

Tiree Tales in the Dewar Manuscripts: Summary description, November 2015 (more may be discovered during cataloguing)

Story title	Description	Maclean MSS ref (English transcription, 1879-81)	Dewar MSS ref (Gaelic text, 1862-66)
Big Jura John	Big Jura John was a Maclean from Jura, who lived in Ballimartin. He married MacLean's daughter and MacLean entrusted him with his castle which at that time was in a little lakelet at Ballimartin. After MacCailein had obtained possession of the island, he sent officers to collect the rents, but Big Jura John refused to pay and he went seven years without paying the rent. The Duke of Argyll, Red-haired John, went to Tiree to see him. He was dressed in a kilt and Big Jura John fired a shot which he sent between his legs – the Duke remarked 'Had you sent the ball a little higher, it would have been effective.' MacCailein's gillies fired canon and took down a corner of the castle, but he still refused to pay. And so it goes on, with lots of drama, prose and island references, including a Tiree tradition that when cattle were driven through the church they became MacCailean's property.	Vol 17, p 72-77  JPEGs 4812-4817	Vol 6, p 217-224  JPEGs dscf8660-8664
Big Jura John and the Irish Earl	Big Jura John's servant was collecting peat with creels and horses when one of his horses was killed crossing a bridge over a ditch made by the miller at Soreby. Big Jura John erected gallows opposite the castle at Ballimartin and hung the miller. Maclean who had come from Duart and was staying in the castle chastised him for killing the miller and challenged him instead to kill 'the Irish Earl who struck me and put out my teeth.' Big Jura John made an expedition to Ireland and killed the Earl, then brought his head back to show MacLean. Maclean said 'it is better to have the likes of you as a friend than an enemy' and rewarded him with a free life rent of Ballimartin.	Vol 17, p 77-80  JPEGs 4817-4820	Vol 6, p 225-229  JPEGs dscf 8664-8666

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<p>Gift of Tiree to Maclean by MacDonald of the Isles</p>	<p>MacLean was married to MacDonald's daughter and tricked him into giving him Tiree by saying that they had no towels in the house to wipe his hands after his meal because their land was too poor to grow flax. After the meal his daughter said 'there is a little island behind Mull called Tiree and some say that flax grows well there. Were I to get that island, as flax grows well in it, I should not be thenceforth without towels.'</p>	<p>Vol 17, p 80-81 JPEGS 4820-4821</p>	<p>Vol 6, p 230-231 JPEGS dscf 8667</p>
<p>The Laird of Callart and the Tenants of Tiree</p>	<p>After MacCaillein had got possession of Tiree the tenants were unwilling to pay rent to anyone except their former landlord, MacLean, and so they refused to pay rent for seven years. After seven years the Laird of Callart tricked them into paying their rent of meal, butter, cheese and cattle by visiting the island with a large birlinn and telling them he would collect the rent and take it to MacLean. The tenants realised they had been tricked and pursued him, but a west wind blew him on towards the Ross of Mull and he escaped. The Tiree people were excessively enraged and one of them exclaimed 'I should not be so much galled had we been cheated by a person worthy of the name of man – but to be deceived by swarthy, filthy Callart!'</p>	<p>Vol 17, p 82-83 JPEGS 4822-4823</p>	<p>Vol 6, p 233-234 JPEGS dscf 8668-8669</p>
<p>John Campbell of Barranacarragh in Tiree  This story and several alternative endings, given by different contributors, are described more fully by Ronnie Black in <i>The Secret Island</i> pp 59-62</p>	<p>MacCaillein sent John Campbell of Barranacarragh to be factor in Tiree and collect the rents there. He lived in Gairtean Domhnaill. He was a good swordsman and thought he could make the tenants submit, but the Tiree people took a spite at him and decided to kill him. One night a man called Donald of the Strath, who lived at Hough, warned him of the plot and took him to the ferry so he could escape to Coll. The ferryman, Malcolm son of black John MacDonald, was also a farmer and feared for his own life because it was nearly daylight and he might be seen. So, he hid him in his corn kiln, wrapped up in blankets to keep him warm, and when</p>	<p>Vol 17, p 83-87 JPEGS 4823-4827</p>	<p>Vol 6 p 235-239 or 240. It's not clear to me if p 240 is the last page of this tale or if Dewar has squeezed in an extra short story.  JPEGS dscf 8669-8672</p>

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	<p>the men came to look for him they couldn't find him. The following night the ferryman took him safely to Coll and he escaped.</p>		
Donald of the Sound	<p>Donald of the Sound was one of the six sons of Neil MacKinnon ('Neil of the Sound'). When Donald was a boy his father refused to pay his rent for six years, so MacLean's men confiscated his cattle to pay his debt. Neil's sons rescued the cattle and in retaliation, MacLean's men kidnapped Donald and planned to take him to Duart. The boat got into difficulties and Donald saved the day, but was then left to drown by Maclean's men. Maclean reprieves him as a reward for saving his men and he is allowed to return to Tiree. I'm not entirely clear about the order of things, but this is an exciting tale with lots of proclamations and actions that could be re-enacted with panache! Later (I think) the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke granted a free life rent to Donald, after he saved him from drowning and they become great friends. The Sound is described as a townland between Coll and Tiree - is it an old name for Caolas?</p>	<p>Vol 17, p 87-97 JPEGS 4827-4837</p>	<p>Vol 6, p 241-252 or 260 The tale appears to be followed by three shorter tales which Maclean does not appear to have transcribed, on: p 253-257, p 258-259, p 260 Or, perhaps the story continues to p 260?  JPEGS dscf 8672-8682</p>
Finlay Guibhneach	<p>Finlay lived at Ballimartin and was the sole carpenter to the five islands. When Macleod of Dunvegan had need of a carpenter to repair his castle he went to Tiree to ask MacLean's help. MacLean gave him Finlay's service and the three sailed to Dunvegan together. Finlay hid his wife in a hogshead because Maclean would not travel on a boat with a woman on board. Finally managed to trick MacLeod's men into giving them nine cows and there are other stories about his time there. He worked at Dunvegan for over a year and MacLean almost forgot about him, but returned to bring him home.</p>	<p>Vol 17, p 121-131 JPEGS 4838-4847 + 4872 (p 123)</p>	<p>Vol 6, p 296-308  JPEGS dscf 9008-9014</p>

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<p>The Tiree Wrestlers, Malcolm Clerk and Donald MacDougall</p> <p>This story is described more fully by Ronnie Black in <i>The Secret Island</i> pp 37.</p>	<p>A man of the clan Rae from the North Country came to Tiree and challenged the laird of Barranacarra to get an antagonist to wrestle with him. It was the tradition that strong men who were good wrestlers went from place to place to seek antagonists and if they could not find one they claimed a reward. Tiree's champion wrestler, Malcolm Clerk, had cholic and refused to fight for fear of losing his title and the benefits that went with it. But there was a better wrestler on the island, Donald MacDougall and he agreed to fight. The tale goes on – good fun and lots of drama.</p>	<p>Vol 18, p 111-117</p> <p>4848-4854</p>	<p>Vol 7, p 393-402</p> <p>JPEGS dscf 9577-9585</p>
<p>Grey and Shaw</p>	<p>Grey and Shaw were neighbours who lived in Gott. They argued one day whilst gathering peats on the large peat moss above Gott and Grey killed Shaw. He feared he would be killed by Shaw's clan from Jura and so pretended that someone else had killed him.</p>	<p>Vol 18, p 118-120</p> <p>JPEGS 4855-4857</p>	<p>Vol 7, p 404-407</p> <p>JPEGS dscf 9586-9588</p>
<p>Traditions about the Island of Tyree and Mull</p>	<p>The notes seem to relate mainly to Tiree and do not appear to have been copied from Dewar. They are part of Maclean's Volume 20, which contains a mixture of tales from different sources, including printed sources (several extracts from <i>Leabhar ne Feinne</i>). Possibly in J.F. Campbell's hand, or the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke's?</p>	<p>Vol 20, p 46-59</p> <p>JPEGS 4858-4871</p>	<p>N/A</p>