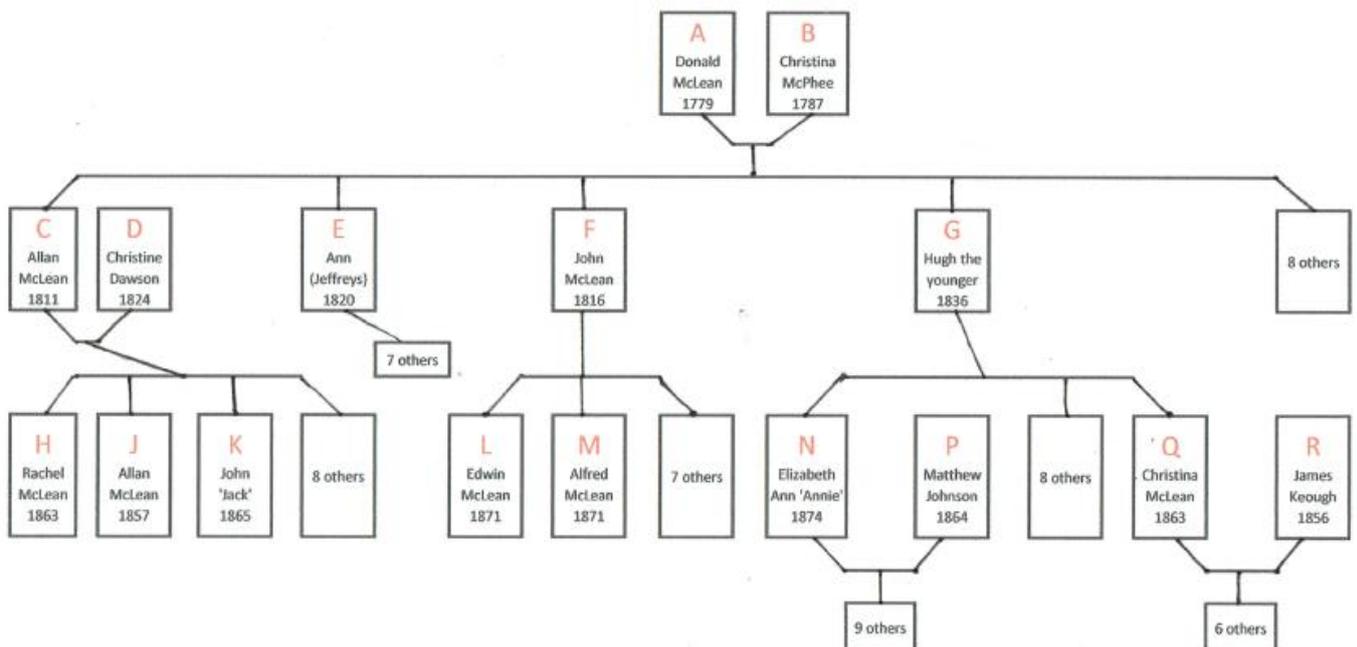


Edwin McLean's letter in 1946

Edwin McLean, son of John and grandson of Donald, wrote to a cousin in 1946 (Gemmell p20)

I knew your father uncle Allan well. I was only about 15 years old. I am nearly 75 now. He came back from the north where he struck bad seasons and stayed here with father for some time. I think Mrs McLean was living then in Strathalbyn on a section of ground on the west of Strathalbyn and had a crop in, and my twin brother Alfred (who died at 35 just after his marriage and had one little girl), went up with Uncle Allan and the old stripper and horses and took a bit of crop off. That section of ground, mostly built on now, is very valuable today. Well, your father put in a few months building a couple of rooms and I waited on him, mostly. I remember one thing he told me. He said in Scotland, Lochaber, they used to have a race every year all round the town and he won it once, and he said he ate nothing but bread and cheese for a month before the race - I forget the prize. I just remember Allan, your brother, a fine looking man, worked on Burnsides Estate, and I think I remember Jack, a dark young man. Of course I knew young Hughey and his family at Strathalbyn. I think they are all gone except Annie (Mrs Johnston). I believe she is still living, her husband is dead but I understand they did well over there in Western Australia in a general store. I know she was a nice looking young woman. Brother Alf and I went to her wedding at Uncle Hugheys in Strathalbyn. Well all the McLeans are gone now at Strathalbyn, but several grandchildren named Keough and some of them have grandchildren now and they mostly have trades and are doing quite well. There is not one drunkard in the lot.



Notes - by Don Gordon in May 2019

- Significance:
 - This is the only source for the some of the kind of details provided.
- Original:
 - Because it is so important, it would be good to be able to get an image of the original letter. The letter might be amongst material held in the Strathalbyn Museum - per Harold Stowe or Nancy Gemmell.
- Author – Edwin = **L**, born 1871 & died 1950:
 - The letter was written by Edwin McLean. His father was John McLean (= **F**) who was born 1816 & died 1903. John's property was Waterloo and Edwin had the adjacent property, Mapelmore. These properties were in Angas Plains, 15 kms south of Strathalbyn. Edwin died four years after he wrote his letter.
- Date: 1946
 - **"I am nearly 75 now"**: This means that the letter was written in 1946.
- Recipient – Rachel = **H**, born 1863 & died 1949:
 - It was written to a child of Allan McLean (b 1811) - **"I knew your father uncle Allan"**. This could have only been to Rachel because she was the only child of Allan still living in 1946. All the other children had died well before that, the most recent being Mary in 1940. Rachel eventually died at the age of 86 years - a few years after receiving Edwin's letter.
- Why:
 - We do not know what prompted Edwin (then 75 years old) to write this letter to his cousin (Rachel then 83 years old) at this time. Rachel was the last surviving of 11 siblings and Edwin was one of the last of 12 siblings (except Eliza, Lizzy and Florie). They might have both sensed a passing of an era, being among the last of the first generation of the original settlers. Edwin was living at Mapelmore and Rachel at Port Broughton, 240 kms to the north. They must have had limited personal contact (otherwise, why write rather than just tell her). They might have felt that some memories were becoming less known and needed to be recorded or clarified. The letter did not seem to have any specific purpose other than to cover a range it details which Rachel might not have been aware of and which Edwin thought Rachel should be mindful of. What did Edwin hope she might do with the information in this letter? She, and her family, must have valued it enough to hold it in safe keeping.
- Allan McLean = **C**, born 1811 & died 1890, and Catherine Dawson = **D**, born 1824 & died 1892:-
 - **"I knew your father Uncle Allan well"**: That was Allan McLean who was the brother of Edwin's father, John.
 - **"I was only about 15 years old"**: When Allan left Strathalbyn for Collinsfield, his uncle was 67 years old and Edwin was ten. Edwin's strongest recollections would be when he was 15 years old at the time that Allan returned to Strathalbyn in 1885. Edwin was 19 years old when Allan died.
 - **"He came back from the north where he struck bad seasons"**: Allan returned from Collinsfield which is 215 kms north of Strathalbyn. He became insolvent after some bad seasons and other factors.
 - **"He stayed here with father for some time"**: Allan strayed with his brother, John, at Waterloo – for perhaps a year or so.
 - **"I think Mrs McLean was living then in Strathalbyn on a section of ground on the west of Strathalbyn"**: Allan's wife, Catherine, nee Dawson had inherited sections 2613 & 2617 after the death of her mother in 1885. It is not clear whether she was living on these sections, or somewhere close by (Waterloo was some kms away). Trevor McLean, in a speech for the McLean reunion in 1988 stated that **"Mrs McLean was Allan's wife, Catherine, and her section is 2617 which is one of the very few sections the McLeans ever owned out on the west side of town – and was approximately half a mile or so, west of the cemetery, and out on the south-west corner"** (p23).
 - **"Had a crop in"**: This was probably on section 2613 or 2617. It is not clear who did the actual farm work. Allan was elderly but probably still able to do some things – with a hand from others.
 - **"My twin brother Alfred went up with Uncle Allan and the old stripper and horses and took a bit of crop off"**: Allan would have needed this help.
 - **"That section of ground, mostly built on now, is very valuable today"**: Trevor stated **"that of course, we'd all say how very true, because most of the sections they owned on the edge of Strathalbyn, would be extremely valuable if still owned today"** (p23).
 - **"Your father put in a few months building a couple of rooms and I waited on him"**: It is not clear whether these rooms were at 2613/2717 or at Waterloo. Allan would have been glad of Edwin's help. Trevor commented **"Allan was about 75 years old when he built those rooms – so he must have been a pretty fit bloke at that stage"** (p23).

- **“He said in Scotland, Lochaber, they used to have a race every year all round the town and he won it once, and he said he ate nothing but bread and cheese for a month before the race - I forget the prize”**: This is the only detail we have about life when the family was at Duiskey, before migrating in 1837. Maybe the local Lochaber historical group have records about these races.
- Alfred = M, born 1871 & died 1907:-
 - **“My twin brother Alfred went up with Uncle Allan and the old stripper and horses and took a bit of crop off”**:
 - **“Alfred died at 35 just after his marriage and had one little girl”**: Alfred married Maria Berndt in 1904, they had Mona in 1905. He died after only three years of their marriage.
- Allan = J, born 1857 & died 1930:-
 - **“I just remember Allan, your brother, a fine looking man”**:
 - **“Allan worked on Burnside Estate”**: Trevor said that *“The McLeans owned Burnside Estate up to about twenty years prior to this letter”* (p23). This would mean that the McLeans sold the property in the 1920s. We need to check about the Burnside connections of Allan jnr.
- John = K, born 1865 & died 1926:-
 - **“I think I remember Jack, a dark young man”**: This would have been Rachel’s brother, John. He was known as Jack or JSD. It would appear that Edwin hardly knew this cousin, but he made a comment because he was trying to provide Rachel with any snippets of information that came to mind.
- Hugh the younger = G, born 1836 & died 1921:-
 - **“Of course I knew young Hughey and his family at Strathalbyn”**: This was who we refer to as ‘Hugh the younger’. It is interesting that he was referred to as ‘young Hughey’ – even in his old age. Maybe this is the way people referred to him in his time. Later in his letter, Edwin refers to him as ‘uncle Hughey’. He had 11 children, including Elizabeth Annie (Johnston) and Christina (Keough). He was 35 years older than Edwin and, over the years, Edwin would have had many opportunities to meet this uncle and cousins around Strathalbyn.
- Elizabeth Ann ‘Annie’, nee McLean = N, born 1874 & died 1948, and Matthew Johnston = P, born 1864 & died 1936:
 - **“I think they are all gone except Annie (Mrs Johnston)”**: This would have been Elizabeth Ann (‘Annie’) McLean, a daughter of Hugh the younger. She was a first cousin to Rachel and Edwin. She married Matthew Johnston. Later in his letter, Edwin indicated that the McLean descendants *“are all gone now”*, meaning that they had left Strathalbyn, whereas in this part of his letter where he states that they *“are all gone”*, Edwin was indicating that everyone of that generation had died except Annie. He was close to being right, but he did not have the advantage the BRB. In fact, in 1946, the situation was that all Donald and Christina’s children had gone – the last being Hugh the younger in 1921. And all of their 86 grandchildren had gone except ten –
 - Isabell died in 1947 (Hugh the elder’s daughter)
 - Elizabeth Annie 1948 (Hugh the younger)
 - Rachel died in 1949 (Allan)
 - David 1949 (Hugh the younger)
 - Edwin 1950 (John)
 - Charles Soward 1952 (Archibald)
 - Eliza Ann 1956 (John)
 - Elizabeth 1957 (John)
 - Jane Ann 1961 (Hugh the elder)
 - Florence 1962 (John) – the last of that generation
 - **“I believe she is still living, her husband is dead”**: Matthew died in the 1930s and Annie died two years after Edwin’s letter.
 - **“I understand they did well over there in Western Australia in a general store”**: Matthew & Annie had stores in Kalgoorlie, Mt Malcolm & Gwalia. They never returned to live in South Australia.
 - **“I know she was a nice looking young woman”**:
 - **“Brother Alf and I went to her wedding at Uncle Hugheys in Strathalbyn”**: Annie and Matthew were married in 1896. Edwin’s assertion that their wedding was at Uncle Hugheys should normally be accepted, because he was there and so he would know - but he was relying on his memory of an event 50 years ago, when he was 25 years old. In fact, this wedding was not held at Edwin’s uncle Hugh the younger’s home (Ardgour Cottage). It was held at Mrs Jeffreys commodious house in Strathalbyn. This is confirmed by contemporary newspaper items and marriage registration. Mrs Jeffreys was Ann, nee McLean – the aunty of Annie. Ann and Hugh (Annie’s father) were siblings – the children of Donald and Christina.
- McLeans in Strathalbyn:-
 - **“Well all the McLeans are gone now at Strathalbyn”**: Trevor stated that *“The McLeans of John, Edwin and then my immediate family, have been at this Angas Plains area, consistently right through – but Edwin says “we’ve all gone from Strathalbyn” he is referring to immediate to Strathalbyn”* (p22).

- Keough families - Christina McFee McPhee McLean = Q, born 1863 & died 1936, and James Keough = R, born 1856 & died 1923):-
 - ***“Several grandchildren named Keough [are in Strathalbyn] and some of them have grandchildren now”:***
Another of the children of Hugh the younger was Christina) who married James Keough in 1894 and they had six children. They all lived in Strathalbyn and, as it was four boys and two girls, there were 16 grandchildren to carry the name Keough (21 grandchildren altogether).
 - ***“They mostly have trades and are doing quite well”:***
 - ***“There is not one drunkard in the lot”:***

..ooOoo..