

3.2 The Harveys of Castle Semple

Part 2: The Later Years (c.1815-1908)

Elizabeth West

1. John Rae (Harvey) of Castle Semple

We turn from the McDowalls of Castle Semple to the Harveys of Castle Semple. Of the two brothers who settled on Antigua and Grenada, John Harvey was unmarried on his death at his London home in 1770. The Grenada estates were bequeathed to his cousin Charles, son of his father's elder brother Alexander Harvey. Charles sailed out to take up his inheritance, but met with an accident when about to land at Grenada, and the estates remained in the hands of John's younger brother Robert Harvey. The Antigua plantations in Cades Bay were left to a nephew, Robert Farquhar, the son of John's sister Elizabeth, by her second marriage to Bailie Alex Farquhar of Aberdeen. Robert Farquhar was a sugar planter in Cades Bay beside the Harveys.

As we saw above, Robert Harvey, the youngest son, the sugar planter and doctor, amassed a considerable fortune before his sudden death in Exeter in 1791. He left money to the poor of his parish in Aberdeenshire and also to the Royal Infirmary in Aberdeen, which he had supported during his life. The Grenada estates were left to his nephew John Rae, whose father, also John Rae, was the first husband of Robert's sister Elizabeth. It was John Rae who took the Harvey surname, giving him the double-barrelled 'Rae Harvey' surname. Before inheriting Robert Harvey's estates, John Rae Harvey already owned 'Harvey's' Plantation (formerly 'Old Road') on Antigua, with its complement of 400 Negroes. Robert used income from his sugar plantations to purchase the beleaguered Castle Semple estate c.1815.

The old county of Renfrewshire was well served by the Harvey's sugar fortune. Robert Farquhar, who inherited the Antigua estates from his uncle John Harvey, purchased the Newark estate in Port Glasgow. He had only one child, a daughter Eliza Mary who married Sir Michael Shaw-Stewart, 6th Bt, of Ardgowan. Although not often mentioned, the Shaw-Stewarts had strong Caribbean connections ¹. She inherited the Harvey's Cades Bay and 'Harveys' plantations with their 800 Negroes in Antigua. One of her daughters married Sir Humphrey Davy, and became one of the leaders of London society. The Shaw-Stewarts are a family still prominent in the west of Scotland.

To return to John Rae Harvey, he purchased Castle Semple as a home for his retirement but died only five years later, in 1820. John had a son, James, of whom little is known except a notice of his death on the Crayfish Estate in Grenada in 1829. John also had two daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth and the Castle Semple estate

¹ Archibald Shaw Stewart, son of the 3rd Baronet, purchase a plantation in Tobago in 1770. Sir John Shaw Stewart, the 4th Baronet, described by Robertson (History of Renfrew, 1818) as having a generous spirit, benevolent disposition and inflexible integrity, married Frances Colquhoun, daughter of Robert Colquhoun, St Kitts slave overseer to the first William McDowall of Castle Semple, and widow of Sir James Maxwell of Nether Pollok. Sir James also spent his early years on a St Kitts plantation (Ed.).

passed to the elder, Margaret, and her husband, James Lee. As his father-in-law had done, James took the name and arms of Harvey by royal consent in 1821, becoming James Lee Harvey.

2. James Lee (Harvey) of Castle Semple

James Lee who became laird in 1820 was a Major in the 92nd Regiment of Foot serving in Egypt, Holland, Portugal, Spain and France under the Duke of Wellington. His family were merchants in Dublin and it is interesting to note that his grandmother was from the Widdington family, a name, slightly modified, which will appear later. His family also had connections with Bristol and, remembering that the principal English ports which traded with the West Indies were London, Bristol and Liverpool, it is probable that the connection was again through the sugar industry. In 1823, Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A., painted Major James Lee Harvey for the sum of £315, the portrait now hanging in the Louvre. Raeburn also painted John Harvey of Castle Semple and Mrs Lee Harvey with her daughter. James' sister Anne Lee who was born in 1775, lived with her brother and his family until her death in 1874, at the ripe old age of 99. She is buried in the Collegiate Church on the estate.



Figure 11: Harvey Graves inside Castle Semple Collegiate Church

There was considerable investment in the estate at this time.; A contemporary description is contained in "A Topographical Dictionary of Scotland 1846" :

Among the principal seats is Castle-Semple House, the residence of Colonel Harvey, a handsome mansion; the grounds attached to it comprise more than 900 acres, and abound with diversity of character, and with every variety of

natural and artificial embellishment. The eminences which intersect it are richly crowned with wood to their summits; and in several parts are noble avenues of trees, and detached clusters scattered over the verdant lawns: in every part, indeed, the greatest skill and the most cultivated taste have been displayed in the improvement of the grounds, which are almost unrivalled. To the north of the house are spacious gardens, laid out with great beauty, and containing long ranges of conservatories for plants, hot-houses for the choicest fruits, a large pinery, and every requisite for horticultural purposes. In front of the house is an extensive flower-garden, surrounded with shrubberies of rare plants; and encircling a fish-pond is a border of fragments of various rocks, among which is every variety of rock plants.

The British banning of slave trading in 1807, and slave ownership on plantations in 1833, affected the industry which had depended on free labour. To soften the blow to the plantation owners and avoid a mass desertion of freed slaves, an apprenticeship scheme was set up which forced ex-slaves to remain on their plantations for five or six years during which their remuneration was minimal. The system was difficult to administer and was terminated in 1838. The second sop to the planters was that the British government paid compensation to the slave owners, the sum depending on the number of slaves held. In the record of hundreds of compensation claims paid to slave owners resident in Scotland, are the names of James Lee Harvey, his wife Margaret Harvey, Robert Farquhar of Newark and William McDowall who was listed as an absentee owner of 197 slaves for which an award of £5,139 13s 9d was made. The enslaved received nothing.

3. John Lee Harvey of Castle Semple

James and Margaret had three sons and two daughters. The eldest, John, was born in 1817 and may have managed the Grenada estates for a time. Despite the decline of slavery, plantation life was still harsh, even for the planters, with diseases such as malaria and yellow fever, accidents at sea and on land, hurricanes, and the threat of slave revolts. When his father died in Edinburgh in 1848, John succeeded to the Castle Semple estate. He died in 1857, leaving no issue.

4. James Octavius Lee Harvey

James Octavius Lee Harvey succeeded his brother and was laird for the next fifteen years. The Harveys kept a home in Edinburgh and at the time of the 1861 census were living in London. The estate was managed by a factor throughout the year and, while living in Edinburgh, a cart took produce from the estate to Edinburgh each week and returned with the laundry for washing in the Castle Semple laundry. As principal landowners the Harveys were patrons of the Parish Church and, with the heritors of the Parish, they were responsible for the payment of a minister, the upkeep of the church building and the manse and the provision of a graveyard for the community. In 1850 it was decided that to avoid the long walk to Lochwinnoch, a Chapel of Ease should be built at Howwood. James Harvey provided land for the building which later became Howwood Parish Church and the family donated the two west side windows. James died in 1872, without issue, and was buried in the Collegiate Church. His brother, Henry became Laird.

5. Henry Lee Harvey of Castle Semple

Henry Lee Harvey married his cousin Elizabeth. His mother Margaret's younger sister, also Elizabeth, was the second of three wives of the 12th Earl of Buchan. By this marriage, the couple had a daughter, Lady Elizabeth, born in 1831. Henry Lee Harvey and his cousin, Lady Elizabeth, were popular in the community. The 1871 census showed that they were already living at Castle Semple House with James, the laird, Aunt Anne Lee, now aged 96 and their only child, Alice Elizabeth who was aged eight. Sadly, Alice died later in 1871 and is buried in the Collegiate Church. A stained glass window in Howwood Church commemorates her short life. When Henry Lee Harvey died in 1883, his wife donated the organ and pulpit in the Parish Church in his memory. Henry and Elizabeth were members of Holy Trinity (Episcopalian) Church in Paisley and Lady Elizabeth donated the large east window in that church in memory of her husband. When Elizabeth died five years later in her London residence in Cadogan Square the congregation of the Parish Church in Lochwinnoch placed windows in the church in memory of Henry and his wife.

6. James Widdrington Shand (Harvey) of Castle Semple

Just as the Harvey wealth passed to a nephew earlier in the century, when Henry died in 1883 the Castle Semple Estate passed to his sister Margaret's son, James Widdrington Shand.

James' father, Charles Farquhar Shand was related to two prominent Aberdeenshire families, the Farquhars and the Shands. The latter was yet another Grenada sugar planter and owned property in Aberdeen. In 1661, Sir Robert Farquhar of Lenturk was provost of Aberdeen and his great-grandson, Sir Walter Farquhar was one of the most noted physicians of the early 19th century. He practised in London, listing among his patients the Prime Ministers of the day and the royal family. His son, Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar served as a diplomat and when the island of Mauritius passed from French to British hands in 1812, he was appointed Governor. Like islands in the West Indies, the Mauritian economy was dependent on sugar plantations. When the slave trade with Africa was abolished, prosperity continued in Mauritius, using indentured labourers who came mainly from India.

The marriage of Margaret Lee Harvey and Charles Farquhar Shand took place in Edinburgh in 1850. The two were related since Charles was the grandson of Elizabeth Harvey whose second husband was Bailie Alex Farquhar. Thus Robert Farquhar of Newark was an uncle of Charles. Ten years later, Charles was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Mauritius and was knighted in 1869. The family had homes in Scotland, London and Mauritius, the 1881 census showing them as resident in The Albany, London. The Castle Semple estate passed to their son, James Widdrington Shand Harvey, in 1883 on the death of his mother's brother. It is interesting to note that when his father, Sir Charles died in 1889, he was buried in the Collegiate Church.

James was educated at Eton and probably studied at Oxford University. He was interested in Natural History and has several publications listed in the years 1887 to 1898. He was interested in some of the more exotic trees on the estate and describes one which was reckoned to be more than 300 years old. He married Emily

Augusta Rosina Robinson, the daughter of a prominent family in Mauritius where they had a home as well as other properties in London and Scotland. James and Emily had two children, James and Margaret.

At the 1891 census, James Widdrington Shand Harvey and his wife were resident at Castle Semple with James aged 10 and Margaret aged 8. Also resident in the house were a governess, a children's maid, a housekeeper, a cook, a kitchen maid, two housemaids, two grooms and a footman. Various other gardeners, gamekeepers, ploughmen etc were resident in the different gate houses, houses and bothies on the estate.

Mr Harvey participated in local sporting pursuits, riding with the hunt and supporting curling on the loch, donating the Shand Harvey Trophy for curling, a prize still competed for annually in the West of Scotland. In 1885 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Renfrew. In the following year he stood as Liberal Unionist candidate in the Mid Lanarkshire General Election, losing out narrowly to the Liberal candidate. He could afford to live well since the Castle Semple Estate alone was giving him an income of around £5,560 per annum – a healthy sum in those days. Young James Shand Harvey was also educated at Eton where his friendship with a grandson of Queen Victoria led to at least one invitation to Windsor Castle in the holidays.



Figure 12: Tower of Lochwinnoch Old Parish Church (Old Simon)

The story of high society and public benevolence presents a grand tale, but as has been noted, the wealth of the Castle Semple owners came from the hard labour and misfortune of a great many others. Even on Castle Semple estate things could be far from perfect. Over the wall from the estate at the old manse in Eastend lived the Rev

Robert Z Gilfillan and his family. For several years, the minister had been threatening to vacate the manse due to the unhygienic living conditions, which were causing health problems for his family. The well at the house was “unwholesome, inadequate and imperfect” so that water had to be being carried from the burn up the hill by the servants; the chimneys in the house were blocked, resulting in serious dampness in the walls; the drains from the house were blocked causing unsavoury rising damp. On top of all that, repairs were required at the church, and the graveyard at the old church (Old Simon) was full, so that a new site for a cemetery had to be found. All of this was the responsibility of the Heritors, led by Mr Shand Harvey. As with other lairds, the Shand Harveys spent much of their time away from Castle Semple, and local affairs were in the hands of the factor. Matters came to a head in 1892 when the Sanitary Inspector from the Council became involved and Mr Gilfillan requested four months leave of absence on account of illness. He died later in the year and his executors made a claim to the Heritors for £35 to cover the rental of temporary accommodation at Fairlie and for travelling expenses.

6. The End of the Harvey Lairds: James Shand Harvey of Castle Semple

For the Harveys, the good times were not to last. Nothing is documented, but by the early years of the new century, the family became penniless allegedly due to Mr Harvey's gambling habits. The Edinburgh Gazette of August 4th, 1908, carried the notice that James W. Shand Harvey, sometime residing at Castle Semple, Lochwinnoch, then at Great King Street, Edinburgh and currently at Ardgowan, Levenhall, Musselburgh had been declared bankrupt. The date of his death is not known but he was a party in an interesting court case, Shand-Harvey v Bennett Clark, 1910.

On leaving Eton, the young James Shand Harvey seems to have served in the army for a few years. He had returned to his family home at Castle Semple in 1905 to find the house in very poor repair and the estate around it in now disarray. Permission had been sought and was granted to build a loop railway line through the middle of the estate, separating the house from the Collegiate Church and spoiling the idyllic rural setting. Young Shand Harvey made his way over to Greenock to purchase a return ticket on the next ship bound for Canada. Later the same year, he sold the return half of his ticket to buy a horse and suitable clothing for his first Canadian winter. He made a brief trip home to Scotland in 1923, but his life was in the wilder parts of Alberta, following the railway as it pushed west. He led a very simple life, working with pack horses and earning a meagre living as a trapper. He kept in touch with his sister Margaret who returned to Mauritius to live on the plantation owned by the family. He died in 1968 at the age of 88.

The Castle Semple estate was put up for sale in December 1908. Some tenant farmers bought their own farms, but the main estate and policies were first bought by a syndicate and later sold to the Department of Agriculture who sold it off in small lots for farming. The area around the old house became overgrown and the house was burnt out in 1924 and the shell was finally demolished in the 1970s. The four pavilions were gradually restored as private dwellings.

The story of the Castle Semple owners is now clearer, but much remains to be uncovered about the far greater number whose labour made the McDowall and Harvey families immensely rich, and funded the purchase and improvements to Castle Semple. Despite the demise of the mansion, the estate has risen again as the focal point of a Country Park. Perhaps this will provide the opportunity to find out more about those, either at home or across the Atlantic, whose labour made Castle Semple one of Scotland's leading country estates.

Figure 10: Abridged Harvey Family Tree

The history of the Harveys of Castle Semple is confusing, not least because various branches of the family took the Harvey name. The following simplified family tree illustrates the main line, to assist the reader in following the generations. The numbers correspond to their period at Castle Semple:

