



Lairds of Knockdow

Name	Birth	Death	Lairdship	Title	
Godfrey Lamont	abt 1370	aft 1431	c 1431	i of I	I = Inverchaolain
Alistair Lamont	abt 1424	aft 1474	c 1474	ii of I	K = Knockdow
Godfrey Lamont	abt 1464	aft 1525	c 1515	iii of I	
John McGorrie	abt1490	bef 1531	1523 - 1531	iv of I & K	
John Lamont	abt 1520	bef 1583	1540 - 1583	v of I & K	
John Lamont	abt 1540	bef 6 Jan 1604	1583-1604	vi of K	
Gilbert Lamont	abt1565	3 Jun 1646	1604-1646	vii of K	
Duncan Lamont	abt1602	3 Jun 1646	1646	viii of K	
Ninian Lamont	abt 1628	abt 1678	1661-1678	ix of K	
John Lamont	abt 1663	bet 1687-1688	1678-1688	x of K	
James Lamont	abt1664	abt 1739	1688-1739	xi of K	
Colin Lamont	abt1701	15 Oct 1757	1739-1757	xii of K	
Alexander Lamont	abt1703	31 May 1781	1757-1781	xiii of K	
James Lamont	1754	6 Dec 1829	1781-1829	xiv of K	
Alexander Lamont	14 Mar 1784	10 Oct 1861	1829-1861	xv of K	
James Lamont	26 Apr 1828	30-Jul-1913	1861-1913	xvi of K	
Norman Lamont	7 Dec 1869	4-Sep-1949	1913-1949	xvii of K	



Knockdow House

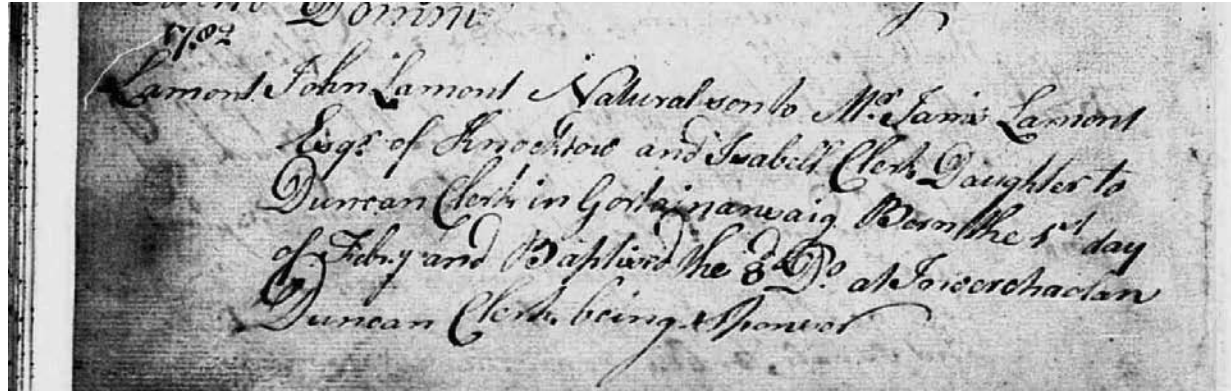
We are gathered for the 113th Gathering of the Clan Lamont in the Knockdow House. Knockdow (Knock-doo in Scots) comes from the Gaelic “*Cnoc dubh*”, or black hill. It was named from the previous Knockdow site located near the old Inverchaolain farm house a few miles north of the present site. It lies two miles north of Toward Castle ruins, on route A 815, on a 7,000+ acres estate on Loch Striven, formerly called Kilmichael.

The McGorrie Lamonts, a cadet family of the Clan Lamont, have been styled as “*of Inverchaolain*” during the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. During 17<sup>th</sup> century the McGorrie Lamonts were listed as “*of both Inverchaolain and Knockdow*”. Later they simply were known singularly as “*of Knockdow*”. The McGorrie Lamonts of Knockdow descended from Godfrey (Gorrie) Lamont c. 1431 who is believed to be the grandson of Lamont Clan Chief John III,

*Charter by John Lawmont (of Inneryne) to John Lawmont M'Gorre, -of those 6 mercates of his lands of Knockdow, lying in the bailery of heirs in fee and heritage forever, by all their right meithes and bounds, as they lie in length and breadth, in houses, woods, hills, valleys, rivers, lochs, pastures, coalheughs, dovescots, iron mines, iron, quarries, stone and lime, etc*  
**Dated at Toward 26 Aug 1500**  
*witness the honorable men John Lawmont of Ardlamont, John Lawmont, clerk of Killenen, brother of the said John of Inneryn, Ewen M'Yllecris, Archibald Fowler, John M'Cloyf, John M'Olcullum, Serjent, and Patrick Lawmont*  
*Signed and sealed*  
*John Lawmont of Inneryne*

The original McGorrie home shifted locations from Inverchaolain to Knockdow during the 19<sup>th</sup> century under Colin Lamont, 12<sup>th</sup> of Knockdow who acquired Kilmichael. His grandson James, 14<sup>th</sup> of Knockdow laid, out the Kilmichael estate in 1817, 44 acres with 10 of them wooded. He built and expanded what is now known as Knockdow House. Sir Norman Lamont remodeled the house and estate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ending with the structure we see today.

## One of the most important events of Lamont history



*Inverchaolain Birth Records (08/02/1782 Lamont, John OPR Births 514/0010 0113 Inverchaolain) 1782 John Lamont Natural Son to Mr. James Lamont Esq. of Knockdow & Isobel Clerk daughter to Duncan Clerk in Gortainamiaig Born the 1st day of February and baptized the 3rd day of February at Inverchaolain - Duncan Clerk being Sponsor.*

This birth record altered the course of the Lamont Clan history. Unlike so many clans whose history was lost to time due to the effects of wars and the clearances, the Lamont's have a good written record of their history. In the later part 18th century, the Highland Clan system suffered severely. Subsistence farming could not sustain an increasing population that was stressed by the policy of many major landowners of clearing their land for sheep farming by expelling the clansmen. With the failure of Jacobites to restore the Stuart line as kings, the clan chiefs and gentry increasingly became landlords, abandoning the traditional obligations of clanship. They were incorporated into the British aristocracy, looking to the clan lands mainly to provide them with a suitable income. We are very fortunate that our Lamont history has been richly preserved

To fully understand the importance of John Lamont of Benmore & Trinidad birth record. We must begin at the end, the death of Sir Norman Lamont.

**The Scotsman – Tuesday, 6th September 1949 pg. 6**

**ARGYLL LAIRD DEAD  
Gored by Bull on  
Trinidad Estate  
SIR NORMAN LAMONT**

*Sir Norman Lamont 79-year-old baronet and landowner in Scotland and Trinidad died on Sunday night at Port of Spain after having been gored by a bull on his estate of Palmiste last Friday.*

*Well known to his clansmen, and at one time a prominent as a Liberal politician. Sir Norman had intended to return to Scotland about this time and resume residence on his Argyllshire estate, where he spent the war years.*

*From his father, who earned some renown as an Arctic explorer and author, Sir Norman inherited the last of the Lamont lands owned by the clan in Cowal, as well as the estate of Palmiste and since his succession 36 years ago he divided his time between the two.*

*Educated at Winchester and Downton College of Agriculture, he was Liberal M.P. for Buteshire from 1905 to 1910, and Parliamentary Private Secretary first to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal Prime Minister, and then to Mr. Churchill when he was President of the Board of Trade. For four years he was hon. Secretary of the Scottish Liberal Association.*

*He also developed a taste for historical research, which resulted in an "Inventory of the Lamont Papers, 1231 – 1807," prepared for the Scottish Record Society and in many contributions to the "Clan Lamont Journal."*

*Taking over the Trinidad plantations in 1907, he abandoned the uneconomic cultivation of sugar, and branched out in other lines, which enabled him to retain the family property while others were changing hands at a loss. He also served on the Islands Board of Agriculture, and from 1915-23 was a member of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago.*

*Some of his speeches and writings on colonial affairs were published as "Problems of the Antilles" 1912 and "Problems of Trinidad" 1933, and he was also joint author of a catalogue of Trinidad moths, the outcome of a lifelong interest in entomology. Sir Norman for many years was a member of various historical and kindred societies; he accepted the president of the Clan Lamont society in 1938; and his guidance and researches contributed to the completeness of the author, Mr. Hector McKechnie, K.C. He is survived by his sister, Miss Augusta Lamont of Knockdow, who was formerly an assistant in the Zoology department of Edinburgh University.*

*Nurtured in the aristocratic tradition, his establishments in this country and in Trinidad were up to the old standards, until the war came and he dispensed with the piper. With the war ended, he arrived home this month.*

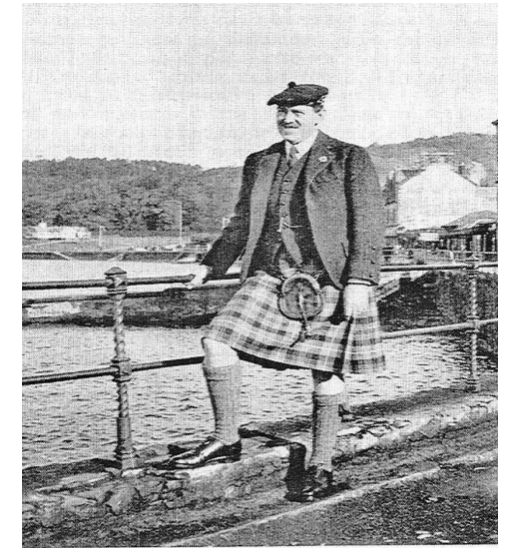
There has been a Lamont of Knockdow for the past 450 years on these lands until Sir Norman's death in 1949. Sir Norman's only brother, an officer in the Gordon Highlanders, was killed at Dargai in 1897. As he was himself unmarried, the baronetcy granted upon their father becomes extinct. Listed below are just a few of his major life accomplishments and honors:

- 17th & last Laird of Knockdow
- Born 07 Dec 1869 Inverchaolain, Knockdow, Argyll
- Died 04 Sep 1949 Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
- Gored to death by his bull in his Trinidad plantation
- Baronet
- M.P. (Bute)
- J.P. & D.L. Argyll
- M.L.C. Trinidad
- Council C.L.S. 1895 - 1911 & President 1938
- Educated at Winchester & Downton College of Agriculture
- Liberal M.P. for Buteshire from 1905 to 1910,
- Parliamentary Private Secretary for
  - Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal Prime Minister
  - Mr. Churchill when he was President of the Board of Trade
- Hon. Secretary of the Scottish Liberal Association for four years
- Active member of the firm of John Lamont & Co., which has its headquarters in Glasgow.
- An early member of Comunn Gàidhealach
- Member of the Scottish Home Rule movement
- 1907, he abandoned the uneconomic cultivation of sugar in Trinidad and branched out in other crops, which enabled him to retain the family property while other plantations were changing hands at a loss
- Served on the Islands Board of Agriculture, and from 1915-23
- Member of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago
- Life-long friend, the Duke of Argyll who died a few weeks after Norman

Sir Norman has left us a huge legacy to. We should question ourselves: how was Sir Norman able to achieve such an accomplished life. I contend that without John of Benmore being driven to success, the history of the Lamont's would have been greatly altered.

Perhaps without the birth of John Lamont of Benmore and Trinidad, the Lamonts of Knockdow would have gone the route of obscurity like so many other clans. The ancestral lands might have been lost. This child, apparently born out of wedlock, as the term "natural son" usually indicates and with no marriage yet located for Isobel & James, grew to manhood and later provided the family with the means to continue their residency in Knockdow. McKechnie mentions the following "A natural son John was born to James xiv of Knockdow in 1782, the mother being a person of lower station." The unwanted child was destined to acquire a fortune and estates in Trinidad by which many years later the family was greatly enriched."

Despite being the first born son, John had no birth rights to the Knockdow family heritage. He sailed in 1801-1802 for Trinidad, England's newest colony leaving Scotland at 20 years of age to find his way in the new world. After serving an apprenticeship as overseer/manager on the Eccles plantation, he soon sets up as a planter of his own. In 1809 he bought his estate of Cedar Grove in the south-west of the island, which expanded to 360. Over the years he buys the estates of Canaan, River & Palmiste and becomes a successful plantation owner.



SIR NORMAN XVII, OF KNOCKDOW, FROM 1913



Barque "Medora" - 297 tons sugar schooner

In 1810 he was joined by his half-brother Boyden, who went to Trinidad to learn the business and remained his entire life. For a while he seems to have fallen out of touch with home, but he was truly not forgotten. In 1816 he received a letter from half brother, Alexander. This letter has been described as a truly fraternal letter to re-establish contact with long departed brother. The response from John was *"I often felt I was alone in the world – a consequent degree of melancholy has been my constant attendant from youth upwards; but the frank generous manner in which so many*

*correspond with me, has given me a new and much more pleasing turn to my feelings ... I am charmed of your description of the happy party assembled at Kilmichael. How delighted I should be to make one of the numbers."*

John was fined in the autumn of 1820 for having a duel with a fellow officer, Mr. Charles Ross. The matter was investigated in the Court of Royal Audience of Trinidad with fines issued in the range of \$200 to \$500. He later rose to the high rank of Commandant of Naparima which he held till his death.

In 1828 John was invited to pay a long deferred visit to his native Toward to visit his ailing father who expressed a great longing to see him. His first visit back to Scotland lasted from Oct 1828 until June 1829. His father passed away a few months after he left. His brothers Duncan, Matthew and Bannatyne had already passed. On his return to Trinidad, he was accompanied by his cousin by, George Cole. George was to become his agent organizing the sugar sales in Glasgow. Annual visits thereafter were made by John back to Scotland until his death in 1850.



Benmore Estates

On his trips back home, John found out that out this large family of brother that only one, Alexander had a son. To his nephew, James he took a great liking, and resolved that the youth should re-build the great family of Lamont glory prior to the toll of the war years. So he took the young Lamont to Trinidad for a holiday in 1847, and later told him of his hopes. James returned to Scotland in 1848, and the same year his uncle engaged a firm of lawyers to look out for a suitable property for his nephew, so that he might set him up in a household of his own. In 1849 Benmore was bought for £13,000, at a public sale, and a Mr. Baird a city architect, was engaged to build a new mansion on the site of the old building. The purchase included the forest of Benmore, Coir-an-T, and the lands of Cur, with woods, meadows and salmon fishing.

John Lamont returned to Scotland in 1849 to review progress. He arranged for James to supervise the building project, returned again to Trinidad again where he died in 1850 in Diego Martin and is buried next to his half brother Boyden. John never really saw the mansion finished. After his death it was found that his wealth was much greater than had been surmised. John willed money to Alexander's daughters, Margaret and Jane and the bulk of his estate to James. He had already built a library onto Knockdown and spoke about buying Garracharon to unite it to Knockdown. His estate was valued at £150,000.



Trinidad Plantation of John Lamont

A century later Sir Norman Lamont is laid to rest next to both John & Boyden Lamont



Photo of tombstone provided by Peter G. Lamont Cole from his trip to Trinidad in 2006

**Left**

In Memory of **JOHN LAMONT of CEDAR GROVE ESQ** long a well known and highly respected planter in this island who died at his house at the CASCADE, DIEGO MARTIN On the 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1850 AGED 68 much regretted by numerous friends here and in Britain

**Center**

Sacred to the memory of **SIR NORMAN LAMONT** second and last Baronet of Knockdown, Scotland and of Palmiste, Trinidad Born 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1869 died in the Colonial Hospital San Fernando 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1949

**Right**

In Memory of a justly beloved brother **BOYDON LAMONT of Canaan Esq.** Ninth son of James Lamont Esq. of Knockdown in Scotland who departed this life on 31st August 1837 aged 43 years This tablet is inscribed by his surviving and sorrowing brothers as a tribute to his many eminent virtues

How did these incredible set of events transpire? To understand we need to return to the time before the birth of John Lamont of Trinidad. We should start with examining the life of his father, James Lamont

**James Lamont was the 14<sup>th</sup> Laird of Knockdown** Born. 1754 – Died - 06 Dec 1829.

James, the last Knockdown to live & work full time on the ancestral lands. He had 15 children (14 sons 1 daughter) with his wife, Elizabeth Robertson. James and his brother Alexander both married Robertson sisters. James was able to experiment with alternative farming methods on poor land that had been used solely for grazing. His expertise in agriculture gained him appointment as factor of the Island of Arran by the Duke of Hamilton. The Old Kilmichael home was laid and enlarged by James who transformed it into Knockdown house. He was a Tory in politics. Despite having a lot of children himself, only one of his sons (Alexander) had any children. Scotland's society rules dictated that while James could not give lands to his illegitimate son, James would still recognize, provide for, and include John in his family. James to the end of his life held a soft spot in his heart for John. In 1811 he gave both land and stone to build a lighthouse that still stands at Toward Point to guide the West Indian sugar transport boats to Greenock. James, seeing that the old life style of the highland clans was drawing to an end, saw to it that his sons sought lives in other manners. James left a merger £2300 estate plus a large amount of land.



James Lamont  
14<sup>th</sup> of Knockdown

**Alexander Lamont, 15<sup>th</sup> Laird of Knockdow** left Knockdow for Edinburgh to study law and became a lawyer in father-in-law's law firm. Alexander was a writer to the signet since 1812 and was in the firm Lamont & Newton. Among his client was the Duke of Queensberry. He was admitted a member of the W.S. Society (Scotland's independent association for lawyers) in 1814. He lived his adult life in Edinburgh and only summered in Kilmichael. Alexander married his 1st cousin Jane Chrystie and they had 3 daughters and 1 son. Alexander remained in the law practice until 1841; and held a commission of lieutenant - colonel in the Bute militia. He inherited the Toryism politics of his father. Alexander along with Mr. Finlay of Toward Castle built the Toward Church in Dunoon.

**James Lamont 1st Baronet of Knockdow, 2nd of Cedar Grove, 16<sup>th</sup> Laird of Knockdow  
1<sup>st</sup> President of Clan Lamont Society, 1895-1913**

Alexander had his only son, James schooled at Rugby and the Edinburgh Military Academy with a career in the military in mind. His uncle John being a regular visitor to Scotland during this period saw that his nephew was not destined for this career. After two years of military life James resigned his commission in 1848 to follow, his uncle John back to Trinidad. James stayed for 5 months forming a close bond with his uncle. John started negotiation on Benmore to provide suitable employment for his nephew. John leaves the bulk of his vast estate to James.

Upon Benmore building being completed, James was only in his early twenties, and had no thoughts of settling down. So he sold Benmore and its mansions, for £17,000 and departed on a glorious big game hunting expedition to Africa. He lived a life of sport and adventure being a world traveler, arctic explorer, naturalist, and big game hunter. Fortunately for him, the sugar estates in Trinidad continued to prosper. He married some twenty years later, with two sons born to the marriage. After James inherited Trinidad estates from John, he only visited 5 times before turning them over in 1907 to Norman, his son.



Lt Alexander Lamont  
of Knockdow

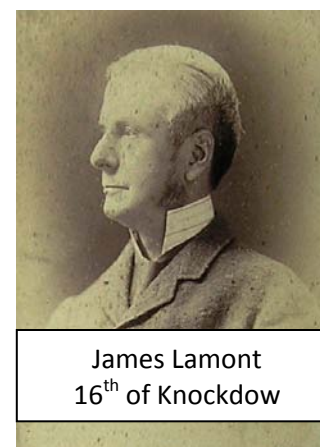
His other son, Alexander died in Dargi fighting with the Gordon Highlanders. An excerpt from his eulogy titled "The Things That Are Not To Be" - *It is a sad and yet apparently inevitable prospect that someday not long distant, strangers will possess the patrimony of the old barons, their treasures scattered to the airs, and the listeners at the Cowal games who hear the quickstep "Lamonts of Knockdow" will ask "Who were they?"*

James in 1858 & 1859, on his yacht Ginvera, a schooner of 142 tons, made 2 voyages to Spitzbergen. 1869 he built the Diana, a three-masted Schooner of 251 tons, with auxiliary steam, specially designed for Arctic travel. He made 2 trips to the Arctic in Diana for a total of 4 trips himself plus funding additional two trips for the Diana to the Arctic. James wrote two books about his arctic explorations, "Season with the Seahorses" and "Yachting in the Arctic Seas". The following is an excerpt from "Season" while stalking a polar bear on an iceberg in the Arctic he is describing the many places his opera glasses have seen.

*"Strange sights has that large, old battered opera glass seen in its day, for, besides its legitimate occupation of gazing at the beauties in the opera houses of London, Paris, Florence, Naples, Havana, and New York, it has seen great races at Epsom; great reviews in the Champs de Mars; great bullfights in the amphitheatre at Seville. It has stalked red-deer on the hills of the Highlands, scaly crocodiles on the sand-banks of the Nile, and read hieroglyphics on the tops of the awful temples and monuments of Thebes and Karnack. It has peered through the loopholes of the advanced trenches at the frowning, dust covered batteries of the Redan and the Malakoff. It has gazed over the splendid cane-fields of the West Indies, from the top of forest-clad mountain-peaks of Trinidad and Martinique; over the Falls of Niagara; over the Bay of Naples from the top of Vesuvius; over Cairo from the top of pyramids; over the holy city of Jerusalem from the top of Mount Calvary; and now it was occupied in a quietly scanning the colossal proportions of a polar bear, amid the icebergs of the frozen north."*

During James many Arctic adventures he recorded a lot of scientific data. He passed the time while sailing performing metrological observations, oceanographic measurements plus gathering geological, botanical and zoological samples. To help finance the trips he saved the skins and blubber of his kills to sell upon his return.

James had a political portion of his life, in his 1<sup>st</sup> book he mentions while he was preparing for arctic travel "*When we were nearly ready to start, and I was superintending the outfitting of my yacht at Southhampton, I was most unexpectedly requested by the Liberal party of a Scottish county to become their candidate in the general election about to take place; so deeming it my duty to sacrifice my amusement to my country's good, I stayed the preparation for the sea, and for the ten following days I was engaged in the excitement of an electoral contest.*" He ran for Parliament a total of 4 times, the first being 1857 as a Liberal candidate for Paisley. His next run for office was in 1859, the first of three for the representation of Buteshire. In Feb 1865 he lost by a mere 15 votes and then in July 1865 he won by 11 votes. By 1868 he becomes bored with politics and abandons his seat. He then turns his attention back to adventure of the Arctic and starting his family at age of 40.



James Lamont  
16<sup>th</sup> of Knockdow

"A Lecture on the Civil War in America", was delivered by James at the Rothesay Mechanics' Institute Dec 7, 1864. In this speech James lectures a British audience about the America he has visited four times, endeavoring to explain the virtues of President Lincoln, and the vileness of slavery. He says this was occasioned by a visit with the Italian general Garibaldi, who cannot understand why the British sympathize with the Southerners.

We can see that James lived a life of leisure as a Scottish gentleman in Glasgow, Edinburgh, & London and never wore a kilt. This good fortune provided to James was due to the hard work of his Uncle John of Benmore. Norman like many sons, decided to live a life radically different that of his adventure seeking father. His life was evolved around Lamont family heritage and business interest in Scotland and Trinidad.

I think we can safely assume that Lamont history would have been immeasurably altered if John of Benmore had not sought to share his fortune with the legitimate branch of the Lamont family.

We can only ask ourselves what would have been the fate history of Lamont history if the Knockdow's continued a vanishing agrarian lifestyle on the homelands? Would James have been able to tour the world? Would Norman have had the time to compile the vast volumes of Lamont documents containing our history?

Written for Clan Lamont Sep 2008  
George Young – Gig Harbor, WA USA  
[oldhiker50@aol.com](mailto:oldhiker50@aol.com)



Crest of  
McCorrie Lamonts of Knockdow



The Arms of Lamont of Lamont