

Allan McLEAN & Catherine McLEAN, nee DAWSON

Biography as published in 1995

Allan McLean was the eldest descendant and son of Donald and Christina McLean (nee McPhee), being baptised on 12/2/1811 at Kilmallie, Argyllshire, as the first child of Donald and Christina McLean, of Duiskey Estate, Argyllshire.

He was aged 26 years when he left Scotland by the "Navarino" for South Australia, although the passenger list shows 23 years. It has already been explained that ages were altered to get free passage. In the 1946 reminiscences of his nephew, Edwin, Allan had told him when he was a boy, that once "at Lochaber" Allan had won the annual race round the town after a fortnight of bread and cheese. But, as there is no town of Lochaber, only a district in Inverness with Ben Nevis, the town must have been Fort William.

The arrival in S.A. with his parents and all the family was on 6/12/1837. See his father's history for his early activities, the growing of the first crop of wheat in S.A. in 1838, and then land purchases at Strathalbyn and Angas Plains. At Strathalbyn his sections adjoined his fathers "Auchanada's" where he established "Meadow Bank", on the outskirts of the town and north east in 1855 he inherited part of Donald's section 2603.

MARRIAGE: To Catherine Dawson - (born 1825, some authorities say Glasgow in 1825, but most at Teheran, Persia, (now Tehran, Iran), the eldest daughter of Colonel James Dawson and his wife, nee Jane Hamilton. The latter, with her children came to join her husband already in S.A. by the "Fairfield" with the Rankines, arriving 30/4/1839.

The Colonel's colourful history is in Nancy Gemmell's book, "Old Strathalbyn", and how he founded the town, Strathalbyn, with William Rankine. The marriage was an elopement as had been that of the Colonel. However, the witnesses on 22/9/1844 at the "Wheatsheaf Inn", Mt Barker, were Donald Gollan, a leading townsman and her sister, Jane.

The only mention of Allan in the Matthew Rankine diaries were 6/11/1855 – Mr McLean asked to be a member of the newly formed Agricultural Bureau - 17th Matthew rode Polly to Strathalbyn, called on A. McLean and at Cheriton's to tell them of the meeting. On the 28th "Large fires up behind Allan McLean's" - 3 years later on 16/2/1858 he called on Mr McLean, who had a two-wheeled plough. Matthew seemed envious.

Ewen McDonald mentioned Allan only a few times in the surviving diaries. On 12/1/1864 called on A. McLean (at Strathalbyn) - the sole mention of Allan that year. On 6/6/1865 he wrote: "Mr Allan McLean in opening a cow he slaughtered found in it a calf with 6 legs to fore and 4 hinder and two on each side. Ill omen would they say back home in Scotland".

Allan was aged 33 years when he married, and Catherine was 19. At "Meadowbank", their children were born, the daughters married and grand children were born there too.

When Allan sold up in 1878 to "go north" - "Meadow Bank" was described in the advertisement as "near the Swamp" and that it had 9 rooms, well and appliances, sheep dip, drying pens, and fencing.

This advertisement on 23/5/1878 listed: 14 heavy draught horses, 4 yearling fillies, 40 head of cattle, 19 milking cows, 30 pigs and a boar, two Mellor reaping machines, 2 Ramsay reapers, horse rake, double furrow plough, 2 sets of harrows, land roller, swingle-trees, horse drays, 4 horse power chaff cutter and horse works complete, weighing machine, a quantity of bags, spades, picks, shovels, forks, and sundries.

From the house: 2 sewing machines (these would have been those turned by hand), piano, an excellent instrument especially made for hot climates - two cedar tables, two cedar chairs, two cedar back sofas, two easy chairs, one cedar wardrobe, one deal ditto, two iron bed-steads, two cedar wash stands, two cedar dressing tables, three forms, two strong kitchen tables, crockery, and kitchen requisites of all kinds.

Back to the farm: 60 tons of 1st class hay in stacks, stack of straw, 25 bags of very good seed wheat, and a bag of flour. Dairy: Iron lever press, 10 vats, 26 milk pans, 10 casks, 6 jars, cheese mill, tubs, buckets, pump, piping, heaps of manure and an immense quantity of sundries.

It was then still the custom to sell up completely when moving, and these "clearing sales" were welcomed by the community. One wonders what treasured items a wife was forced to part with. It was not until the turn of the century that people took their goods and chattels with them, as a matter of course when shifting.

The land which Allan offered for sale - Sections 2610, 2691, 2695, 2621/22 and part Section 2603 (where "Auchananda's" had been built by his father), 2632 and 2624. The "Southern Argus" later stated that 174 acres sold at £11/-/- (\$22.00) per acre, which was regarded as excellent.

After selling up at Strathalbyn, Allan purchased in June, 1878 properties in the Hundred of Redhill, mostly within close proximity of the Collinsfield Railway Station.

Four years later on May 3rd 1882, Allan McLean was declared insolvent. Causes of insolvency were failure of crop, forced sales by mortgagees and there were no books of the Insolvent's keeping.

Insolvent and family were living with and dependant for their subsistence upon the Insolvent's son-in-law Mr Robert Haldane, farmer at Mount Templeton.

On July 4th 1882, the Court acquitted the Insolvent of the charges and awarded him a Certificate of Second Class suspended for six months on the ground that he had carried on his business without proper supervision.

Allan returned to stay with his brother John at "Waterloo", Angas Plains for a time. This was the 1886-87 period. His wife Catherine had inherited Section 2617, west of Strathalbyn, from her mother Jane Dawson in 1885. It was to become the site of the old sale yards and now the road to Goolwa bisects it. There Catherine planted a crop which was reaped with an old stripper and horses by Allan and a nephew Alfred McLean aged 15 (a son of John).

Therefore in 1886 Allan did build some rooms there for them to live in. The misfortunes of his northern attempt after years of plenty at "Meadow Bank" caused his health to fail. He and Catherine seem to have gone to their daughter Mrs E. A. Haldane at Adelaide who had been widowed in 1888.

DEATHS:

Allan died at Adelaide aged 79 years on 2/9/1890 and was buried at West Terrace Cemetery. (He died after 4 weeks of Bronchitis, at Marion Road, Plympton - death certificate).

Catherine died two years later on 21/1/1892 at the house of her daughter Mrs Robert (Eliza Ann) Haldane at Hackney (Adelaide). she was aged 67 and was buried with Allan at West Terrace.

OBITUARY:

Catherine's obituary states that her birthplace was Teheran, Persia where her father was drill instructor to the Shah's army and who received from him a medal, the Star of Persia. The photo of James Dawson at the Strathalbyn Museum shows the medal pinned to his coat. It was said to be of great value. The obituary did not say so but he was also presented with a gold mounted saddle which bandits stole and a fine sword. The obituary continued that the lady was a brilliant conversationalist and excellent at repartee and could vividly describe the Shah's gardens and occurrences that she witnessed as a girl at Constantinople. It said also that she had married Allan McLean, a

pioneer ploughman, but failed to mention that famous first wheat or the years at Strathalbyn, only that he had died two years earlier. She left 5 sons and 6 daughters according to this write up. There were 4 sons and 7 daughters and 69 grandchildren. The obituary appeared in the "Southern Argus" as well as a city newspaper.

The ruins of "Meadow Bank" are on lot 49, Hundred of Strathalbyn, adjoining "Burnside House" - see the map on page 112 of Nancy Gemmell's book with the later subdivision into Burnside Estate. Allan's land, or some of it, was incorporated. J. J. Lee bought "Meadow Bank" in 1878. When the railway from Mt Barker went through (1884) it bordered these two properties.

Catherine's inherited land from her mother Jane Dawson was:- Part Section 2613 in the Angas Special Survey - Part Section 2617 south of the Strathalbyn Township - Part Sections were both in the Hundred of Kondoparinga. Record from Lands Titles, Adelaide.

LATER NOTES FROM THE "SOUTHERN ARGUS" DATED 22/7/1915

These mainly concerned Allan's daughter Kitty, Mrs A. Bradley of Kybybolite, SA' but went on to say that her father with various brothers came to Strathalbyn in the early part of 1837 (error - 1841) and for many years the family owned the greater part of the land from Allan's "Meadow Bank" to Angas Plains at which place his brother John remained when the area between his holding and Strathalbyn was taken up by other settlers. Allan and John were typical Highlanders and in old age when they got excited they lapsed into Gaelic. John was a great reader, an adherent of the Auld Kirk and strong on doctrine and strict in its observances. Allan was more worldly, with a bevy of pretty daughters who made "Meadow Bank" the ideal home of sociality for many a year. The McLean family scattered, and although their father Donald intended that the land should be handed down from generation to generation none of the sons seemed to settle down to help him realize his hopes and their names are almost forgotten now (1915). All the girls married well.

Further of Allan: He was a member of the first District Council of 1853. With his father in partnership he held the occupational license for Mundoo Island in 1846-47.

Children :

1. William Donald McLean – born 25/11/1845 at Strathalbyn, married Margaret Ann Homer. [See biographies 5004.](#)
2. Jane Hamilton McLean – born 17/7/1847 at Strathalbyn, married Frank Turnbull Inglis & Henry Graham. [See biographies 5005.](#)
3. Christina McPhee McLean – born 11/7/1849 at Strathalbyn, married Edward Stirling Stark & Peter Kelly. [See biographies 5011](#)
4. Eliza Jane McLean – born 5/3/1851 at Strathalbyn, married Robert Haldane. [See biographies 5012](#)
5. James Dawson McLean – born 25/6/1853 at Strathalbyn, married Mrs Pearson. [See biographies 5016](#)
6. Mary Dawson McLean – born 23/10/1855 at Strathalbyn, married John Thomas Nutt. [See biographies 5017](#)
7. Allan (junior) McLean – born 11/11/1857 at Strathalbyn, married Sarah Thompson. [See biographies 5018](#)
8. Catherine Graham McLean – born 9/4/1860 at Strathalbyn, married Alfred Bradley. [See biographies 5026](#)
9. Rachel McLean – born 21/3/1863 at Strathalbyn, married William Prescott Hornby. [See biographies 5031](#)
10. John Stuart Duncan McLean – born 12/7/1865 at Strathalbyn, married Susannah Mary Beaber & Lilian Cahill. [See biographies 5032](#)
11. Margaret McLean - born 16/2/1869 at Strathalbyn, married Thomas Power & Henry Gifford. [See biographies 5034](#)

• SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 36.
• COLONIALISTS : Christina and Donald McLean and their ten children migrated from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. This was in the earliest years of the colony. The McLeans initially settled near Adelaide where they grew the first wheat crop in SA. Then in about 1840 they pioneered the Strathalbyn area. There are now well over 20,000 descendants spread across Australia and elsewhere.
• CHANGES : Please contact us with additions, corrections or suggestions about any part of this family tree.
• CONTACT : Visit our website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to learn more about your family – or about privacy and copyright.