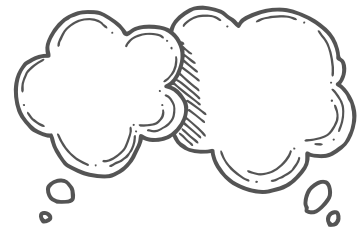


ON REFLECTION



Memorialising... the victims of the Potato Famine

Many people think of the potato famines of the mid-nineteenth century as affecting Ireland.

Whilst the effects in the Highlands were not on the same scale as in Ireland, thousands of people did experience great suffering here too. In the Highlands, potatoes were a significant part of many families' diets.

1

EXPLORE

Lots of highland museums have a potato masher – or tattie masher – in their collections! They would have been found in every home.

Explore this one from Strathnaver Museum. It doesn't look much like a potato masher you would use today. How do you think it would be used?



2

TRY IT YOURSELF

A system of digging 'destitution roads' was set up – in 1847, groups of men, women and children could be seen digging roads and doing similar tasks in order to earn food.

The amount of work required for the amount of oatmeal given was set so high that only the very starving would take up the offer!

Measure the food rations – weigh out rolled oats if you can't get hold of oatmeal:

- One and a half pounds for an adult male (680 grams)
- Three quarters of a pound for a woman (340 grams)
- Half a pound for anyone aged under 12 (225 grams)

Would you be happy to dig roads all day in exchange for this?



3

TALK ABOUT IT

During the famine months and years, many families struggled to feed themselves and were also unable to pay their rents. At first, help was given – efforts were made to provide food for the starving population. As time went on, some landlords encouraged emigration to places like Canada or Australia.

Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, influenced the policies over giving relief. He felt that charity would encourage laziness and make people dependent.

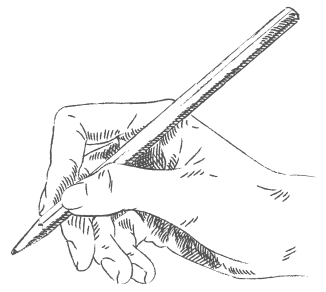
- Why do you think it was unfair to call the highland population lazy?
- 'Lazy' Highlanders were compared to 'hardworking' Lowlanders. Why do you think the people in the lowlands didn't need help at this time? (Think about how their circumstances might be different.)



4

CREATE A COMMEMORATION

Use this page to plan your ideas.



Who do you want to commemorate?

Why do you want to remember what happened to them?

What could your design look like? What shapes or pictures could you include?

What message could you write?

