



# The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme

*Roger Hutchinson*

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## **The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme** Roger Hutchinson

In 1918, as the First World War was drawing to a close, the eminent liberal industrial Lord Leverhulme bought—lock, stock and barrel—the Hebridean island of Lewis. His intention was to revolutionize the lives and environments of its 30,000 people, and those of neighboring Harris, which he shortly added to his estate. For the next five years a state of conflict reigned in the Hebrides. Island seamen and servicemen returned from the war to discover a new landlord whose declared aim was to uproot their identity as independent crofter/fishermen and turn them into tenured wage-owners. They fought back, and this is the story of that fight. The confrontation resulted in riot and land seizure and imprisonment for the islanders and the ultimate defeat for one of the most powerful men of his day. *The Soap Man* paints a beguiling portrait of the driven figure of Lord Leverhulme, but also looks for the first time at the infantry of his opposition: the men and women of Lewis and Harris who for long hard years fought the law, their landowner, local business opinion and the entire media, to preserve the settled crofting population of their islands.

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