Lewis and the Hudson's Bay Company in the Nineteenth Century

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I

In June 1832, ships bound for York Factory on Hudson Bay touched at Stornoway to take on board 37 working men under contract to the Hudson's Bay Company. It was the first such visit for over a decade, and the chamberlain of Lewis wrote enthusiastically to The Honourable Mrs Stewart MacKenzie of Seaforth on the occasion:

> The Hudson's Bay squadron have been in this harbour for the last 4 days. They have taken on board 40 young men and sailed last evening—besides this advantage they have taken outfits of Beef, Pork poultry &c.—and have left a considerable sum of money in this place. I have taken upon myself as a present from you to have sent on board the ships a small supply of vegetables from the Lodge Garden, for which they were thankful and I showed them all the little attention that laid in my power.[1]

This was the second year in a row that the HBC had conferred on Lewis the 'advantage' of hiring her young men, for in 1831 a smaller contingent of 12 men sailed to the Bay *via* Stromness, traditionally the last European port of call for the Company's vessels. Orkney had provided the bulk of the Company's land-based contracted servants until 1810 (as much as 87 per cent in 1799) but the Napoleonic Wars inflated the price of labour in Britain, and competition with the Montreal-based North-West Company drove up the HBC's demand for men. Therefore the years from 1810 to 1821 saw sporadic recruiting in such other areas as Canada and Lewis. But in 1821 the two great fur companies merged, and the lists of forts and of men shrank suddenly.[2] In 1827, the workforce began to swell again as the losses from competition were recouped and trade expanded into new areas of the Company's continent-wide domain. Although North America itself provided the majority of the 'wintering servants' in the important Northern Department after 1821, the Company never again let itself depend on a single labour pool. The HBC spread its demand around and by recruiting largely in Rupert's Land where the inhabitants had little other market for their labour, it was able to hold wages below their inflated 1821 level for almost forty years. In this situation, Orkney no longer met the Company's demand for men in Britain.[3] For the rest of the century the HBC rotated or spread its recruiting in Europe round Orkney, Lewis, Zetland and Inverness. But except for a

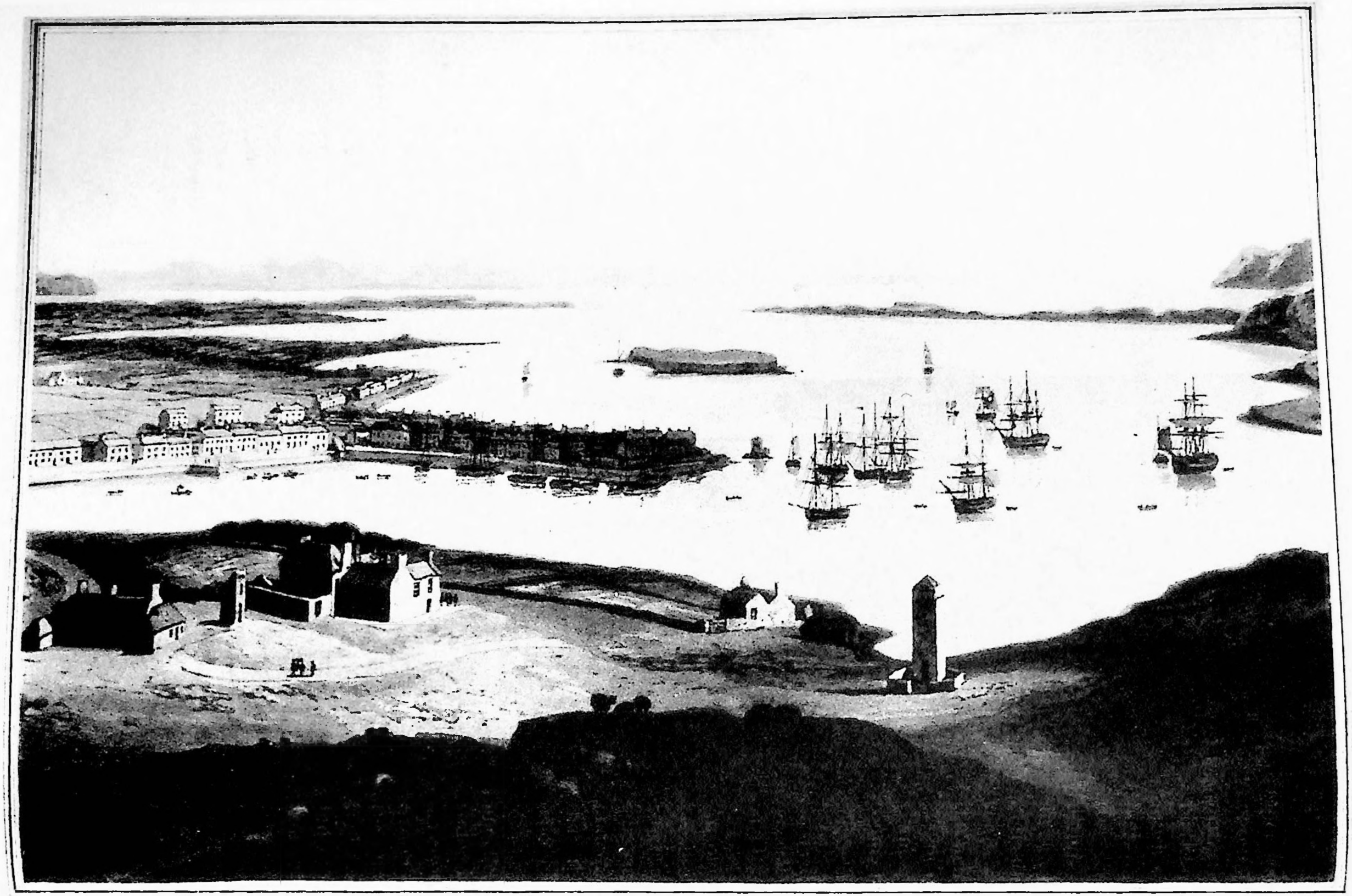

Fig. 1 View of the town and bay of Stornoway, Lewis, by William Daniell, published in 1819. (Seaforth Lodge, in the foreground, was rebuilt in the 1840s when the estate was bought from the MacKenzies by Sir James Matheson.)
Reproduced from a coloured engraving, by courtesy of Edinburgh City Libraries.

few years in the 1840s, and in the mid-fifties when Norway was resorted to, the strongest European rival to Orkney was Lewis.

The island estate of the Seaforths was by 1830 in many ways an ideal source for the small numbers of men required annually to replace the Company's retiring European servants. Like many other parts of the north-west of Scotland, Lewis felt the tensions of rising population and falling economic opportunities. The price of kelp touched bottom in 1826–7, leaving tenants without an exportable commodity except the traditional one, cattle, while landlords searched for some other commodity to augment rent rolls. The Seaforths were far too poor to help 'surplus' tenants reach the colonies, so contrived the expedient of clearing small farms to be consolidated as large grazings, locating the victims of this 'improvement' on small crofts, and encouraging them to fish for a cash income so that croft rents could in some degree compensate the landlord for lost income from kelp. By the 1840s, therefore, substantial areas in the two southern parishes of Lochs and Uig had been put under sheep; crofting townships had been laid out further north, particularly at Ness at the northern tip of the island, and around the port of Stornoway. In 1841 about two-thirds of the island's population lived on 1,913 small crofts rented at £3.3*s*.9*d*. a year. Emigration did not appeal to Lewismen in great numbers; the Seaforths (and until 1851 Sir James Matheson, who bought the estate in 1844) tried to employ displaced tenants within Lewis, and the people themselves were rarely inclined to leave. There were no big emigrations between 1811 and 1832 (76 and 248 people respectively) and the departure of about 70 people from Uig in 1838 was mentioned as an exceptional incident by factor Knox in 1841.[4] In 1851, Matheson began encouraging emigration with threats and inducements, and from then until 1855, 1771 people emigrated. This cut the decade's rate of population growth to 4.7 per cent, but in every other decade from 1811 to 1871 population rose by 14 to 21 per cent, and it doubled from 12,231 in 1811 to 25,485 in 1881.

The loss of cultivated lands and of revenue from kelp was therefore not mitigated by falling population, and the result was alike distressing to the people, who were far worse off in 1851 than in 1821, and to the landlords. The owner was also threatened with having to provide for tenants in years of crop failure. Sir John McNeill reported in 1851 that if crops were normal people could get six months' subsistence from their crofts, and with income from other sources like fishing could live and pay the rent. But in such years of scarcity as 1836–7, factor Knox asserted, relief might have to be provided for up to a third of Lewis' 17,000 people. This prediction was fulfilled during the potato famine of the 1840s. Despite the vulnerable state of this large portion of the population, the islanders were generally considered to be fit and healthy, and it was usually asserted that they did not consider their poverty intolerable.[5] From the 1840s onward most families sent at least one member to the Caithness fishery which garnered in a typical year around 1850 from £2 to £4 a man, and a minimum of £7 by 1876. An upsurge in fishing activity from Lewis ports after

1856 also provided employment nearer to home. With a good crop of potatoes and the annual sale of a cow or two, the great majority of Lewis crofters were prepared to remain in their native island (even if removed from their native parishes), believing that life was endurable and hoping it would get no worse. The HBC therefore did not have unlimited applications from the 'stout active young People' it sought to enlist on five-year contracts for service anywhere in British North America.[6] Occasionally quotas no bigger than average—15 to 20 men—proved difficult to fill; and unhealthy men, or men without certificates of good character from their ministers, were slipped in to make up numbers. Joining the HBC was not as final a step as emigration, but in a sense it was a greater step, for it separated men from their immediate families. Even when father and son enlisted together, they might be sent to serve a thousand miles apart, and never meet again.[7]

In the passages which follow, three aspects of Lewis participation in the HBC labour system have been studied: first, the Company's decisions with respect to recruiting in Lewis; second, the position of the agent in Stornoway; and third, the inducements (and disincentives) to enlistment. This last section has been drawn from the Company's correspondence with its agents, and from a detailed statistical analysis of the careers of the 46 men enlisted in 1831–2. Their unusual choice of employment left their experiences exceptionally well documented, and therefore well suited for an attempt to broaden our understanding of the lives of some ordinary people of Lewis towards the middle of the last century.

II

The Company's demand for labour from Lewis fluctuated from year to year. In the 1830s men were taken only in 3 years. Recruiting resumed in 1840–1, then the combined contributions of Orkney, Zetland and North America shut out Lewis from the Company's hiring activities for four years. From 1846 onwards there was heavy but intermittent hiring, inhibited during the 1850s by the men's reluctance to come forward. The Company responded in 1858 by making the first substantial improvement of payscales since 1821, and despite frequent disparity between the number of men sought and the number found, the recruitment of men for Hudson Bay was an annual feature of life in Stornoway through the 1860s and 1870s. It is difficult to calculate the actual number who enlisted over the century, for the data is scattered through the records of four geographical departments of the fur trade. But there must have been 500 men at least from 1830 to 1890—more than went from Zetland, though fewer than were recruited in Orkney and far fewer than the numerically dominant group of servants, the métis ('half-breed' or 'mixed-blood') inhabitants of the HBC chartered territory, Rupert's Land. But by the early 1840s Lewismen were to be found in most districts of the huge Northern Department, in the Southern Department around James Bay and Lake Superior, and in the Columbia Department on the Pacific coast.[8]

As long as the Company sought European labour, it had good reasons for recruiting in Lewis—the relative convenience of the island to the Company's traditional transport route to the Bay, and the availability of men, willing to work for the wages offered, who never altogether lost the reputation for 'steadiness, sobriety and obedience to their masters' earned before 1822 (HBCA: A.5/8 fo. 139, Secretary to Rae, 10 Jan. 1828). One factor worked against Lewis: the Company preferred to deal with only one hiring agent in Europe. Oddly enough, the Hudson's Bay Company was not unduly troubled by the fact that Gaelic-speaking Lewismen might not fit conveniently into a workforce which functioned in English, French, and various Amerindian languages.

The convenience of having a single agent in the North was demonstrated late in the eighteenth century at Stromness, and the advantage of channelling all recruiting correspondence through one agent was obvious, so long as that agent could meet the demands upon him. In the late twenties the Stornoway firm of W. & R. Morison applied to the London headquarters of the HBC to be accredited as hiring agents, but they were merely advised to work through John Rae, agent in Stromness. Rae was reluctant to share the business with Lewis, but he was unable in 1830–1 to provide satisfactory men from Orkney; so the Morisons were put on an equal footing with Rae in 1831 and were offered all the hiring in 1832. Dissatisfaction with the Lewis recruits of 1831–2 was expressed by the HBC's overseas governor, George Simpson, so it was not until 1836 that the Company decided to try Lewis again as Rae's successor, Edward Clouston, fell short of his quota. There were further calls on Stornoway in 1840 and 1841, when Clouston was warned that recruiting might end altogether in Stromness. If this threat was meant seriously it was extremely rash, for there were several complaints about the men sent by the Morisons in 1840–1. The rivalry to supply the Company was extended in 1842 when a retired HBC surgeon living in Zetland began to hire with sufficient success to see a third agency established at Lerwick until 1877. Less important agents were also named at various times in Inverness (which provided highly unsuitable men) and in 1858–9 at Lochmaddy, North Uist, which provided no men at all.[9] The decision to spread the demand around northern Scotland coincided with the improvement of mail connections in the late 1840s, and a general routine evolved. After the Company's ships returned from the Bay in October the Company's secretary in London asked the agents to report on prospects in their districts; the Orkney agent was sometimes canvassed first. Early in the new year each agent was informed of the total number of men he was expected to provide for the ships sailing in the ensuing June. This routine was convenient in Stornoway, for as the Morisons put it in January 1850, they wished to know the Company's needs by 'the earliest information in your power as other engagements such as the Herring Fishing may interfere with us towards the middle of March'.[10] Agents would report progress intermittently to London and if the rough local quotas were not being met the demand would be assigned to other agents. Occasionally more

men were hired than were needed, a fact which did not greatly trouble the HBC since uncertain proportions of the recruits were apt to be found unfit and sent home prematurely from the Bay. A more careful approach was taken to avoid over-hiring of blacksmiths, coopers, boat-builders and sailors ('sloopers') who were required in much smaller numbers. The agents still competed against each other to find these high-priced hands, but needed individual permission from London before signing contracts. The recruitment correspondence attests to the rather local character of the islands' economies, for it was not unusual for a shortfall in one port to be balanced by an easy recruitment in another. Although the Company continued in theory to prefer Zetlanders to Lewismen and Orkneymen to both, by 1850 it was fully launched on the course of encouraging several agents in Scotland, in place of the old tendency to work through a single recruiter.[11]

One might imagine that the prevalent use of Gaelic in Lewis would discourage the Company from hiring there, but this does not seem to have been the case. It was commonly said up to the 1850s that there was a little English spoken in Stornoway but none anywhere else, and Sir John McNeill in 1851 drew attention to the fact that

> in the deputations that met me, there were always some persons who spoke English, and generally more who understood it; but there were others, frequently the most intelligent and the best informed, who were acquainted with no language but their own.[12]

An old servant seeking re-enlistment in 1841 asked for exceptionally high wages because his 'experience in the Country & knowledge of the English & Canadian languages should render him an useful Man'. It is unclear whether the 'Canadian' language was French or Cree, but English was presented as a noteworthy asset, not a prerequisite. It was not until 1853 that the Secretary mildly suggested to the Morisons that 'those who understand the English language are to be preferred, as inconvenience has sometimes arisen from the Lewes recruits being ignorant of that language'. Yet a few years later the Company encouraged the Morisons' proposal to have recruiting circulars translated into Gaelic. It also acceded to their request to appoint a few young Lewismen as apprentice clerks, hoping that the prospect of a Gaelic-speaking superior might encourage men to enlist at the lower levels.[13] There was always at least a sprinkling of Highland gentlemen in the upper levels of the Company's service, but the middle-level servants who managed the important boat crews and outposts of the trade were almost entirely métis, the North American-born descendants of mixed Indian and white alliances. It is striking how quickly and how thoroughly the métis replaced the French Canadians—who in turn had displaced the Orkneymen—as bowsmen, steersmen and guides for the boat brigades. Some of these higher servants had Highland or Hebridean ancestry and probably had some Gaelic, but in general no recruit going out to Rupert's Land could count on being stationed near another Gaelic-speaking person above his own level. Although language is scarcely mentioned in the recruiting correspondence before 1853 or after 1858, it undoubtedly

contributed to an early report by the Company's fur-trade officers that Lewismen were difficult to deal with.

When Governor Simpson weighed up his subordinates' opinions of the new Lewis servants in 1832, he wrote to London (too late to affect the large enlistment in Stornoway that summer) that Orkney should be preferred: he spoke highly of the Lewismen in all respects except one: 'we find them exceedingly stubborn and difficult of management and so clannish that it is scarcely possible to deal with them singly.' This aversion was recanted in 1839. By that time the French Canadians had largely priced themselves out of the Company's market, the 'inefficiency and private character' of recent Orkney recruits were deplored, and the Company was therefore obliged to look to Lewis to avoid becoming altogether dependent on the métis. Simpson therefore advised that 'the Servants required for next year be brought from the Lewis Island, as altho' stubborn and difficult of management in the first instance, they generally turn out trusty well conducted men'.[14] Circumstances in Orkney compelled the London office to act on Simpson's advice, but a few noticeably unfit men in the 1840–1 consignments hurt the prospects of Lewis in the early 1840s. But by this point the Company was writing regularly to the Morisons on the affairs of existing servants, and the link remained intact despite occasional years of low demand or poor supply. From 1840 to 1870 Lewismen continued to make up from 16 to 34 per cent of the Scottish contingent in the permanent workforce of the Northern Department, while Scots as a whole held between 25 and 40 per cent of all jobs (particularly at the lower levels) in the same Department.[15] The relationship between the HBC and Lewis was not always easy, however, as problems arose which eventually cost the Morison firm its agency in 1866.

III

The problems the Morisons experienced over four decades as agents of the Hudson's Bay Company reflect interesting aspects of the affairs of both Lewis and the Company. Temporary agencies had been held by James Robertson, Comptroller of Customs, in 1811, and for a few years after 1816 by Donald McKenzie Jr. When the Morisons were eventually given the agency in 1831, they received the usual allowance of £2 for each man hired, provision for expenses such as stationery and advertising, and a commission of 6*d*. in the pound (2½ per cent) on all sums disbursed for the Company.[16] This last item put the agent at odds with the HBC, for it was to an agent's advantage to spend as much as possible, particularly in advancing money to new recruits. The commission came to 4*s*. on advances to labourers before 1857, and 5*s*. 6*d*. thereafter if the agent limited the recruit to the customary advance of six months' pay to clear local debts and outfit himself for the Bay. The company tried to enforce this limit, but it was not in the agents' interest to comply. Yet the agency business also carried risks: the agent lost hiring fees and became personally responsible for trying to recover money from men

who failed to reappear at shiptime after taking wages in advance. In 1849 the Morisons lost a recruit on the eve of sailing, and received neither cash nor sympathy from London when they asked the Company to share the loss. From 1858 to 1863 not a year passed without at least one man absconding with his advance. When one deserted in 1862 the Morisons threatened to have him 'apprehended & punished'; but this did not deter a further eight from failing to sail the following year.[17] In rough terms the loss of one man could wipe out the profit on four others, besides giving the agency a bad name in the Bay where shortfalls could be severely inconvenient. When the Morisons lost the agency in 1866 their surly letter of resignation let the HBC know that 'our regret now is, that we held the Agency so long' (HBCA: A.10/65 fo. 396, 19 March 1866). The sentiment was probably sincere; and it invites an examination of the advantages an agent enjoyed in addition to the irregular amounts from hiring fees and commissions.

The firm of W. & R. Morison (which passed into the hands of a younger generation without changing its name in 1863) was a diversified partnership of a sort likely to be found in outlying districts where capital is scarce. At different times while the firm held the HBC's agency it also acted as agent for one of the mainland banks; it owned a distillery and as an importer of spirits was among the larger suppliers to 'spirit cellars'; the Morisons were deeply involved in purchasing the catches of local fishermen, both at Ness and at Stornoway; and they ran a general store, chiefly to outfit the fishermen-crofters.[18] This last activity eventually got them into trouble with the HBC. In 1854 the Secretary warned of reports

> made to the Company's officers by some of the people engaged by you, that they are obliged to receive goods from your stores to the amount of their advances instead of being paid in Cash, and I am instructed by the Governor & Committee to request that this practice be discontinued in future, as such a system is not only unfair to the men, but it brings the service into discredit...when they compare notes with the Servants engaged elsewhere.

The Morisons replied that some of the men had been supplied, but 'on the best terms' and at their own request.[19] As the complaints came from three thousand miles away there was little the Company could do. But nine years later, when the Secretary asked Sir James Matheson to propose another person to act as agent, the general complaints about the poor quality of recent recruits were followed by this specific warning:

> Probably it might be as well that the H.B. Agent should not keep a retail shop for the supply of the class of men who usually engage as servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, as some of the evils attributed to Messrs. Morisons management are supposed to be connected with their traffic (HBCA: A.5/30 pp. 224–5, Secretary to Sir J. Matheson, 7 Nov. 1865).

Matheson wrote back that 'my friend Mr. Morison' could exonerate his firm from any specific charges: 'none of the Hudson's Bay Men were invited to make purchases at his

Store, & were quite free to buy wherever they liked.'[20] The fact remained that both officers and men had lost confidence in the Morisons as agents. Before recruitment began for the 1866 ship the agency was given to a local medical practitioner, Dr Roderick Millar.[21]

A certain sympathy is due to the Morisons on the question of advances. They were never able to establish at Stornoway the system in effect at Stromness, where new men were given bills payable three days after they sailed, such bills finding general acceptance around the town. Merchants in Stornoway refused to advance goods on such conditional notes and the Morisons (and Millar after them) were always obliged to make the advances on their own responsibility.[22] They may actually have lost money on one or two years' recruitment in the early 1860s. It is understandable that they tried to reap a large share of the profit on servants' advances, and to limit their losses to the wholesale rather than the retail value of goods supplied, since local circumstances prevented them from spreading the risks.

Dr Millar did rather better than the Morisons during the remainder of the 1860s. He was harassed for two years by some members of the Stornoway business community, who tried to usurp his commission on retired servants' bills, and who twice had recruits' possessions impounded aboard ship because of debts owed in Lewis. These petty annoyances stopped in 1869 and problems over both the quality of the men and last-minute desertions fell off sharply under the new agent. Millar's only evident side-interest was in having his partner, a Dr McRae, carry out medical examinations for the Company before the men went aboard ship. With this very modest perquisite and the normal commissions and allowances, Millar continued as agent with profit to himself and the HBC for over a decade. A review of the numerous complaints made against the Morisons over the years, including cases in the 1840s when men were sent out with unsigned contracts, suggests that the Company's agency was probably too small a concern for active businessmen like the Morisons, and that unless the agency—and the men it hired—could be exploited to the limits of the economic opportunities available, it was not worth the Morisons' time to handle it. Certainly the Company's affairs were better conducted by professional men like Dr Cowie at Lerwick, the long-serving Stromness agent Edward Clouston, and Dr Roderick Millar of Stornoway.[23]

IV

It remains to be asked, what were the attractions of service with the HBC to the labouring classes of Lewis? Enlistment with the Company, like emigration, was affected by local circumstances and overseas opportunities, but also by individual preferences, even whims. Correspondence between Lewis and the HBC in London, and a close view of some 46 men who were hired at Stornoway in 1831–2, reveals considerable diversity in the descriptions of the men themselves, and in their behaviour once they joined the service. The Company's records largely deal with money

and therefore provide a lopsided picture of the sorts of subjects which social history normally tries to explain. The HBC's domain of Rupert's Land was, except at the Red River Settlement, virtually a closed commercial system wherein a large part of the economic behaviour of the Company's own employees was systematically recorded. By contrast, family life can be glimpsed only haphazardly in the effort to distinguish the few dozen men who enlisted every year from a thousand eligible ones who did not.

The first point to be noted is that opportunity cost—the value of advantages foregone by enlisting—was not an effective deterrent to potential recruits. The Company paid European servants £16 or £17 a year on first contracts as labourers from 1830 to 1858, and £24 including a special allowance for luxuries from 1858 to 1875. In 1875 a more flexible scale including signing bonuses and performance pay was acceded to by the London office for the first time since 1821 under pressure from the Winnipeg office and the northern agents. Skilled boatmen ('sloopers') earned a few pounds more than labourers, and tradesmen got up to £40 a year, but generally under £30 on a first contract. Very rarely a tradesman might earn more in Scotland than the Company offered, but this can hardly have been the case for labourers.[24] A Lewis crofter engaged in the cod-fishery might conceivably have earned £17 in money or its equivalent, but only in a remarkably good season for both fishing and agriculture. Much more normal would be the situation described by Malcolm Gray:

> The addition of all the incomes that came into the crofting household would at best no more than stretch to cover fixed obligations and basic necessities; a drop in cattle prices...partial failure of the grain or potato crop, would pull the tenant into debt, and once there he would find it hard to recover. Arrears and debts of many sorts would drag on for years. The effect was to destroy the economic independence of the peasantry.[25]

In Rupert's Land in the 1830s and 1840s labourers frequently *saved* five or ten pounds a year, perhaps more than the gross earnings of their counterparts who stayed at home. The recruits of 1831–2 spent only 61.6 per cent of their earnings during service up to 1851.[26] The average savings across the whole group amounted to £51.33 per man—£6 per man per year of service: if the same calculation is made only for the 33 men who returned to Lewis, the average saving rises to £7.75 a year. So there is no evidence that opportunity cost, in cash terms, could deter enlistment. There may still have been a non-cash economic deterrent in the shape of capital invested in a fishing-boat or equipment, which the owner would be reluctant to sell or lend during his absence. Tenure of a croft could also have been a deterrent: the uncertainty of tenure without leases would make many who actually held crofts think long and hard before absenting themselves from Lewis for five years at a time. Such considerations would have pressed more lightly on cottars or on unmarried men, especially younger sons.

This is not to say that crofters with a stake (however meagre) in the land or in fishing equipment did not enlist with the HBC, particularly under pressure of debt or, one may surmise, under threat of eviction for arrears. Yet it is clear from the

studies of Hunter and Gray that debt was ever-present, and its sheer pervasiveness makes it unlikely to have been, by itself, a strong determinant of enlistment. But particular cases must have pressed harder than others: the rather late engagement of 27 men in 1853, after Matheson's factor accompanied Morison on a tour of the west side of Lewis, may have represented several such cases in point.[27] There are other evidences of indebtedness: labourers' debts often cropped up as a bone of contention between the Company and creditors in Stornoway, as in 1841 when the hard-hearted tacksman of Gress, Lewis McIver, sought payment on account of four men who sailed for the Bay owing him money. (The Company refused to make advances.) In 1849 and again in 1859 the Morisons drew particular attention to being 'under the necessity of exceeding the advance to some of the men to prevent their being detained' by suspicious creditors.[28] Dr Millar experienced worse problems in 1867–8. 'I have to explain to you how I exceeded the prescribed advances. . . . The day before the men left their clothes were arrested in the Sailors hands so I had no alternative but either lose both my advances & men and being in a fix I promised to pay the amount of the arrestments.' In 1868 the sums involved were 16*s*. and £2.11*s*.9*d*.[29] There is a strong suggestion in the pattern of money remitted to Britain by the recruits of 1831–2 that their remittances were to pay debts. Of the 46 recruits, all but 13 sent money home within their first two years of service. Remittances after the second year tended to be fewer and larger, and only 20 men were involved. Six remitted no money at all. Bills in the first two years averaged just under £4 each, within a range of £2 to £8, and amounted to 45 per cent of the total £287.75 remitted to Britain by absent servants down to 1851. Although the money may simply have been gifts, the evidence shows that 70 per cent of men enlisted with some immediate need for cash at home; and debts, owed personally or by a close relative, seem the most likely short-term need to be met in that fashion.

Sir James Matheson in the 1850s, like factor Stewart in the '30s encouraged recruiting by the HBC to remove excess population; but most of the men themselves did not see enlistment as a step towards emigrating.[30] The HBC's recruits were not seeking either a life-long career in the fur trade, or access to the land at Red River which could until 1862 be obtained by retired servants in lots far larger than a croft in Lewis. Of the 46 recruits of the early '30s 80 per cent had returned home (or died in the service) by 1850. Those who stayed had all served at least three years beyond the required term, and one is known to have married in Rupert's Land. In 1857 the Company added to its standard European contract a promise of 25 acres of land free at Red River for servants completing a normal contract; but enlistment dropped to nothing in Lewis that year. Five years later the land grant was abolished, and the change aroused no disappointment in the island.[31] Men continued to return to Lewis at the end (or, with distressing frequency feigning illness, to return *before* the end) of the stipulated term. Some returned servants did subsequently emigrate, and their savings may have been important in paying their passages out of Lewis with their

families. When the government in 1859 offered medals to five Lewis-born veterans of official Arctic expeditions, the Morisons could find none—three were still in Rupert's Land and the other two had emigrated to Canada from Back. On the other hand, the Morisons often received applications for re-employment, some by men who had been out of the service for a dozen years.[32]

Considerations of material gain do not go very far to explain the enlistment of Lewismen in the HBC. Enlistment was an abnormal act, undertaken by men who on the surface seem to have little to distinguish them from thousands who stayed at home. By the late 1840s family tradition probably influenced enlistment to some extent, but it is beyond the resources of this researcher to sift through the McDonalds, Morrisons, McIvers, McKenzies, McLeods and others who were hired intermittently from 1810 onwards. Every recruit who was not motivated by financial pressure must have had at least a curiosity, if not a lively desire for adventure in foreign parts, and some undoubtedly had more than their share. A sturdy character recorded only as 'Murdo the Horse...who fell over a cliff only to spoil the sea-beach, and relieved the tedium of life fighting all comers in Hudson's Bay' was of this sort. So was Roderick Campbell, a boy of a tacksman family who joined the Company as an ordinary labourer in 1859 and became a literate, much-travelled Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.[33] What Campbell lacked was the fixed attachment to his native place which stamped most Scots in the HBC's service. This attachment is evident in reports from officers in charge of York Factory, who sometimes tried to re-engage retiring servants if the annual ship brought too few recruits. Colin Morrison, a cooper from Stornoway due to retire in 1837 extorted a rise of £5 a year when the ship failed to provide his replacement; and during a shortfall in 1839 Chief Trader Hargrave complained that several labourers 'avowed their willingness to re-enter the Service, after that they have revisited their relations and native land'.[34] In 1867 Dr Millar warned the HBC not to send recruits to Orkney by way of Thurso: 'the men on getting on shore at Thurso may play hide and seek....you are not aware of the difficulty your agent here has to get those engaged to ship away from their homes & friends.' At the last moment Millar found himself 'forced to accompany the men myself to Stromness as the man with whom I had bargained & agreed with to deliver them to the agent here became frightened when he saw the men excited with drink and parting with their relations—just before the Steamer was leaving'. Millar inquired into three men sent home by the surgeons at York Factory in 1870 and found one had stopped coughing the moment the ship left York Roads; one had tried to evade sailing after taking his advance and 'he completely deceived the Dr & acted the old soldier' in Rupert's Land; yet a third had nothing wrong with him 'but a disease that Highlanders are very subject to viz ''Maladie du pays''''—homesickness.[35]

Few men were seriously tempted by the HBC's wages and allowances as such, or by the prospect of adventure in the New World, at least by the 1860s. Granted their motive for engaging was chiefly financial, but it was not just a function of the general

economic conditions of Lewis. The movement of kelp, fish and cattle prices, the yield of grain or potato crops, the variable harshness or leniency of the landlord—these were the crucial elements in the crofting economy, but they do not alone explain the choices of individual recruits for the HBC. In them one might do better to look for such obscure domestic incidents as the lengthy illness or sudden death of a parent; damage to a boat or fishing equipment; or a careless cow straying off a cliff. Crises in an intimate circle, mixed in variable proportions with desire for adventure, must explain what pushed (and in a few cases, led) several hundred men to leave the insecurity of Lewis for the substantial gains of service in the Hudson's Bay Company territories over the course of the nineteenth century.

V

A few reflections remain to be made on the general character of the Lewis servants and apparent changes in that character over the course of the century. One may begin with Malcolm Gray's comments on habits of acquisitiveness among Highland crofters engaged in the fisheries.

> Growth was based upon modest capital accumulation by... men who would persist season after season, plough back their earnings into better equipment, or perhaps into purchase of a fuller share in the boat, and who, although they retained some hold upon the land, concentrated upon fishing as a main task. This was not the Highland way; and, indeed, there were formidable obstacles to the west Highlander following such a course (Gray 1957: 159–60).

The Hudson's Bay servant lost, at least in the medium term, his hold on the land, but he also escaped some of the worst aspects of the tendency (as Gray put it) of 'Debts due on the land [to] sweep off any small accumulations before they could fructify' (*op. cit.* : 160). It has already been mentioned that the recruits of 1831–2 saved almost 40 per cent of their wages over twenty years. One Roderick McLeod, a labourer from Cromore, Lochs, spent less than one quarter of his £163 wages during nine years overseas. This remarkable record may be used as a yardstick of how much it was *possible* to save while providing oneself with clothing and luxuries in addition to the food and lodging supplied by the Company. (McLeod presumably remained unmarried and he was stationed in the Mackenzie River district, where servants could get no liquor.) It might be argued that Lewismen were unaccustomed to having such sums and saving was easy when wages were only an abstract entry in a ledger; but the fashion in most of the workforce was to grumble if there was insufficient opportunity to spend wages.[36] Yet accumulation of considerable savings came easily to the bulk of Lewis servants in the 1830s.

There can be no doubt that the labourers recruited in 1831–2 were from crofter or cottar families. The prevalence of men who could not sign their names, the menial occupations for which they were hired, the fact that the son of an impoverished tacksman (John McDonald of Crobeg, Lochs) was hired in 1837 as a clerk and hence a

gentleman, not a servant—these factors all indicate that the recruits (apart from five tradesmen, all from Stornoway) were from the poorer classes of Lewis society.[37] Yet they showed a strong acquisitive streak which suggests that the 'Highland way' of which Gray wrote was at that time largely the result of the structural factors he identified, and not intrinsic to the cultural traits of Lewismen.

But the commendable frugality of the early recruits changed. The officer in charge of York Factory in 1866 complained that saving was 'formerly common, especially among the Orkneymen & Shetlanders'—no mention of Lewis—but was 'now exceptional' throughout the workforce. Analysis of the accounts only partly bears out the complaint. The 83 Lewis servants in 1865–6 did indeed spend a little more in the country than their Orkney and Zetland fellows, but only to the extent of 5 per cent of gross earnings—62.9 per cent compared with 57.2 per cent (Orkney) and 56.8 per cent (Zetland).[38] The difference was made up not in greater savings by the men from the Northern Isles, but in their larger or more frequent remittances to Britain. Even here the behaviour of Lewis servants in 1865 is in marked contrast to that of the recruits of 1831–2. Of the Northern Department's 38 Lewismen in the 1830s, as many as 68.4 per cent remitted money home in the second year of service, but only negligible numbers did so in the third to fifth years—5.6, 2.9 and 3 per cent. By contrast in 1865 92.8 per cent remitted in the second year, 52.2 per cent in the third and 25 per cent in the fourth. Certainly communications were slightly better in the 1860s and economic changes in the Highlands had given Lewismen more experience in handling monetary rather than barter transactions; nevertheless remittance patterns strongly suggest that servants' wages had become an integral part of their families' earnings (and expenditures!) whereas thirty years earlier they had been regarded as a capital fund, slowly accumulated for some particular purpose. And this is not inconsistent with the Company's feeling that the recruits of the '60s were less tractable and less committed to the service than their predecessors had been.

In 1857 a Stornoway blacksmith named George McDonald was sent home before his contract expired because his presence at York Factory 'has always been, highly injurious to the service; in consequence of the improper language used by him when speaking of the Hon. Company, and his influence among his Countrymen, who look up to him as a Leader, in causing discontent among them'.[39] Unrest was difficult to check: 'However well disposed recruits may be on their arrival from Europe, the advice & example of the old hands soon render them as dissatisfied as the latter' (HBCA: A.11/118 p. 581, Wilson to secretary, 25 Sept. 1866). But the bad influence of surly old servants was not new in the '50s—it had been noted in the context of Lewis recruits in 1832.[40] It seems that the recruits of the '50s and '60s were of the same social class as those of 1831–2, but not of the same character. The demoralizing hunger of 1836–7 and 1846–7, the forced emigration of a tenth of Matheson's crofters in the early '50s, the disrepute into which the Morison's peccadilloes had brought the HBC in Lewis by the '60s—all these factors seemingly contributed to a coarsening of the type of men hired by the HBC.

Desertions before shiptime, feigned illness on arrival, disobedience and some overspending were the results. But the general character of Lewis and its people ensured that a steady trickle of recruits would continue to board the Company's ships at Stornoway or Stromness. There was even an attempt by a Captain of the Highland Rifle Militia in 1875 to check the flow—an interesting sequel to the cheerful acquiesence of the factor in 1832 (HBCA: A.10/94 p. 313, 29 June 1875).

The information at hand does not allow decisive conclusions on some significant questions. Issues that remain to be explored include the family circumstances of recruits before enlistment—for instance, surviving letters on individuals' affairs seem disproportionately to concern remittances to aged or widowed mothers; but such evidence is too sketchy to warrant more than a note in passing.[41] To whom, precisely, did the remitted funds go, particularly the heavier remittances characteristic of early service? And how successfully were returned men integrated back into the crofting townships or the town of Stornoway after an absence of five years or more? Did the factor and landlord manage to skim off part of retired men's savings, as happened in Orkney in the eighteenth century, and as landlords manipulated so profitably the labour of the kelpers and, to a lesser extent, the fishermen? It has been possible in this survey to outline the structural aspects of the recruitment, and to describe some significant trends in detail; but many questions about individual behaviour and motivation remain. What does emerge is that enlistment with the Hudson's Bay Company was an individual choice, forcing a break with the emotional security and economic instability of crofting society in Lewis. But enlistment stopped short of the hazardous, ambitious act of renouncing one's native place and emigrating. Labour in the fur trade may be viewed as a stable kind of migratory employment, and as such was a forerunner of the practice, common in the Western Isles in this century, of joining the merchant navy. By medium-term expedients such as these, Hebrideans managed to escape the worst consequences of geographic isolation: high prices, narrow opportunities and over-crowding at home. Conversely, they were not compelled to break up close-knit communities; and they avoided the harsh choice of giving the name 'home' to foreign and distant places.

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NOTES

1 S.R.O. GD 46/1/530, Alexander Stewart to Hon. Mrs Stewart MacKenzie, 26 June 1832. The log of the *Prince Rupert* listed 30 servants as passengers: one was from Harris, two were rejected by the Company's surgeon at York Factory, and one appears not to have sailed. See Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) C.1/923 fos. 1–2. The *Prince of Wales* took 8 men to the more southerly port of Moose Factory. These 34 men, with 12 recruits sent *via* Stromness in 1831, make up the 46 servants mentioned at various points in this article. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references to HBCA A.5 are to letters from the Company Secretary in London to the agent in Stornoway; and references to A.10 are to the agent's letters to the secretary.

2 For eighteenth-century background see Clouston 1936 and 1937, and Glover 1948; for 1820s see Rich 1959: 482–5; for 1831 see HBCA A.5/9 fo. 127, secretary to John Rae (Stromness) 30 March 1831.

3 Origins of servants were tabulated by computer analysis of abstracts of servants' accounts kept annually at York Factory; data were collected for every tenth year from 1830–70 (HBCA B.239/vols. 10, 20, 30, 40, and 47). For Simpson on Canadian wage demands and Métis labour see HBCA D.4/100 p. 2, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 21 July 1834; also a passage in the exhaustive study of the Métis by Marcel Giraud (1945: 968–71).

4 For Seaforth management see Hunter 1976: 43–5; kelp prices, *ibid.*, and S.R.O. GD 46/13/134; for Knox see *PP* 1841: 174; for emigration see Macdonald 1978: 165–70. Sir John McNeill reported that in 1851 2,628 crofting families in Lewis paid an average £2.12*s*.2*d*. rent a year (*PP* 1851: 917).

5 For Matheson, see Hunter 1976: 80–1; for population abstracts see *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* (London 1883), vol. 4, p. 508. For Knox and definitions of poverty as perceived in Lewis, *PP* 1841: 177–8; for general health conditions, *PP* 1851: 1041–2; also *op. cit*: 917 for ability of crofts to give half a year's subsistence.

6 For descriptions of men needed, HBCA A.5/5, fo. 32, secretary to Charles McLean, 4 Dec. 1810; for Lewis fisheries, *PP* 1851: 917; fishing incomes, *PP* 1841: 179; also *PP* 1866: 717–31, and Macdonald 1978: 91–107. For a sample HBC contract see Cowie 1913: 69–72; with minor textual changes the same contract form served the Company for most of the century.

7 For a missed quota see HBCA A.10/43 pp. 344, 452, 588 and 720, April to June 1858; this shortfall followed a rise in wages of £5 a year. Four men sent home in 1841 included two from 1840 and two of 1841 (see A.5/13 p. 253, 29 Oct. 1841). A man sent home in 1849 was 'a notorious thief, ferocious and brutal. He belongs to the Isle of Skye' and no effort had been made to check his character (A.5/16 p. 183, 5 Nov. 1849). A father and son, both named Donald McDonald, left Carshader (Uig) together in 1831. The father was seconded to a government expedition inside the Arctic Circle in 1833–4; the son was assigned to the Pacific Coast, and died there in 1834 (B.239/g/14, fos. 33, 50).

8 The Northern Department engagement register (HBCA B.239/u/1–3) showed over 500 Lewismen, 1831–93. While some are duplicate entries, the Northern Register omits Southern Department and Labrador servants.

9 The first Orkney agency is described in Hon. D. Geddes, 'David Geddes, Whom You Pronounced a Dunce...' (n.d., n.p.) typescript in Orkney County Library. For agencies 1828–58 see HBCA A.5/9, fos. 70, 122 and 158, secretary to W. & R. Morison, 23 Dec. 1829, 26 Feb. 1831 and 11 Nov. 1831; A.5/10, p. 5, 13 June 1832; A.5/11, p. 310, 29 Dec. 1836; A.5/12, p. 18, 29 April 1837; A.5/13, pp. 38 and 46, 12 March and 1 April 1840; *op. cit.* p. 117, secretary to Edward Clouston (Stromness), 4 Nov. 1840; *op. cit.* p. 313, same to John Cowie (Lerwick), 18 March 1842; A.5/22, pp. 173–6, Circular to Clouston, Cowie, W. & R. Morison, John Adam (Lochmaddy) and Duncan McTavish (Inverness), 1 Dec. 1858.

10 For mail service, *PP* 1851: 918; for herring fishery, HBCA A.10/28, fo. 224, 21 Jan. 1850.

11 For disparate hiring conditions see for instance 1840 correspondence cited above, note 9; HBCA A.5/37, pp. 39, 56 indicates a local shortage of labourers at Lerwick and Stornoway, but not Stromness in 1871; A.5/40, pp. 382, 465 shows shortages at Lerwick and Stromness, but not Stornoway, in 1875.

12 *PP* 1851:903. The *New Statistical Account* noted in the 1830s that the Gaelic of Stornoway parish was corrupted with a good deal of English; in Uig the Gaelic was 'as generally and purely spoken' as forty years before, and in Lochs 'a few of the males can speak broken English' (vol. 15:128, 154, 168).

13 For languages see HBCA A.10/12, fos. 287–8, 8 April 1841; A.5/18, p. 37, 14 Jan. 1853; A.10/44, fo. 808, 8 Dec. 1858: 'Alexr. Matheson Esq., Ardross... handed me a copy of the Circular which we recommended to be translated & printed in Gaelic of which he approved.' Matheson was one of the Committee (*i.e.* Directors) of the HBC, a friend and distant kinsman of Sir James Matheson, and a great Ross-shire landowner himself. For Gaelic-speaking clerks see *ibid.* and A.10/45, fo. 32, 14 Jan. 1859. Lewismen without English were hired at least as late as 1866 (Cowie 1913:122–3.)

14 HBCA D.4/99, fo. 3, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 10 Aug. 1832; D.4/107, fo. 13, same to same, 12 Aug. 1839.

15 HBCA A.5/13 pp. 38, 46 and 253, 12 March and 1 April 1840, and 29 Oct. 1841; D.5/6, fo. 60, Hargrave to Simpson, 20 Feb. 1841.

16 HBCA A.5/5, fos. 46 and 115, 20 May 1811 and 17 Jan. 1816. Agents' compensation is defined in A.5/10, pp. 300–2, secretary to Clouston, 6 Dec. 1834.

17 For 'lost' recruits see HBCA A.10/26, fo. 432, 28 June 1849 and A.5/16, pp. 142–3, 12 July 1849. Also A.10/43, fo. 720, 23 June 1858; A.10/45, fo. 635, 20 June 1859; A.10/47, fo. 663, 25 June 1860; A.10/49, fo. 827, 25 June 1861; A.10/52, fo. 50, 9 July 1862; A.10/55, fo. 61, 6 July 1863.

18 For the Morisons' enterprises see next two notes, and the following: banking, HBCA A.5/22, p. 173, 1 Dec. 1858; distillery, A.5/12, p. 96, Secretary to Clouston, 16 Nov. 1837; importing spirits, *PP* 1851:1046; fishing station at Ness, S.R.O. GD 46/1/545/4, W. McGregor to Hon. Mrs Stewart Mackenzie, 3 Mar. 1841. McGregor referred to the Morisons and two other concerns as 'taking as much advantage of the People as they can, nothing else can be expected as there is no opposition... among the fish curers that would rise the price of Fish and sale the fishing materials reasonable'. For death of Roderick Morison, A.5/26, p. 267, Secretary to Alexander Morison, 2 Feb. 1863.

19 HBCA A.5/19 p. 79, 31 Oct. 1854; A.10/36, fo. 368, 7 Nov. 1854.

20 HBCA A.10/64, fos. 202–3, Matheson to Secretary, 15 Nov. 1865, enclosing (fos. 203–4) Alexander Morison to Matheson, same date.

21 Millar appeared before the McNeill commission in 1851 as medical officer for Lochs, Barvas and Stornoway (*PP* 1851:1041–2). He was appointed agent 28 March 1866 (HBCA A.5/31, p. 64).

22 The Stromness system was explained to the Morisons by the secretary on 9 March 1848 (HBCA: A.5/15, p. 307). For failure to implement that system in Lewis see A.10/44, fo. 61, 12 July 1858; A.10/71, fo. 359, 7 Sept. 1867; and A.5/43, pp. 316–18, 17 July 1878.

23 For harrassments see HBCA A.10/70, fo. 576, 29 June 1867; A.10/72, fo. 227, 11 Nov. 1867; A.10/75, fo. 34, 6 July 1868; A.10/76, fo.233, 21 Nov. 1868; *op. cit.* fo. 331, 4 Dec. 1868. Dr McRae is mentioned in A.10/81, fos. 641–3, 3 Dec. 1870.

24 Wages were recorded beside contract details in the Northern Department Engagement Registers (HBCA: B.239/u/1–3). See also A.5/21 p. 206, 19 Jan. 1858, '... in consequence of the rise which has taken place in the value of labour in this Country the Company have resolved to increase the rate of pay for labourers in the Indian Country'. Later the same year rations of tea and sugar were offered gratis for the first time, because these 'luxuries are... used by the labouring classes in modern times'; see 'Private Instructions for the Company's Agents, 22 Nov. 1858 (A.5/22, p. 176). For flexibility after 1875 see A.5/40, p. 809, secretary to Stanger (Stromness), 2 Nov. 1875.

25 HBCA A.10/39, fos. 523–4, 14 May 1856, 'The demand for labour consequent on the extension of the Fisheries and the aboundance of food operates against Emigration'; A.10/51, fo. 252, 26 Feb. 1862, 'We can procure the number of Labourers & Sloopers you state... or even a larger number if required as food is scarce in the Island'; also Gray 1955:62.

26 Total earnings of 46 men 1831–51, £7,585.60; mean £164, standard deviation £97.88. These figures include neither the earnings after 1851 of Hector Morrison (retired 1886) nor the second HBC careers of men afterwards re-engaged at Stornoway. The average of income spent (61.6 per cent; standard deviation 19.4 per cent) is distorted by a few heavy spenders, since 60 per cent of the

group spent below the mean level. A few servants detached on Arctic exploration had virtually double wages, with gravely curtailed spending opportunities. Amount of income spent has been determined by subtracting servants' purchases *from the Company* from total earnings. Outside Red River Settlement, other opportunities either to earn or spend were slender. Assignments of cash in Britain are *not* counted as money spent. Source of all data is HBCA B.239/g/11–31 (Northern Department abstracts of servants' accounts) and B.135/g/15–24 (Southern Department abstracts). The accounting year of the HBC began on 1 June.

27 HBCA A.10/33, fo. 553, 18 May 1853: 'Mr. J. M. McKenzie [factor or chamberlain of Lewis] accompanied the Writer, to the West side of the Island and altho he used every exertion to aid us, we have only 20...engaged.'

28 HBCA A.5/13, p. 249, Secretary to Lewis McIver, 27 Oct. 1841; for advances to clear debts see A.10/26, fo. 432, 28 June 1849, and A.10/46, fo. 17, 6 July 1859.

29 HBCA A.10/70, fo. 576, 29 June 1867; A.10/75, fo. 34, 6 July 1868.

30 HBCA A.10/39, fo. 475, 28 April 1856, mentioned Matheson's offer of a 20*s*. signing bonus; A.10/40, fos. 532–3, 29 Nov. 1856, 'Sir James...is anxious that some of the Young Men would go abroad.'

31 Two 1831 recruits from Leurbost, Lochs, retired to Red River in 1841. Angus McLeod was unmarried, but William McDonald was reported in the 1843 Red River census to have a wife and one son under 16. In 1847 he had three sons and the following property: a house, three stables and a barn, two horses, six oxen, seven cows and three calves, nine hogs, 30 sheep, a plough and harrow, three carts and ten acres under cultivation (PAC:MG 9 E 3, vol. 1, pp. 255, 288). For 1857 land offer see HBCA A.5/20, p. 254, 28 Jan. 1857 and reply, A.10/41, fo. 313, 21 April 1857; for abolition of land grants see A.5/26, pp. 139–41, 23 Sept. 1862, and replies, A.10/53, fos. 60, 255, 7 Jan. and 16 Feb. 1863.

32 Arctic medals, see HBCA A.5/22, pp. 226–7, 24 Feb. 1859 and reply, A.10/45, fo. 228, 11 March 1859. Applicants for re-engagement often asked for exceptional wages or privileges. Donald Buchanan of Sandwick (Stornoway) went out on three separate occasions and each time stayed beyond the minimum term: 1832–46, 1849–57, 1859–66 (HBCA B.239/u/1, no. 113, and u/2, no. 83; also A.5/22, pp. 250–2, 23 March 1859).

33 Among the recruits of 1831–2 surnames were divided as follows: McDonald, 8 (Uig, 4; Lochs and Barvas, 2 each); McLeod, 7 (Stornoway, 5; Lochs, 2); Morison, 4; McLean, McLennan and McKenzie, 3 each; McMillan, Matheson, McKay, McIver and Smith, 2 each; McAulay, Murray, Gunn, Cameron, Martin, Buchanan, McPhail and Ferguson, 1 each. Parishes reflect residence at time of enlistment, so the Stornoway and Barvas men possibly included Lochs and Uig men who had not successfully re-established themselves after removal from the southern parishes. For 'Murdo the Horse' see Smith 1875: 33. Roderick Campbell published an autobiography (1901) of which pp. 1–44 deal with childhood and impressions of Lewis in the 1850s.

34 HBCA A.11/118, fos. 57 and 67, officers in charge of York Factory to secretary, 13 Sept. 1837 and 7 Sept. 1839.

35 HBCA A.10/70, fo. 440, 5 June 1867; *op. cit.* fo. 538 (from Stromness), 22 June 1867; A.10/81, fos. 641–3, 3 Dec. 1870.

36 Thomas 1978:17; for McLeod see sources in n. 26, above.

37 Of 46 recruits only 12 (all 1832) signed their contracts (HBCA A.32, servants' contracts.) Three of five skilled tradesmen signed; seven of 15 men from Stornoway and five of 19 from Uig signed. Four from Barvas and eight from Lochs did not. There was no significant correlation between ability to sign and spending habits, career duration, or retirement patterns. For education in Lewis see Macdonald 1978:140–58. Signing and reading were very different: the minister of Lochs remarked in 1833 that 'There are only 12 persons in all the parish who can write; but half the inhabitants from twelve to twenty-four can read the Gaelic language' (*NSA* Ross and Cromarty, p. 168). For Angus McDonald's engagement as clerk see HBCA A.5/11, p. 333, secretary to McDonald, 16 Feb. 1837; A.10/4, pp. 313–14, 22 April 1837; A.10/12 p. 482, McDonald to secretary, 26 June 1841. This family was related to Chief Trader Donald Ross, a prominent officer who joined the HBC at Stornoway in 1816.

38 HBCA A.11/118, p. 582, J. W. Wilson to secretary, 25 Sept. 1866. Northern Department servants' accounts for 1865 (B.239/g/42, fos. 252–92) were analysed in detail for information on remittances.

39 HBCA A.11/118, p. 337, Hargrave to secretary, 12 Sept. 1857; Hunter (1976: 100) noted that 'blacksmiths seem to have been especially prominent' in chiliastic religious movements in the Highlands earlier in the nineteenth century; a similar point could be made about discontent in the Company's service.

40 HBCA A.5/4, pp. 26–7; Chief Factor J. L. Lewes wrote (19 Dec. 1832) that the new Lewis recruits 'are all employed seperated a mong the old Hands . . . they are one and all industrious labourers and well be haved young Men . . . they will be first rate Men provided none of the evel disposed among the old Servants corrupt them'.

41 For example, HBCA A.10/46, p. 543, 23 Nov. 1859; A.10/44 p. 302, 25 Aug. 1858. But when Philip McKay of Uig died in 1845 his heirs proved to be a brother still living at Miavaig and a sister-in-law in Cape Breton (A. 10/23, p. 179, A.10/30, p. 560).

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