



The MacKinnons of Heanish

Donald MacKinnon was born in Heanish in 1828, and went on to become one of the greatest seafarers of his age.

He went to sea when he was sixteen, and gained his master's ticket when he was just twenty-three. He was presented with a gold watch for sailing from Canada to Glasgow in record time.

Appointed as captain of the newly constructed *Taeping*, he contested the 1866 Great Tea Race from Fuzhou to London with eight other clippers. After 16,000 miles and 100 days at sea, the much-fancied *Ariel* and the *Taeping* raced up the Channel neck and neck. Captain MacKinnon docked just thirty minutes in front. Feted on his return to Tiree, he was injured when the boat taking him back to the mainland got into trouble. Returning to China on the *Taeping*, he died at sea off South Africa. He was 31.

ABOVE

Portrait of Captain Donald MacKinnon by the well-known Hong Kong-based marine painter Lai Sung, who was active from 1850 to 1885.

ABOVE RIGHT

The *Taeping*.

RIGHT

The *Demerara*, which was captained by Donald's younger brother Colin from 1861 to 1863. Colin had followed his brother to sea, serving under him for most of his career. He followed Donald as captain of the clipper *Ellen Rodger*, but died from a diarrhoeal disease the following year. He was also 31. The studio has drawn a dragon, a symbol of power and good fortune in China, in the varnish. This has become visible as the varnish has darkened.

