They Came From Tiree

by
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CHAPTER SIX
FAMINE AND FAREWELL

The Potato Famine

During the summer of 1846 a disaster of major proportions struck the Hebrides and Northwest Scotland, which was to have a traumatic impact on the islanders of Tiree. This was in the form of the potato blight, a fungus disease encouraged by the warmth and moisture present that summer, and carried by the wind throughout that troubled area.[1] This scourge was so rapid that it turned a completely healthy crop of potatoes into a rotten, fetid mass within a twenty-four hour period. Only a few scattered communities escaped this damage, and Tiree was not among them, as only West Hynish on the island escaped this scourge. This was the same plague that had devastated Ireland in the previous year, and threatened the same dire consequences in the Hebrides.

So dependent were the people of Tiree upon the potato that the failure of the potato crop was a complete disaster.[2] The situation was aggravated by the severe reduction in the earnings expected from the cattle trade. By the end of the year famine began to stalk the island. It was the cottar class, along with the poorer of the tenants, who were most heavily affected by the potato blight. Those with the capability of selling an extra cow, being able to plant a larger grain crop, or draw upon savings were better positioned to weather this catastrophe, although the effect was felt by all. There is evidence that the obligations of kinship were maintained between the crofter and cottar families throughout his crisis, and many more would have died without the assistance they received from the small tenants. To add to the crisis bitter cold set in early in the winter of 1846-47, and severe winter storms only increased the anguish. Diseases, such as typhus and cholera, preyed upon the weakened people, particularly the children and the elderly. The Glasgow Herald reported as early as August of 1846 that "*disease in the most afflictive forms*" ran rampant in the islands, especially Tiree.

Famine, of course, was not new to the Hebrides, and the islanders of Tiree had gone hungry before. They had lived close to starvation in the past, particularly during the last several decades. A poor harvest or storm damage had brought suffering for a while, but usually this was of relatively short duration because a decent harvest the next year brought relief. Unfortunately this situation was much different and was to become much more serious. It was the congested islands that had so heavily relied on kelping that were hardest hit.[3] In January of 1847 it was reported that "*virulent disease of purpura raged in Tiree…deaths occurred every day*." Most crofters had used up what little savings they had to keep from starving and by the spring of 1847 few had any money to purchase seed for planting. Seed potatoes had succumbed to the fungus disease and cereal seeds, such as oats and barley, had had to be eaten by the starving. Many landowners hesitated to supply seed to their tenants. They feared that their starving tenants would be unable to repay them. Even the government's offer to ship seeds into the region would not produce any action on their part. Some charitable organizations did attempt to alleviate the seed shortage, but there were delays in implementing this policy. The net result was that the spring planting was both late and inadequate, and only a sixth of the normal amount of potatoes were planted. This grim cycle was to be repeated during the next two winters on Tiree, each bringing more suffering than the last. The famine stricken

[1] *Phytophthora infestans* is the scientific name of this fungus.
[2] Various estimates have been made to illustrate the dependency in the Hebrides on the potato, but it is most likely that this tuber provided 75-80% of the nutrition in this region prior to the famine years.
[3] Barra, Tiree, and South Uist were considered the most vulnerable of the Hebrides.

islanders were less able each spring to prepare for the next winter's onslaught. In December of 1846 it was reported that the conditions of the islanders of Tiree, Arisaig, Barra, the Uists, and Harris was "*so deplorable to cause serious apprehensions", and that the situation was worse, if anything, than the bitterly cold winter of 1846-47*."[4] In the spring of 1848 it was reported on Tiree that "*a number of fever cases terminated fatally*" and "*swelling of limbs with discoloration of skin*" was also noted. Later that year it was further reported that despite "*much destitution"* the people received only one-quarter of the food relief of the previous year.[5] In 1849 Tiree did see some small relief from the strangle-hold in which it had been held. Then a better harvest and a good herring season on the East Coast, combined with a somewhat milder winter, did break the pattern of the worst famine years. Yet 41% of the inhabitants of Tiree continued to receive relief supplies from the Central Board in 1849, which was only slightly reduced from the 50% number of the year before.

The Highland Potato Famine did not mirror that tragedy which had overwhelmed Ireland. While many lives were lost to starvation the numbers never approached that of the Irish catastrophe. The government and private charities made much more of an effort to aid the people in Scotland. A government grain depot was set up on Tobermory on Mull, as well as at Portree on Skye. This grain was only available at the going market price, however, since Victorian principles did not allow any grants to the starving, but it probably saved some Tiree lives. Although the government urged the landowners to come to the assistance of their tenants, their efforts were inadequate even when well-intended. Some took a hands-off approach, not even willing to assist in the distribution of grain unless they could turn a profit. Government money was made available for public works, such as drainage projects and road improvements, in those areas in need of assistance. The Duke of Argyll borrowed £10,000 at 6½%, payable over 22 years, under the Drainage Act, which did allow some of the people of Tiree and the Ross of Mull to earn some money badly needed for food. Each laborer obtained 1.5 pounds of Indian meal (maize) for working an eight hour day for six days a week. He and his successors made the most of this benevolence, however, and insisted that it be reflected in the tenants' annual payments. Forty years later the crofters of Tiree were still paying 'drainage money' annually in addition to their rent.

James Hunter in his *Making of the Crofting Community* is generally very critical of the landlord response during the famine years, but Devine presents evidence in *The Great Highland Famine*, which paints a much better picture. The latter cites a survey of independent observers who found that in a sample of 59 landowners, which represented about 69% of that class, 17 or 29% deserved commendation. Those landowners whose actions were deemed adequate, but could be improved, numbered 30 or 51% of the sample. Only 12 or 20% of the sample were considered negligent and open for censure. Most of the Highland estates suffering most from the ravages of the potato blight were in fairly strong hands during this period. Their owners, such as the Duke of Argyll, did not have to depend solely on the income from their small tenants as had earlier owners, who had gone bankrupt. Many did believe that they had a traditional obligation to feed those of their tenants in need, although there is evidence that they felt lesser obliged to come to the aid of the cottars on their estates. Family honor was at stake and their social position would have suffered if they had shirked this duty, and some spent themselves into financial ruin in this attempt. Those that did not come to the aid of their tenants were often landlords who were themselves stretched to the limit economically and near bankruptcy. It is apparent that the response of the Duke of Argyll would have been considered adequate by Victorian standards. He did provide some relief to his starving people, but also make an effort to keep this at a minimum where possible by demanding those able to find work off island to do so.

Between 1846 and 1850 £7919 was spent in Tiree and the Ross of Mull on gratuitous relief and employment on roads and agricultural improvements. A further £6373, partly financed under the Drainage Act, was also spent on these two areas of the Argyll Estate. It is apparent from the following chart that rental income on Tiree was maintained through some of the famine years, probably because relief gained through some form of work enabled many tenants to meet their obligations.

[4] James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, p.65.
[5] Ibid., p.67.

TABLE VII - TIREE ESTATE FINANCES, 1843-1849 (£.s.d.)

	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849
Taxes, etc.	957.16. 8	610. 9. 1	482.19.11	600.12. 8	908. 0. 2	585.19. 7	738.17. 8
Relief by Employment	4. 1.11	200.12. 9	8. 0. 0	6. 6. 1	1850.19.11	1717. 5.11	1709. 1. 2
Gratuitous Relief	11.14. 0	9. 8. 0	11. 8. 0	1037.10.11	217. 4. 2	118.15. 8	736. 7. 4
Relief for Emigration				215. 0. 0	470. 1. 5	325. 3. 8	1017.10.8
Payments for Drainage, etc.				18.19. 0			
Total	973.12. 7	820. 9.10	502. 7. 1	1878. 8. 8	5403. 5. 8	2747. 4.10	4201.16.10
Rent Payments	2321.13. 1	2559. 8. 3	2764.17. 4	2028. 3. 8	2229.13. 2	2229.13. 2	2887.11. 3
% of Rent Paid	88	97	104	79	84	84	109
Burden on Estate					3173.12. 6	417.11. 8	1314. 5. 7
Balance in favor of Estate	1348. 0. 6	1738.18. 5	2226.11. 5	199.15. 0			

Source: *The Great Highland Famine*, by T.M. Devine

The most effective aid received in the Hebrides during the famine years came from the Highland Relief Fund, which had the Free Church as its main core. This church, which had broken off from the Presbyterian in 1843, had a most commendable record during the famine years for its humanitarian aid, which extended into the Catholic areas in the Outer Hebrides. Scotland provided most of the relief funds, but England, Canada, and the United States were also active in reducing the suffering of the Highlanders. Other relief agencies also played a part and soon were consolidated under a central 'Board', supplying meal, flour, beef, and cash to the needy. These efforts became less and less effective over time unfortunately, as paid employees rather than the earlier volunteers came to administer the program. Humiliating tests of destitution were also put in play as time went on, and many choose to suffer rather than submit to the indignities imposed. Such tests also required those asking for help to butcher all their cattle and consume all their seed stock before they could qualify. Those who were most instrumental in setting the policy of the Central Board, namely Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir John McNeill, shared the view that poverty was a reflection of personal failure, and that the gratuitous distribution of food would discourage the Highlander from exerting an effort to help himself. They believed that the famine crisis was an opportunity to promote more industrious habits among the afflicted, and bring about moral and material regeneration. There was no doubt racism in this view, particularly on the part of Trevelyan, who believed the Celtic race was inferior to the Anglo-Saxon. Worse yet, there is every indication that Trevelyan believed that the Highland and Irish potato famines were God's punishment on an indolent people. This is not to say that the Central Board saw no evil in letting people starve, but they saw an even greater evil in having the starving become habituated to public charity. Thus it is very easy to perceive how the famine years completed the work of three decades of steadily growing poverty and left most crofters without any remaining resources.

Migration and Emigration

Even with its position as the most westerly of the Inner Hebrides, and the difficulty of travel to and from the island, Tiree had never been a completely isolated community. The men, who had served in war-galleys and regiments of the Macleans had seen many of the other Hebrides and much of the Scottish mainland. Many others had had close contact with Mull, going there every year to cut peat and timber. Those connected with the cattle trade no doubt attended the fair at *Druim Tighe* on that neighboring island, where they swapped news with those more well-traveled than they. During the Seven Years' War, which was known as the French and Indian War in North America, 57 men of Tiree served in the Highland regiments formed to fight the French and their Indian allies. Of these only 12 returned home, but these may have told tales of the land across the Atlantic. In the Napoleonic Wars the Duke of Argyll raised four regiments of 'fencibles' from his estate, and men of Tiree were among them. Then, too, even those that never left Tiree had contact with their tacksman, who not only offered advice, but news of the outside world as well.

Early in the 19th century many of the young unmarried men and women began to travel to the Scottish mainland to find work in Lowland fields or in the factories beginning to spring up in Lowland towns. Estate officials encouraged such migratory work, which served to supplement the meager income of the laborers' families. Most returned to Tiree when the season was over, but some no doubt used this opportunity to find permanent employment and left Tiree for good. Emigration overseas from Tiree began in a small way soon after the end of the Napoleonic Wars with most settling in Nova Scotia among other Highlanders. The repeal of the Passenger Vessel Act in 1827 allowed others who could afford the passage to go as well. These were, of course, not only the people who could pay their way, but those with the will and determination to begin anew in a new and alien land. The majority of the people of Tiree clung to the hope, however, that their dismal conditions would improve with time. The Duke of Argyll did everything to encourage emigration, short of assisting his tenants to do so. This policy was reversed when the effects of the famine years convinced Argyll that only emigration would relieve the destitution of the islanders and improve the productivity of his Tiree estate.

The chart below shows the net out-migration from Tiree during the 19th century. The figures shown include people leaving the island for the Lowlands, as well as those going overseas.

The figures in the chart below indicate that there were a number of people on Tiree who did find a way to leave the island in the first decade of the 19th century. An analysis of the net out-migration on Tiree in 1801-1811 showed that 259, or about 6.5%, of the population left the island during this period. These people were probably ones whose resources enabled them to do so, but in the face of the Passenger Vessel Act of 1803 and the wars with Napoleon it is unclear how many made their way overseas. It is more likely that they ended up in Lowland towns, such as Glasgow.

TABLE VIII - THE NET OUT-MIGRATION OF TIREE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Decade	Number	Percentage of Population
1801-1811	259	6.5
1811-1821	375	9.1
1821-1831	546	13.7
1831-1841	88	2.3
1841-1851	1470	35.7
1851-1861	841	27.5
1861-1871	311	12.3
1871-1881	626	25.4
1881-1891	392	22.5

Source: *The Great Highland Famine*, by T.M. Devine

The burst of migration in the third decade of the 19th century probably was due to the shelving of the Passenger Vessel Act in 1827, which was a spur to overseas travel. The Hebridean landowners, no longer in need of a large labor force with the collapse of the kelp boom, now wanted no impediment to emigration. It is significant that one in about seven of the inhabitants of Tiree decided to leave at this time, when the cost of passage dropped from approximately £10 per person to £3.10s.

While the Duke of Argyll did all he could to encourage emigration in the decades leading up to the potato famine, there were no mass evictions on Tiree in this period, as there were in most of the Hebrides. The population of the island continued to swell during this period, however, and it became increasingly difficult to provide an adequate diet for all the people. In years of a poor harvest the Tiree crofters and their family lived at the edge of starvation. The unrealistic rent structure forced many into arrears, and those crofters lived in fear of eviction. Despondency was the order of the day, since the islanders of Tiree could see little hope of better days. This often stifled any initiative and made matter worse. Seasonal work in the Lowlands offered the only relief, and it was reported that one third of the 278 tenants paying under £5 per annum in rent, "*go to the low country in time of harvest where they can get a little money*". The parish minister said that *"a great part of the unmarried population, especially the females, found harvest work in the south: hundreds of these set off about the middle of August, and are generally absent from six to eight weeks"*. There were also a number of migrant workers from Tiree who worked during the winter months at the dye works of the Tennant family at St. Rollox in Glasgow. For many of the families of these migrant workers the income they earned off-island meant the difference between survival and utter destitution. This was a feature of life on Tiree for many years and the census figures for 1841 show that 495, or about 12%, were temporarily absent and presumably working in other areas.

In January of 1831 'the inhabitants of Tiree' had petitioned the government, explaining that with the collapse in kelp prices they were "totally without capital or means of procuring passage to Canada, where many of their countrymen are now happily settled." We can therefore conclude that some on the island did see emigration as a solution to their problem, although there is evidence that this feeling was not shared by the small tenants and cottars.

It is known that 160 people left Tiree for overseas in 1846, the year that the potato blight first hit the island, but it is unclear if they were aided by the Argyll Estate. As the potato famine intensified early in the winter of that same year the Marquis of Lorne, son and heir of the 7th Duke, came to the conclusion that the health of the estate depended upon ridding Tiree of those least able to provide for themselves. He therefore "*directed the attention of the people most seriously to emigration to Canada in the following spring."* Assisted passage was promised to those unable to pay their own way. Lorne explained that "……*less expense will be incurred in aiding the proprietor to send the poorest class out, than will certainly be incurred in aiding by the necessity of keeping them alive, if they remain where they are now"*. More than 1000 of the islanders jumped at this offer, and it would appear that no coercion was needed to make them step forward. Lorne continued to energetically pursue the goal of culling the estate of its weakest members, after he succeeded to the dukedom in 1847, but it could not be acted upon immediately. Only 340 left Tiree and the Ross of Mull in 1847 for overseas.[6] It is not clear how many of these were from Tiree, but many of these emigrants were described as "*respectable crofters in pretty good circumstances*". The Chamberlain of Tiree, Colonel Jock Campbell, who was better known as '*an Bàillidh Mòr*,' the Big Factor, amassed a list of 1059 names of those interested in emigrating in April of 1847. He concluded that of that number 241 could either pay their own way or contribute substantially toward their passage, but the majority would require assistance. In his report to the eighth Duke he stated that those "*who had means*" had volunteered to emigrate in 1847, and of those others *"there only remain the really destitute*".

It was not until 1849 that the Duke inquired of the Maritime Provinces of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island about the feasibility of locating a number of Tiree emigrants within their territories. A large number of Highlanders had already made a new home for themselves in these Canadian provinces, including some from Tiree. He was discouraged, however, from this course of action, because these areas were also in dire economic shape at the time. Three consecutive bad harvests, a trade depression, and the failure of their potato crop had reduced the people to a

[6] One source shows that the emigrants of 1847 left in the ships of *Eliza* and *Jamaica*.

condition little better than those in Tiree. It was for these reasons that the Tiree emigrants were directed to the western part of Upper Canada.

In June of 1849 the Argyll Estate sent 364 men, women, and children of Tiree to Canada aboard two ships, the *Charlotte* and the *Barlow*, paying £1387.2.10 for their passage. Of these passengers, 74% were of the tenant class, while 26% were classified as cottars. Their crops, livestock and farm implements, which were sold and credited against the cost of sending them overseas, totaled a meager £387.12.10. This does indicate that the Duke was following up on his announced policy of speeding the exodus of those who were the biggest drag on the estate. Evidently 236 others from the Ross of Mull were sent out to Canada at the same, as the Canadian press reported that there were many deaths from cholera among the 600 passengers from Tiree and Mull at that time

After 1849 the Duke had several added incentives to continue, and even speed up, the process of assisting the unwanted people on his estate to go overseas. One was the announcement on the part of the Central Board that they would discontinue their program of famine relief in 1850, and the burden of feeding the starving would then fall entirely upon the landowners. Another was the rumor that the government would put into effect 'an able-bodied Poor Law', which would give those destitute a legal right to claim relief from the proprietors. Under such a system many would stubbornly resist giving up their homes, and the Argyll Estate might never be what the Duke desired it to be.

An additional 167 left Tiree for overseas in 1850, but little is known of them except that they were "*all miserably poor*", according to the Chamberlain of Tiree, who had to supply them with clothing since "*they were so naked.*" Their ship was the *Conrad*.

There were 825 people of Tiree who petitioned the estate for assisted emigration in 1851. Of these only 6% came from families paying rentals over £10 per year, while those paying rents of under £5 per year comprised 21%. The remainder,or 63%, were of the cottar class. Those chosen for emigration aid were again the unwanted, as the Duke reiterated that year, "*I wish to send out those of whom we would be obliged to feed if they stayed at home; to rid of that class is the object*". These instructions to Big Jock Campbell were underlined.

In that year a Greenock banker, Alexander Thompson, acted as an agent of the Duke to contract with owners of small ships to pick up the emigrants from Hynish take them to Greenock, the port, from which they would leave for Canada. Thompson evidently also arranged the ocean going transport, which consisted of three ships, as well as a reception for the emigrants on their arrival in Canada. These left Tiree in July of 1851.

The *Conrad*, carrying 389 people, was the largest, being a sailing ship of 142 feet in length and 30 feet in width. It had three masts, a single deck, and was marked by a square stern. Two other smaller ships, the *Birman,* and the *Onyx*, carried 70 and 6 passengers respectively. Of the 465 people leaving in 1851 a total of 171 came from 21 families in the tenant class, or 37%. The others, or 294 people, came from 46 families classified as cottars, which represented 63% of the total.[7]

It us unclear how many people left Tiree for locations within the north of Britain during the years of 1846-1851, but the evidence suggests that many did just that. Not all those individuals who applied for assisted emigration obtained such help, and it is known that Big Jock Campbell urged many of the more able-bodied to seek employment, and presumably a new home, in the Lowlands. T.M. Devine in *The Great Highland Famine*, analyzed the available population figures, along with those known to have left for Canada and came up with a creditable total of about 850 people. This admittedly is far from an exact figure, but it does indicate that a substantial number of people migrated from Tiree to mainland Scotland or the north of England during the years of greatest emigration. If the number of documented emigrants is added to this estimate of migrants, a total of approximately 2346 people left Tiree during the years of 1846-1851. This is a somewhat startling figure of 47% of the 1841 population.

There is no agreement among historians as to the conditions of the emigrant ships that carried the Highlanders overseas. Some describe them as little better than 'floating pesthouses', and compare them to the 'coffin ships' that carried the famine Irish to America. Others claim that the conditions under which the Scottish Highlander procured ocean passage were much better than what the Irish experienced. James Hunter reported that the Duke of Argyll shipped almost 600 people from Tiree to

[7] See Appendix VI for the passenger lists of these three ships.

Canada in 1849, and that cholera broke out on the voyage across the Atlantic. Upon their arrival in Quebec they found the emigrant sheds overflowing with destitute Irish, and had to huddle upon the wharves without shelter. According to Hunter *"many died of disease and exposure*". Other historians tell of typhoid fever and dysentery being common among the malnourished famine victims on these emigrant ships, while cholera and smallpox were also prevalent. Death rates have been estimated as high as 10%. In the early 1850s a cholera epidemic raged in Brock Township, which was a stopping place for many of the famine emigrants, and it was believed that it had been brought that Canadian settlement by those recent arrivals. The Canadian press, commentating on the wretched condition of the Tiree emigrants of 1849, reported that only a third made their way to their destination. If this was correct, a number very near 120 died.

If the passengers escaped the hazards of disease, they were often faced with problems in the quantity and quality of the food and drinking water. Ships failing to make their scheduled landfalls, because of storms or lack of wind, often ran short of these bare necessities, which added to the sufferings of the emigrants. The greed of ship owners and their agents, which produced crowded ships without adequate provisions, was a common story during the emigration years of the 19th century. There is little doubt that disease took its toll of the under nourished Highland emigrants of this period.[8]

Adding to the physical distress that the emigrant had to endure was the mental anguish suffered upon leaving his native land. It was a bitter, bitter moment when the time came for the Tiree islander to step aboard the ship that was to take him or her overseas. No people on earth took such pride in their ancient heritage and the island of their ancestors. The poorest, even in their rags, had always felt the equal of any man or woman, and gloried in the noble name they carried which identified them the heroes of the past. No punishment could have been devised that would have dealt them a crueler blow than exile in a strange and foreign land. All that they had held dear was now taken from them, and they felt they had been betrayed by those to whom they had historically looked for help. One can imagine that the actual leave-taking was a highly emotional affair for both those going and those remaining. The Highlander was never one to be stoical in his grief, and no doubt the women wept loudly, while the men stood by with tears in their eyes as well. If a piper were present a lament for the sad fate of the Gael was no doubt heard.

It is not surprising that the views of the Tiree emigrants and those remaining on the island were vastly different from those of the eighth Duke of Argyll, who orchestrated the removal of about 2400 from the island. The Duke pointed out that there had been few actual evictions from Tiree, admitting to only 40, and that the emigration had been completely voluntary. He was deliberately deceptive in that statement, however, since there was a total of 175 Summonses of Removal and Sequestration obtained in the sheriff-court at Tobermory for Tiree during the period of 1846-1851. The majority of these were after 1849, with 78 in 1850 alone, during the phase in which the factor was most energetic in pursuing the policy of ridding the estate of the cottars and the poorest of the small tenants. Eviction was mainly employed when the tenant was unable to reduce rent arrears, and occasionally as reaction to unruly conduct, selling whisky, or indolence.

The Duke was also less than honest in describing the emigration as voluntary. 'Compulsory emigration' is the term that T.M. Devine employs in describing the process on Tiree. There is little doubt that many 'volunteered' to go overseas, after either having their cattle confiscated to make up arrears in their rent or living under the threat of such action. Such a loss would sentence them to a life of destitution, from which they could not realistically hope to recover. Others no doubt 'volunteered' for emigration assistance when they were threatened with the revocation of their right to cut peat for winter us. It is also known that Big Jock Campbell delayed the cutting of kelp in 1850 in some instances to put additional pressure on those stubbornly refusing to agree to emigrate. There were probably others in the more vulnerable category, who, seeing the writing on the wall, petitioned for emigration assistance because they saw no other option. There were also those who, being able bodied, were coerced into finding work off the island, when they were told they could expect no relief from the Argyll Estate if they did not do so. Many that did not have families to support probably never returned.

[8] The writer's great-great grandmother, Isabella MacDonald, nee MacFadyen, died on the crossing to Canada leaving an orphan daughter.

Bitterness and resentment remained with the people of Tiree long after the famine years. Angry charges were placed before the Crofters' Commission in 1884 of forced removal, resettlement of cottars on lands occupied by small tenants, and the withdrawal of grazing rights from some of the crofting townships. They did not include in their accusations the ugly steps taken by the Duke and his factor to forcibly remove many of their kinsmen, friends, and neighbors from the island during the famine years and after. If they had done so, we would have a better picture of what happened in those critical years. There were also long memories of such abuse and more in the emigrant communities of Ontario. A common toast heard in the taverns of Bruce County many years later was, "*Health to all, except the Duke of Argyll".*

The Bitter Aftermath

While it is not the purpose of this book to tell the history of Tiree after 1851, which is covered so well in other works, it is worthwhile to describe briefly the immediate effect of the famine emigration and migration on the island. The policy of the eighth Duke of Argyll to expel the 'semi-pauper population' of the island, which he so energetically pursued when given the opportunity of the famine crisis, enabled him to revolutionize the social and economic structure of Tiree. He continued this same policy throughout the 1850s. This enabled him to reverse the fragmentation of the tenants' holdings, which had been put in place at the turn of the 19th century to accommodate the large numbers needed in the kelp industry. It reverted to the policy of consolidation proposed by the 5th Duke, which had at its core crofts of adequate size to support a family well.[9] The 8th Duke explained in 1883 that to accomplish his purpose it was necessary to reduce the population of Tiree through assisted emigration. It was also necessary that subdivision be prohibited, small crofts be consolidated upon death, emigration, or insolvency, and small farms formed from the consolidation of crofts. He further explained that it never had been his purpose to build up large farms, but to have a variety of sizes in the holdings of his tenants. Lastly the Duke emphasized that substantial investment had to be made in fencing, draining, and other such improvements in the estate for it to be prosperous. It can be seen from the following chart that the Duke had largely accomplished his purpose by 1861.

TABLE IX - TENANT STRUCTURE OF TIREE, 1847-1861

Year	Tenants Under £2	Over £2 Under £5	Over £5 Under £10	Over £10	Total	Rental £
1847	97	145	99	45	386	2618
1849	68	141	108	49	366	2867
1852	43	110	108	56	317	2929
1861	4	48	108	102	262	3994
% Change 1847-1861	-96%	-67%	+9%	+120%	-32%	+53%

Source: *The Great Highland Famine,* by T.M. Devine.

While the eighth Duke of Argyll fiercely defended his policy of consolidation on Tiree throughout his life, brushing off his island critics with being of "exotic character" and accused them of agitation for political reasons. He pointed out that Tiree was more prosperous, more profitable to the estate, and that the old "pauperised class", with the exception of about 300 cottar families, had been removed. He minimized the social costs involved saying, *"I had an insuperable objection to taking any sudden step in that direction such as might be hard towards the people. I thought it was my duty to remember that the improvidence of their fathers had been at least seconded, left unchecked, by any active measures, or by the enforcement of any rules of my own predecessors who*

[9] See pages 39-40 for the 5th Duke of Argyll's proposal of 4 mail-land size crofts.

had been in possession of the estate. I regarded myself, therefore, as representing those who had some share in the responsibility, although that responsibility was one of omission (sic) and not of commission". These are indeed fine words, but they do not describe what happened on Tiree during the 1840s and 50s, which involved the use of eviction and coercion to further the Duke's policy. Massive social disruption did occur on the island during those years, which caused much suffering among its inhabitants. Those remaining on the island no doubt received material gains in the long run through the consolidation of the holdings of the tenantry, but it was at a substantial price. Bitterness and resentment at the practices of the factor, Big Jock Campbell, were long remembered, while the Duke was held responsible for all that had occurred.