

# Alexander Mackenzie

Alexander Mackenzie was born on the 28th January 1822 at "Clais-an-deoir", Logierait, by Ballinluig. He was the third son of Alexander and Mary Mackenzie.

His father was born at Kincaigie the parish of Logierait in 1784. He trained as a carpenter. As tradesmen were needed to build ships for the great fleets that would sail under Admiral Nelson etc. he moved to Portsmouth to work. After the battle of Waterloo there was a slump in shipbuilding industry - he returned to Scotland, and tried his hand at various jobs to do with construction and buildings of manorial houses; he also cut timber on the land of local lairds.

1817 - married Mary Fleming - daughter of local school master and clerk of the church (Logierait). He moved about Scotland in search of work. When Alex junior was three they lived in Edinburgh, 1826 -lived in Leith; 1828 - moved to Dundee and then to Perth, - his sixth son was born in Perth. To relieve financial strain and solve the problem of accommodation the two eldest sons were sent back to Strathgairn to stay with their aunt Anne Fleming on Cluny estate. They attended Daniel Stewart's school in Strathgairn and learned the "Gaelic".

1830 - Family lived in Killiecrankie. At the age of forty six and in failing health he had to abandon quests for fortune - he built a house in Pitlochry. Alex (junior) was now eight. He attended Moulin School. His father, once again moved to Little Dunkeld and in the following year (1836) Cathedral Street, Dunkeld, where he died at the age of 52. He was buried in the family grave in Logierait Church Yard. The headstone on the wall of the church, was erected by his widow and children many years later. Sadly the inscription is fading and the letters and figures - obliterated with the passage of time.

Young Alex was earning a few pence at the age of ten by tending sheep and cattle on neighbouring farms in the Dunkeld area. For three winters he returned to school in Dunkeld. He did not have a sound grounding in his basic subjects but he was a practising Christian and well-versed in the Bible. By the age of fourteen he was one of three full time bread winners - for a family of eight - trying all kinds of jobs. He became apprentice to a local builder - to learn the art of stone-cutting and masonry. He finished his training before his twentieth birthday. Because of lack of work in the Tay Valley he set off for Irvine (1841) in Ayrshire and found employment building stone bridges and culverts on the new rail line between Ayr and Glasgow. It was not long before he was taking an interest in politics. He spent a year in Irvine.

The family with which he lodged decided to move to Canada. Alexander went with them in the emigrant ship "The Monarch". As well as his tools, he had a good supply of books with him.

6th May 1842 - landed in Montreal - Canada was in the midst of an economic depression. They joined a French Canadian barge and sailed to Kingston - found work in the quarries. 1845 at the age of twenty-three he married Helen Neill, his landlord's daughter, who had accompanied him from Irvine - set off to Sarnia - and set up a business as a contractor. His brother Hope followed him to Sarnia

1847 - Hope returned to Scotland to bring out their mother and six brothers, who settled in their new home in Sarnia.

1873 to 1878 Alexander Mackenzie became 1st Liberal Prime Minister of Canada (and second prime minister)

17th April 1892 Died in Toronto - aged 70 - buried in Lakeview Cemetery, Sarnia.

1969 A monument was unveiled to his memory in Sarnia at Lakeview Cemetery.

1994 - 13th August plaque unveiled in Sarnia to recognise Alexander Mackenzie's tomb as a historical land-mark.

A Biography by Dale C. Thomson "Alexander Mackenzie : Clear Grit" written in 1960 published by The Macmillan Company of Canada, Toronto.