

# Sil an Eòrna

## Children of the Barley

For two hundred years, islanders, some in hope and some with great sorrow, have left Tìree to build new lives in every corner of the globe – the original world wide web.

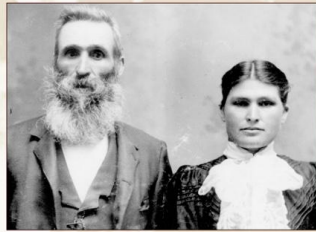
We calculate that there are over 2 million people of Tìree descent around the world.

Even before 1800 there had been a trickle of emigration from the island as the British Empire colonized America and then Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But after the famine of 1846 the trickle became a flood as the Duke actively helped islanders emigrate from Tìree for the first time. In the next five years a quarter of the island's population left - 1,354 people.

There's the famous stone on the *Druim Bhuidhe* [the road between Heylpol and Corraig]. Two men from Corraig [Iain Mòr Mairi Lachainn and Dòmhnall Mòr], they'd been down at Island House and got their bounty [for emigrating] and they were walking home. They were emigrating the next day. One said to the other, "Well, we'll be away from here and we'll soon be forgotten." And the other one said, "Let's do something that they'll remember us by." The boulder there, twice the size of that table, and they rolled it over on its side. You'd need a JCB digger today to turn it over. HECTOR MACPHAIL, RUAIG.



The emigrants' stone, on the right of the road from Heylpol to Corraig



Archibald and Catherine MacKinnon, who had ten children. Archibald's father Finigan emigrated from Ruairig to Kincardine township, Ontario in 1851 on board the *Conrad*

### CANADA

Most went to Canada. Some of the first arrivals had to endure appalling conditions. In the winter of 1849 a party from Tìree had to camp on the quayside in Quebec because of the number of emigrants. 48 of them died from cholera.

Some were disappointed by the new land. The famous Tìree poet **John MacLean** had emigrated from Caolas to Nova Scotia in 1819 with his wife and three children. Coming from treeless Tìree, his dislike of the virgin forest was unmistakable. 'It's no wonder that I'm gloomy living here...in the middle of the wilderness at Barney's River with nothing better than plain potatoes. Before I make a clearing and raise crops and tear the tyrannous forest up from its roots by the strength of my arms I'll be worn out and almost spent before my children have grown up,' he wrote.

The Canadian winters were also a shock to him. 'However good your trousers are they'll do no good without two pairs of stockings and hair-like moccasins that are tightly laced with thongs. It's the latest fashion with us to wear the hide, hair and all, just as it comes stripped from the beast the day before.' Despite this gloomy start he went on to do very well in his new homeland.

Others also prospered. **Hugh MacLean** left a 12 acre croft in Ruairig in 1846, one of a family of ten. Fifteen years later he had a 100 acre farm in Kincardine, Ontario, with two bulls, six cows and 60 pounds of maple syrup.

**Malcolm MacLean** was born in 1844 in Kilmaluig and emigrated to Ontario with his parents as a young child. He arrived in Vancouver in 1885. Within weeks he had been elected as the city's first mayor. Four weeks later the young city was destroyed by a huge fire. MacLean himself lost everything in the disaster but called a meeting of the city council in a tent. A colleague wrote, 'I don't suppose in history that a city hall was built as rapidly as the one – a tent – I erected in five minutes the morning after the fire.' An obituary described Malcolm and his wife Margaret as being 'the real founders of the third city of Canada.'

The family of **Joe Clark**, who became Canada's youngest Prime Minister in 1979, had emigrated from Tìree in 1850.



Malcolm MacLean, mayor of Vancouver



Hector, Duncan and Lachie Dun MacCallum on Pictou Island, Nova Scotia in the 1920s. Their grandfather emigrated from the Corraig mill around 1821