

# Christina STURGEON, nee McLEAN & George Harvey STURGEON

Biography as published in 1995

**CHRISTINA McLEAN**, born 28/7/1848, at Strathalbyn.

Parents : Mary McLean (nee Stacey) & John McLean

Grandparents : Christine McLean (nee McPhee & Donald McLean

MARRIED: George Harvey Sturgeon, born 1846, who had arrived in S.A. at the age of 5 years with his parents, Charles and Elizabeth Sturgeon, by the ship "China" in 1852. They farmed at "Sunnyside" Strathalbyn.

They married at "Waterloo" Angas Plains on 17/7/1872 just prior to her 24th birthday. The witnesses were:- Elizabeth Sturgeon, Strathalbyn; Mary Ann Jones, Belvidere; John McLean, Angas Plains and Agnes Jane McLean, Angas Plains. The Rev. Slaney Poole (Church of England) officiated.

According to an obituary Christina and George farmed at Gladstone, S.A. but left for Victoria in 1883. There were two obituaries which Jill McDonald found for her book, "Ewen and Rachel McDonald and Descendants" published in a Melbourne paper, but undated.

"The death is reported by our Nhill correspondent of Mrs Christina Sturgeon, whose father Mr John McLean, with his brother Allan, assisted their father, Mr Donald McLean, who grew the first crop of wheat in South Australia, at Marleston near Adelaide in 1838".

The more extensive account gave that she died at the house of her daughter, Mrs Thomas Warner, "Dow Well" Nhill, aged 82 years on 30/10/1930. She and her husband left Gladstone in SA. for West Wimmera, Victoria, in 1883 and that they were among the first settlers at Lawloit, McKenzie Springs, Vic. Further that she was the second daughter of Mr John McLean. And that her family consisted of six children of whom only Mrs Warner survived.

There were 11 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

DEATHS: It then mentioned that her sister the late Mrs Richard Jones, and her own husband, George Henry Sturgeon, had died two and a half years previously, following a motor car accident. Both were buried at Nhill.

The family of six children, comprised 5 children born in South Australia and the last child in Victoria.

- (1) Beatrice Mary Sturgeon, born 10/2/1874, at Strathalbyn.
- (2) Frances Agnes Sturgeon, bom 1/5/1876, at Gladstone.
- (3) Louisa Alberta Sturgeon, born 8/2/1879, at Gladstone.
- (4) Charles Buscombe Sturgeon, born 25/2/1881, at Gladstone.
- (5) Florence Jessie Sturgeon, born 16/6/1883, at Gladstone.
- (6) Albert John Sinclair Sturgeon, born 1890 at Nhill.

Following the marriage of Christina and George Sturgeon, they farmed for a time at Strathalbyn. Their eldest daughter, Beatrice, about 1907 wrote an account of the family which is here abridged.

George Henry Sturgeon was born in Suffolk, England, and besides farming with his father and brother at Strathalbyn, he conducted a carrying business between Adelaide and Strathalbyn before the railway was built. He did the same from Gladstone, S.A. until 1883.

In that year he took up land at Lawloit, Victoria, travelling overland with his wife and family of 4 children, by wagon and dray. On arrival he pegged 30 acres, taking up more land in due course. Beatrice records that they left Gladstone in August, 1883, and that Christina's brother-in-law, Richard Jones, took the whole family with a few possessions in a dray to Lawloit, and on the first night they all slept on bags of chaff on the ground in the open with the sky as their roof. They then set to work to build a temporary hut 25 feet long and 15 feet wide, divided with wheat bags for partitions. The sides of the hut were made by placing 2 or 3 sheets of iron horizontally - there was an iron roof.

Beatrice refers back to her father's early years, saying that not being able to attend school during the day his education took place at night school, which was further helped by books brought out from England. One year at the Strathalbyn farm, 1000 bushells of wheat was reaped, which was considered a big harvest at that time. It was sold for £1,000.0 (\$2,000). Flour was £1/5/- a bag. George Sturgeon was particularly fond of horses, which led him to becoming a teamster. At Gladstone he used 8 to 10 horses, caning merchandise between that town. Laura and Georgetown, prior to the move to Victoria.

That first dwelling was near some crab holes for water for domestic use. His next duty was to clear enough land in readiness for crops - no fallowing then, all hands working and helping - mother and children were his only aid, picking up sticks and burning off. When the crop was growing, the parents and children took turns going around the crop, even late at night and then before daybreak, hunting off the trespassing rabbits and kangaroos which were very numerous. Then came the task of cutting posts to fence in the block, and clear a few more acres for cropping.

The work was done by bullocks, and as they had to find their own forage, they were only worked for a few hours a day. When unyoked they would ramble for miles unless minded, and having no fences it came to the lot of the two eldest girls to hunt for them and bring them home. This often meant miles of walking, quite often wading through the Lawloit and Menrvyn swamps, near McKenzie Springs. They helped yoke the cattle, and sometimes drove the team while their father used the plough. Crops were badly affected by rust, and burning off was practised as mentioned above.

When store goods were required four bullocks were yoked to the dray, and the family would set off for Kaniva. Going one day, staying overnight at Yanipy with the Richard Jones' and returning the next day or two. They made 4 or 5 trips a year. As the rail terminated at Dimboola, wheat was carted there, or to Horsham; or let to contractors with horse teams. The mail coach went from Nhill, through Lawloit to Kaniva, and would bring groceries or meat when ordered.

It was the practice of the Sturgeons to rear pigs, and kill them for pickling. Saturday afternoons were usually spent in the scrub hunting kangaroos and rabbits to cook with the pork. The children took home broombush for sweeping the house.

The wheat sown was called Golden Drop. Incidentally, the pigs were slaughtered when weighing 60 to 100 lbs. Good mutton was rare. When carcasses of sheep of squatters were found, the wool was removed and taken home, scoured and used to stuff mattresses. But, George Sturgeon was better off than when he was forced to work at a very early age, with only raw turnips to take for his lunch.

After two or three years it was decided to build a new house. Large wide planks were sawn from gum trees, for door and window frames with mud bricks for the walls. At the same time bullocks were replaced with horses, so stables were built also. During these preparations the father let his adze slip, slicing right through his boot and severing his big toe! By 1907, the only survivor of the Sturgeons who emigrated, besides George himself, was his sister, Mrs Blatchford of Adelaide in her 83rd year, and still caring for her 85 year old husband. George's brother and another sister were deceased.

Four of the Sturgeon children were born in South Australia, and the youngest in Victoria. A Warner family history was published in 1979, dating from 1802 showing that their 5<sup>th</sup> child (Thomas) married Beatrice Sturgeon.

#### THE STURGEON CHILDREN:-

1. Beatrice Mary Sturgeon, born 10/2/1874 at Strathalbyn, S.A. Married Thomas Warner. See separate biographies 5056.
2. Frances Agnes Sturgeon born 10/2/1876, She was aged about 7 years when the family moved from Gladstone. S.A. to Lawloit, Victoria. Married: Joseph (Joe) Phillips. No history known as they moved to Western Australia and the present generations know nothing further, except for the names of 3 children – Lillian, Beatrice & Harvey. Photos of these held by the Warner family.
3. Louisa Alberta (Bertha) Sturgeon born 8/2/1879, probably at Gladstone S.A. She was aged about 4 years when they arrived at Lawloit. Married: Edward (Ted) Abbott and moved to Western Australia but no record remains of the place of residence or details of this family. Death: from cancer c. 1909 at about 30 years of age. CHILDREN – Rita, Ivy & Myrtle.
4. Charles Buscombe Sturgeon born 25/2/1881 at Gladstone, S.A. Named for his grandfather Sturgeon (Charles) and the maiden name of his grandmother Elizabeth Sturgeon (nee Buscombe) both of whom are buried at Strathalbyn. The Warner family has no knowledge of Charles whatsoever. There is no death recorded in S.A. so he must have been about 2 when the family left Gladstone and died in Victoria.
5. Florence Jessie Sturgeon born at Lawloit, Victoria in 1885. The present Warner generation know only that "Aunt Florrie" was a staunch member of the Salvation Army and lived in S.A. Married: Hotel Keeper Robert E. Welchman (where and when not traced). No record of any children. Robert is recorded as holding the licence of the "Gresham" Hotel on the corner of North Terrace and King William St, Adelaide (now demolished and other buildings on the site although well remembered by the present writer E.M.S.). The Hoad record of publicans and licensees at Mortlock Library, Adelaide records - the "Gresham" was run by Robert E. Welchman "and wife" from 1923 to 1927 inclusive and again from 1932 to 4/3/1936. Deaths: Robert died on 1/10/1936. The Warners give the death date of Florrie at the age of 44 in 1930; the hotel record shows that she and her husband held the licence of the "Pier Hotel", Largs Bay. Sth Aust. Together with H. T. Lighton from August 1927 to 1929. Only Robert is given 1932 to his 1936 death, so her death 1930 appears to be correct.
6. Albert John Sinclair Sturgeon born 1890 at Nhill. Victoria, the youngest of the six Sturgeon children. Unmarried. According to Warner relatives he lived in Western Australia. He enlisted in the First A.I.F. and returned safely to Australia. He died in W.A. at the age of 35 years in 1925. No further record found.

- SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 274 to 284.
- 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](http://www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com) or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to discover more about your family – and about privacy and copyright.