

# Captain Allan MacLean of Tiree, Iona and Shoal Lake, Manitoba

by

Mary E. R. MacLean  
Scarinish, Tiree



## Tiree (1835-1870)

Allan MacLean, the second child of Hector MacLean of Hynish and Mary MacDonald of Caolas, was born in Balephuill on 23 April 1835. He was the second child of Hector MacLean of Hynish and Mary MacDonald of Caolas, and as was the custom then he was named after his grandfather Allan MacLean of Sandaig. His parents had married in 1828. I often wondered how they met as they lived at opposite ends of the island, but Mary had many relations in Balephuill: Donald MacLean (*Donald the Cooper*)<sup>i</sup>, Malcolm MacDonald (*The Lancer*)<sup>ii</sup>, Margaret MacLean (*Highland Margaret*)<sup>iii</sup> and the Sinclairs<sup>iv</sup>, all with connections to the notorious “Black” MacDonalds of Coalas – “Black” due to their dark colouring or some say it was their lawless behaviour – either way they were well respected and very proud people.

Allan’s parents had a croft near Loch a’Phuil (the same croft that Duncan and Sheila MacPhail have today) and seven of their children were born there. It was at the height of the potato famine when the family moved to Salum, in the east end of the island, to a croft very close to “Sack Hill“. Their last child, my grandfather Neil, was born there in 1852.

Allan MacLean was an ambitious young man and began his career at sea early in life. He would have been taught by some the best mariners of the day, with the beautiful Traigh Bhi of Balephuill as his backdrop. He started in the fishing boats and eventually had three smacks of his own, trading locally and on the mainland. He knew all in his township, and especially those that were involved in the fishing disaster of 1856.

He met his first wife, Margaret MacLean of Iona, while trading with her father Hugh MacLean, whose prosperous shop front can still be seen today. When you come off the ferry from Finnophort, look to your immediate left and you will see a house with a large window on the left and *Duart* above the door: this was Hugh MacLean’s shop, and after his death in 1868 his son Lachlan carried on the business.

## Iona (1870-1874)

Captain Allan MacLean of Tiree and Margaret MacLean of Iona were married in January 1870 in Glasgow and returned to Iona to live in the well-known house Iona Cottage. Their first child, Mary, was born in December 1870 and their second child, Mary Anne, in 1872. Margaret fell pregnant again but died of “weakness from the childbed” in Oban in April 1874. We can only assume that Captain Allan



*Iona Cottage, Iona*

---

<sup>i</sup> Donald MacLean was a cooper by trade and related by marriage to Mary MacDonald, Allan’s mother.

<sup>ii</sup> Malcolm MacDonald was an uncle of Mary MacDonald, Allan’s mother. He was known as *The Lancer* because of his skill in bleeding, learnt when he served as a valet to a surgeon in the Peninsular War.

<sup>iii</sup> Margaret MacLean was a daughter of *Donald the Cooper* and known as *Highland Margaret* because of her devotion to Highland ways.

<sup>iv</sup> The Sinclair family was well known in the west end of the island. Alistair Sinclair married Anne MacDonald, daughter of *The Lancer*.

took his wife to Oban, as she was ill during/after the complications of having their child. No birth or death record can be found for the child. Shortly after Margaret's death Captain Allan returned to Tiree with his two young daughters.

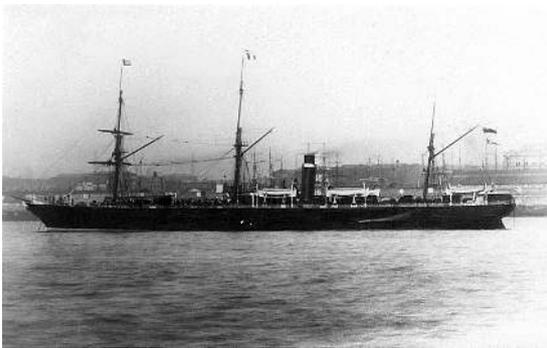
### **Tiree 1874-1878**

As in time of troubles, the family rallied to their aid and a home was found. A young cousin, Catherine MacLean, (Kate) of Balinoe, agreed to stay with the toddlers Mary and Mary Anne while their father continued in his successful business. Captain Allan and Kate married in January of 1875. It was a very happy union; their children came in rapid succession: Jessie in 1876, Hector 1877, then Christine in 1879 in Ontario, Canada, and Hugh 1881 in Manitoba, Canada.

In 1872 Hector MacLean, father to Captain Allan, passed away peacefully at Salum and Captain Allan became head of the family. Many of earlier Tiree generations had emigrated to Canada and their letters described the wonderful opportunities available there. This was in the time before crofting reforms and farm tenants in Scotland had little chance of ever owning their own land. The people of Tiree must have thought it was impossible for an individual to obtain 100 acres of virgin black soil with no capital investment – just your own hard work – but such was the case in Western Canada. The Indian Territories were opening up and the government was looking for young, strong pioneers who were willing to work hard in exchange for the opportunity of owning their own land. Family history tells us that Captain Allan made an early trip to Canada to ensure all the rumours were indeed true before he and his family emigrated.

### **Canada-Tiree-Canada 1879-1913**

Captain Allan MacLean, Kate his wife and all the children left from their Tiree family home that is now Baugh Guest House and emigrated to Canada in 1879. In fact 22 of our family members, young and old – the eldest being the matriarch Mary McLean, née MacDonald, aged 70 – left Tiree knowing that they would never return but excited for the adventure that would be their new lives in Canada. They sailed on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1879, leaving Glasgow on the S.S. *Waldensian*, of the Allan Line, arriving in Montreal April 29<sup>th</sup> 1879. They stopped for a time in Ontario, staying with family and renewing many old friendships



*S.S. Waldensian*

and acquaintances. Soon they made their way to fertile land in Manitoba close to the Saskatchewan border, to a small community that would later become Shoal Lake. The family all settled in close proximity – they helped one another during the difficult times and they all prospered, but none so well as Captain Allan. From a Manitoba History book:

*Captain Allan McLean, who formerly followed the sea, was for over thirty three years one of the greatest*

*individual forces in the agricultural development of the Shoal Lake district, where he owned a farm of 640 acres in Twshp 17, range 24, which he made by careful management and progressive methods one of the finest agricultural properties in this locality.*

*Captain Allan McLean's education was acquired almost entirely in the school of experience, for his advantages along this line were extremely limited. At a very early age he was working on a fishing smack, receiving for his services, five dollars per month. This gave a bent to his early ambitions and at 21 he became a sailor, following that occupation for 22 years, the last 12 of which were spent as a captain. When he abandoned the sea he sold his vessels and came to MB, taking up a homestead and pre-emption claim near Shoal Lake. He found here a tract of almost unbroken prairie which he was obliged to clear of brush before the work of development could be begun.*



*Captain Allan MacLean's house  
Shoal Lake, Manitoba*

*He had no outside aid, for the country was sparsely settled and his only assets consisted of a yoke of oxen and 1 cow. However, he was ambitious, energetic and progressive and applied himself with sturdy determination to work before him. He adopted the mixed farming method and gradually brought his fields under a high state of cultivation, adding to his holdings from time to time until he owned 1280 acres of productive land. Some of this, however, he later divided among his sons, retaining*

*640 acres. He devoted a great deal of his time to raising grain and was likewise extensively interested in stock-raising, keeping 80 head of cattle and 30 horses. He was a member of the Grain Growers Association and interested in everything pertaining to progressive and scientific farming. He erected upon his farm a fine residence, all the necessary farm buildings and installed modern machinery. Unflagging industry and unfaltering determination constituted the basis of Captain McLean's success, enabling him to win prosperity as the years passed.*

Tragedy struck Captain Allan again when Kate died in childbirth in October of 1882. She is buried with her unborn child in the MacLean Cemetery now known as the Argyll Cemetery, on an acre of land that was my grandfather's.

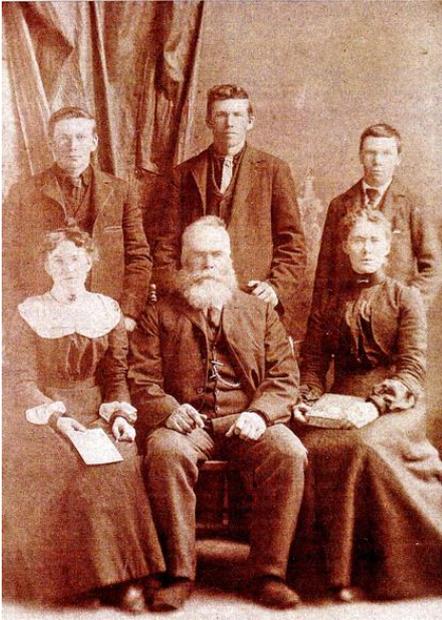
Captain Allan's third wife Jeanette Templeton was from a highly respected Canadian family. They were married in 1885 and George Allan McLean was born in June of 1886. Unfortunately Jeanette also passed away in childbirth in May of 1893; she and her unborn child are buried in the Argyll Cemetery.

Communications between Tiree and Shoal Lake continued over these many years but Captain Allan longed to see his homeland again and finally made the journey to Scotland and home to Tiree in 1907/08. During the visit home Captain Allan met again, his second cousin Anne MacDonald of Milton, Tiree, daughter of Donald MacDonald, *The Contractor*. She agreed to return to Canada with him and become his wife.

Anne MacDonald and Captain Allan were married in July of 1908; by all accounts they enjoyed their time together.

Captain Allan died in February 1913 and is buried in Argyll Cemetery with his second wife Kate.

Shortly after Captain Allan's death Anne returned to her family home at Milton, Tiree, where she remained until her death in May 1923. She is buried with her sister Effie in Kirkapol Cemetery.



*Captain Allan MacLean & his children c.1900  
Back : Hugh , Hector, George  
Front: Jessie, Captain Allan, Christina*



*Shoal Lake, Manitoba, c.1911  
Marion (daughter-in-law), Capt. Allan, wife Annie, Frank (grandson) & Hugh (son)*



*Glasgow 1907/08  
Back: Donald MacLean, & Capt Allan McLean  
Front: Hugh MacLean & Hector MacLean.  
Donald & Hector were sons of Hugh MacLean*



*Annie MacDonald, widow of Captain Allan MacLean, in the wheelchair  
and her sister Effie in front of their house now called "Windrush" at Milton, Tiree  
c.1922*

*This is just a brief history of one of our family members, and truly just the beginning of Captain Allan's family, which now numbers in the thousands in Canada and the USA. I am but the gatherer of information, gleaned from many sources, most importantly my late cousin Angus MacLean of Tiree, and other family members who very kindly sent photos over the years namely: Marion McNabb, Rosemary and Ishabel MacKinnon, Judy McLean, the late Kate Menzies, and of course Jessie McLean.*

*Mary E.R. MacLean  
Tiree, 2014*



*Mary MacLean, (author) and Jessie McLean<sup>i</sup> of Birtle Manitoba, Canada (granddaughter of Captain Allan MacLean) taken in The Lodge Hotel, Tiree, 2005*

---

<sup>i</sup> *Jessie McLean was daughter of Hugh, son of Captain Allan. Jessie loved Tiree and visited many times. One trip she, her niece Judy and nephew Hugh climbed the stairs to the top of Ben Hough to enjoy the view – no small feat as she was 87 at the time! She passed in 2013 and I miss her.*