



A Charragh Bhorach, the sharp pillar, otherwise known as Spitheag on Fhoimheir, the chip of the giant, a standing stone in Balnakeil

Around 4,000 years ago a new **Bronze Age** culture reached Tìree. As well as using metal for the first time, they brought new ways of honouring the dead, with graves such as at *Cnoc an Fhoimheir*, the giant's hill, in Kirkapoll. Islanders also erected standing stones, for example the two stone circles at Hough.

The **Iron Age**, which began around 2,500 years ago, saw a spate of fort building on Tìree. These were either simple round *dùns* or larger double-walled brochs. Often these forts were built at the top of cliffs, such as at *Dùn na Cleite* at the end of Happy Valley. Whether life had become more dangerous or they were a status symbol we don't know. These buildings took thousands of man-hours to build and the fact that they are still there is a tribute to the tenacity of their builders.

The most famous Tìree fort is a broch in Vaul called *Dùn Mòr Bhalla*. This was excavated in 1962. 4,139 pieces of pottery alone were found. This broch had once been 30 feet high with a double wall 13 feet thick containing a staircase. On the right, inside the front door, was a guard room. Any (right-handed) attackers would have held their shields in their left hands and the guard could have attacked them on their unprotected side. It was built in 60 AD and occupied for some 300 years.



A crannog at Loch na Buaille, on the Scarinish slabh. Crannogs were dwellings built on lochs from the Iron Age onwards. There are at least four on Tìree

Amongst the finds in Vaul were parts of a Roman glass bottle, similar to ones used by Roman soldiers. Today we often like to think of Tìree as an isolated island on the edge of Europe. Two thousand years ago the island was connected to mainland Britain and even Europe, by strong trade links.

The inhabitants of *Dùn Shiadair* in West Hynish are said to have buried their gold when they left the fort. The treasure has never been found.

On the north side of Kenavara there is a cave called *Uaimh a' Ruith*. A traditional story tells how a piper and his dog once climbed into this cave which continued into an underground passage. People followed their progress above ground by listening to the sound of the pipes. At Scarinish the tune changed to one called '*If only I had three hands; two for the pipes and one for the sword!*' and then the music suddenly went quiet. The piper was never seen again but the dog reappeared from the fort above Milton harbour, *Dùn Mòr a' Chaolais*, with all its hair singed off.

The name Tìree is likely to come from Iron Age times when it seems to have been called Heeth. The next wave of Irish immigrants then called the island *Tìr* [the land of] *Heeth*.



This souterrain, an underground passage from the Iron Age, was discovered by John MacIntyre in Kilkenneth in 1918 while ploughing

This panel has been sponsored by Blue Beyond, Balemartine, Tìree