

Read this first

Setting the scene & some background concepts

By Don Gordon - October 2022
www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com

About this series

SERIES: This document is one of a series of research notes being prepared for this website by the C&D McLean Committee. The notes should be read in conjunction with each other.

ACCESS: The notes will be in the SMALL PRINT on the left of the home page. Some have already been placed there, and others are in the process of preparation.

RESEARCHERS: The notes were compiled by Don Gordon – in collaboration with others, particularly Lorna McLean. You are welcome to join this process.

VERSIONS: Each document has been updated several times – please discard earlier versions.

RESTRICTION: You are welcome to use any of this material, but be cautious:-

- Drafts: They are works-in-progress which still require checking and major editing.
- Audience: The notes are for serious researchers rather than casual visitors.
- Tentative: They include opinions and proposals which need further consideration.
- Relevance: In some instances, we have gathered material which have turned out to be blind alleys which are not pertinent to our particular family history – eg the early history of the Duard chiefs.
- Copyright: There might be photos and substantial quotes for which permission has yet to be finalized.

SCOPE: The notes include:-

- Issues and questions – and why it matters
- What we know so far
- What questions remain
- How we are going about finalizing these matters.

STRUCTURE: We are gathering together anything we could find. These notes are lists of details – headings and dot points which create a framework for placing new material as it comes to hand. Eventually we can decide which details to retain and which ones are less relevant.

READABILITY: The notes are not intended to be easy reading. However, it is a starting point for creating readable narratives. At present, the notes are placed within the SMALL PRINT section of the website so it is not easily accessed by the casual visitor. Once we have developed this further, it is our intention to place something on the website in the STORIES section to invite public viewing. Indeed, this is our main objective. The notes are the raw material from which we can draw just a few highlights which can be developed into lots of wonderful stories. The research notes also provide the context for these stories to enhance their authenticity.

DETAIL: These are notes are for serious researchers rather than casual readers who will get lost in the details. New readers will find it best to read the summaries at the start of each set of notes because these summaries cover all that is essential towards understanding 'our' McLean story.

COLLABORATION: Your contributions, corrections and comments are welcome. Do this via 'Contact us' on the homepage of www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com.

KEEPING IN THE PICTURE: Changes are always being made to these notes. From time to time, we will circulate an email to let people know of major updates. Please let us know if you want to be included in our email network.

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Purpose

This document sets the scene for a series of researcher's notes which centre around Donald McLean and Christina McPhee who were born in the Scottish Highlands in the late 1700s. They migrated to South Australia in 1837.

These notes explain some of the concepts which arise in the other documents in this series:-

- Researcher's notes – a list of all of the many documents in this series.
- Places – a brief outline of some locations which are mentioned in the other documents
- Clan structure – explanations about Chiefs, Lairds, tacksmen, branches and inheritance
- Land ownership - how acquiring land has changed over the centuries
- Names – some notes about people's names in these documents
- Collaboration – how this is arranged
- Glossary – definitions of terms used
- Sources – books, articles and internet materials we have used in this series – and how to access them

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List of research notes

Summaries of each of the following notes are in '[Summary of summaries](#)'

We are gathering a history of the Chiefs and Lairds over many centuries to try (unsuccessfully) to find what connection Donald has in the formal clan structure (see [#02, 04 & 05](#)). We explain how we are searching for Donald's and Christina's ancestors ([18, 19 & 20](#)). We describe the places of clan events and where predecessors and descendants lived ([8 to 14](#)). We identify some of the changes swirling around them and discover what their lives were like in Scotland and in Australia. Finally, we summarize the generations of descendants ([34 to 37](#)). All this in the context of the family tree, individual profiles and biographies on the website.

| | | Years | On website? | Location |
|-----|---|------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | GENERAL | | | |
| C10 | 'READ THIS FIRST - Setting the scene – background concepts' | | Yes | Home page |
| | CLAN HIEARCHY IN SCOTLAND | | | |
| F30 | 'Maclean chiefs of Duart' | 1200s to present | Yes | Small print |
| F25 | 'Jump where the wall is lowest' | 1420 | Yes | Small print |
| F30 | 'Maclean lairds in Ardgour' | 1420 to present | Yes | Small print |
| F35 | 'Maclean lairds in Blaich' | 1480 to 1760 | Yes | Small print |
| F40 | 'Macleans in the Jacobite Uprisings' | 1715 & 1746 | Yes | Small print |
| F15 | 'Time line for chiefs, lairds & our family' | 1200s to present | Yes | Small print |
| | PLACES | | | |
| E20 | 'Blaich & Duiskey' | | Yes | Small print |
| E25 | 'Ardgour – the district, the estate, the house & Sallachan' | | Yes | Small print |
| E30 | 'Kilmallie & Lochaber' | | Almost | Small print |
| E40 | 'Tour of Fort William, Ardgour, Blaich & Duiskey' | | Almost | Home page |
| E35 | 'Duart Castle' | | Yes | Small print |
| E45 | 'Other places of our Macleans in Scotland' | | More work | Small print |
| E50 | 'Places of our McLeans around Adelaide' | | Hardly | Small print |
| E55 | 'Places of our McLeans around Strathalbyn' | | Hardly | Small print |
| E65 | 'McLean tour around the Strathalbyn district' | | Almost | Home page |
| E95 | 'Other places of our McLeans in Australia' | | Hardly | Small print |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| | | | | |
| | SEARCHING FOR OUR SCOTTISH ANCESTORS | | | |
| D30 | ‘Donald’s birth, his parents & grandparents – our strategies’ | 1700s | Yes | Small print |
| D40 | ‘Donald’s birth, parents & grandparents – searching original records’ | 1700s | Yes | Small print |
| D50 | ‘Christina McPhee’s birth & parents & grandparents’ | 1700s | Yes | Small print |
| | DONALD’S LIFE IN SCOTLAND | | | |
| D20 | ‘Lives of generations before Donald McLean’ | 1700s | Almost | Small print |
| G20 | ‘Overview of Donald’s life’ | 1779 to 1855 | Yes | Home page |
| G30 | ‘Donald’s childhood’ | 1779 to 1800 | Yes | Small print |
| G35 | ‘Donald’s initial working years’ | 1800 to 1820 | Yes | Small print |
| G40 | ‘Donald’s continuing work and growing family’ | 1820 to 1837 | Yes | Small print |
| | DONALD’S LIFE IN AUSTRALIA | | | |
| G45 | ‘Migration of the McLean family on the ‘Navarino’’ | 1837 | More work | Small print |
| G55 | ‘Donald’s life around Adelaide’ | 1837 to 1841 | Yes | Small print |
| G60 | ‘The first wheat grown in South Australia’ | 1838 | Yes | Small print |
| G70 | ‘Donald’s life around Strathalbyn’ | 1841 to 1855 | Almost | Small print |
| E55 | ‘McLean properties around Strathalbyn’ | 1841 to present | Hardly | Small print |
| G85 | ‘Highway robbery’ | 1847 | Yes | Small print |
| G90 | ‘Donald’s final year’ | 1855 | Almost | Small print |
| G95 | ‘Christina’s final years’ | 1869 | Almost | Small print |
| | DESCENDANTS | | | |
| H20 | ‘Children of Christina & Donald’ - 2nd generation | 1810 to 1910 | Hardly | Home page |
| H30 | ‘Grandchildren of Christina & Donald’ – 3rd generation | 1840 to 1940 | Hardly | Home page |
| H40 | ‘Great-grandchildren of Christina & Donald’ – 4th generation | 1900 to 2000 | Hardly | Home page |
| H60 | ‘Present generations’ – 5th generation to the 9th generation | 1940 to present | Hardly | Home page |
| | SOURCES | | | |
| C30 | ‘Library: references & sources’ | | Yes | Home page |

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Places

Ardgour is a district in the Scottish Highlands bounded by Loch Eil on the north, Loch Linnhe on the east and the district of Morvern to the south. Clovulin is the only village and there are no cities. Fort William is just outside Ardgour’s north-east corner. (See [#09](#))

Blaich and Duisky are of particular relevance to Christina & Donald McLean. They are within the district of Ardgour and parish of Kilmallie. Blaich is not a village – just a string of cottages and crofts. Duisky is a farming estate next to Blaich. They are located on the southern shores of Loch Eil. ([08](#))

For most of the past six centuries, the seat of this branch of McLeans was Ardgour House which is near Loch Linnhe which joins the northern end of Loch Eil. It was sold in 1996 and the current laird lives at Sallachan Farm nearby. ([09](#))

Duart Castle ([12](#)), which is the world-wide seat for the Chiefs of Clan McLean, is on the Isle of Mull. It is about 40 kilometers from Ardgour House.

After migrating to South Australia, the family were in Adelaide for three years ([14 & 27](#)) and then pioneered 70 kilometres away to the Strathalbyn area ([15, 16 & 29](#)). Over the generations, the families have spread to other parts of Australia – and a small number, to other countries.

For details, have look at other notes in this series – 08 to 17 or take a virtual tour:-

11. [‘Tour of Fort William, Ardgour, Blaich & Duisky’](#)
16. [‘Tour of the Strathalbyn area’](#)

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Clan structure

The McLeans are well organized.

- The Clan McLean Association is a worldwide organization based at Duart Castle. There are three associations in Australia – they are independent but acknowledge the standing of the Duart association.
- The descendants of Donald and Christina are a tiny part of the great McLean Clan but we had our own formal organisation, the Donald & Christina McLean Genealogical Council Inc. They first met in 1986, arranged a reunion in 1988, published the BRB in 1995 and ceased to function in 1997. The official records of the council are placed in the Small Print as '**Previous Council**'. Since this council has ceased, the copyright of the BRB is now held by the NTSA.
- An informal C&D McLean Committee began meeting in 2005. It has connections with the Strathalbyn branch of the National Trust of South Australia. We are managing a website, www.christinaandmclean.com and have inputted all of the BRB and are adding other information.
- The BRB is the source for most of the genealogical details (profiles and family trees) and biographies which have been placed on our website. New details are steadily being added from our own research or from descendants who offer more particulars.
- Each entry in the website cites the source – either the BRB, a descendant, or other sources such as xxxx.
- It is best to look at individual profiles for full details and sources if you want to explore things more closely. You should draw your own conclusions about how much you trust the accuracy of a particular detail, depending on the reliability of the sources cited.

In past centuries, the Clan was bound together (or at times in conflict) by force of arms. In the present day, there is no single Maclean Clan organisation which has authority over the whole clan. There are several Clan associations which see themselves as independent of each other but acknowledge the Chief in Duart Castle. Their loyalty is not put to the test because the associations act as social and cultural alliances rather than having to take up arms to defend their properties as they did in the past. The associations are:-

- Strathalbyn: Donald & Christina McLean Genealogical Council Inc functioned from 1986 to 1997 and its role is now undertaken by the Steering Group of the C&D McLean Committee which is linked to the Strathalbyn museum. The current members of the Steering Group are Trevor McLean, Heather McGrath, Lorna McLean & Don Gordon. Contact via www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com.
- Clan Maclean International: This connects the whole clan, worldwide, with the Chief in Duart Castle on Mull. Contact www.maclean.org.
- NSW: Clan Maclean in New South Wales. The archivist Edwin MacLean has provided material to help trace Donald's origins in Scotland. One of Donald's descendants is a member of this association – Trevor McLean.
- Victoria: Clan Maclean Association in Australia. Contact www.clanmacleanaustralia.com.
- WA: Clan Maclean of Western Australia. Four of Donald's descendants are members of this association - including Don Gordon and Lorna McLean. Contact www.clanmacleanwa.asn.au
- NZ: Clan Maclean Association of New Zealand. Allan Lachlan MacLean of Willowburn might be a member. He has provided material about the MacLeans around Blaich in the 1700s and early 1800s.
- Scotland: Clan Maclean Association of Scotland
- England & Wales: Clan Maclean Association of England and Wales
- Canada: Clan Maclean Atlantic
- USA: Clan Maclean Association in the United States. <https://maclean.us.org>
- USA: Clan Maclean Association Pacific NW
- California: Clan Maclean Association of California
- France: Clan Maclean Association of France
- Facebook:
 - Maclean International Youth Group
 - Clan Maclean Net Central – Maclean.net

Now, we need to look at it is by key figures of the clan in order to understand their roles and authority.

Chiefs

- This is the title of the leader of the whole McLean clan (but this is often contentious - see below).
- The current chief of Clan Maclean is Sir Lachlan Hector Charles MacLean who resides at Duart Castle (but see seat, below).
- Maclean-Bristol seems to avoid the appellation of 'Chief' and prefers 'head of kindred'.

- Generally, the role passes from father to eldest son (but see hereditary, below)
- Our research notes:-

02. [‘Chiefs of Clan MacLean’](#)

Lairds

- The current laird of Ardgour is Robin MacLean, the 18th Laird of Ardgour. There is no current laird for Blaich.
- Laird is a Scottish term for owner of substantial land or estate.
- The position is sometimes (1600s) called ‘fiare’ or ‘feir’ – eg in SHS p336
- In the Scottish order of precedence, a laird ranks below a baron and above a gentleman.
- Laird is a courtesy description for a land-owner with no other rights assigned to it. Although he has no formal authority, the laird has considerable power as landlord and also controller of hunting and fishing. From time to time, the laird may carry considerable moral authority and leadership in the clan area – this often went well beyond roles directly related to land ownership - depending on his personal qualities and the prevailing circumstances. Alexander 13th Ardgour is an example of substantial authority.
- Sometimes the laird is referred to by the name of their main property – as if it was his own name. For example, at the time, the 15th Laird, was referred to as Ardgour rather than Alexander Thomas MacLean. Another example is Laird Cameron of Locheil who are known as just Locheil.
- The laird is sometimes referred to as chieftain and is typically subordinate and loyal to the Chief. For example, our Laird Robin is styled as a chieftain and he is loyal to Sir Lachlan of Duart.
- Lairdship is hereditary – passing to the eldest son who inherits the land and the title when his father dies. But see our notes on inheritance, below.
- Maclean-Bristol seems to avoid the appellation of ‘Laird’
- Other researcher’s notes:-
 - 04. [‘McLeans in Ardgour’](#)
 - 05. [‘Lairds of Blaich’](#)

Tacksman

- Donald held the lease of Duiskey.
- A tacksman leases an estate from the laird but does not have a formal position within the clan.
- He subleases crofts to farmers and generally acts on behalf of the laird within the estate.
- The position is not hereditary but there is often an ongoing family connection.
- Rents for crofts and cottages *“were paid through the channel of tacksmen, a lesser gentry acting as estate managers who allocated strips of land, lent seed-corn and agrarian tools and arranged droving of cattle, taking a minor share of the payments made to the clan nobility, the fine”* (Rev JA Carruth, ‘The Bonnie Prince Charlie Country’, Norwich, 1996).

Variations

The arrangements with chiefs and lairds often depart from the ‘normal’:-

- Seat: The chief or laird is usually associated with a ‘seat’, often a castle or stately home, and this is usually his place of residence. However, there are long periods when the clan is not centered at a particular seat because either they have been divested of it, or he is living elsewhere for personal reasons. For example, Alexander, the 13th Laird of Ardgour, for many decades was living in Edinburgh and also was overseas for extensive military service.
- Role: We expect that he is actively involved in the affairs of the clan. But this is not always the case. Sometimes the nominal chief or laird has little to do with the wellbeing of the clan. At times, he might have little ability, or show no interest, or it might be a low point when he is impoverished, without substantial properties or subjugated by more powerful forces – a chief in name only.
- Contention: Highland history is replete with arguments, intrigues and battles with disputes over which branch is in the ascendancy. The Duart line has often been challenged by the Lochubie MacLeans and Coll MacLeans – but never by the Ardgour MacLeans.
- Numeration:
 - The various scholarly works number the 5th Laird or 12th Chief etc
 - It is not clear cut, particularly the first few in the line.
 - The incumbents might not have been referred to in this way in their lifetimes.
 - In order to write the history, especially with many men of the same name, sometimes scholars numerate the line long after these times. It is a way of making the sequence clear to those reading the historical account. For example, we devised our own numbering system in our article [‘Lairds of Blaich’](#) because the main source, Sinclair, did not give the lairds a number, even though he had done

so when detailing other lines in his book. Another example is that Alexander 13th is usually referred to in this way even though he referred to himself as 12th.

- Although most scholars use numeration, Maclean-Bristol avoids giving a fixed sequence – ie does not use 1st Chief, 8th Laird etc.
- Ownership: The mantle of chief or lairdship comes with a substantial parcel of land and other riches – or vice-versa. But there were many generations where the MacLean Chief was landless and impoverished.
- Hereditary: The practice of passing to the eldest son is most often the case, but we can identify some exceptions among the Duart chiefs and Ardgour lairds. For example, the 17th Laird of Ardgour (Catriona) was a woman and 18th (Robin) is her nephew. For more about inheritance, see below.
- Wills: We do not have details of the formal documentation which facilitated new chiefs and lairds inheritance of the role over past centuries. Presumably the current Laird of Ardgour has these arrangements in place.

Clan hierarchy

- While generally the lairds are loyal to the Chief, he does not have any direct authority over them. Also, although there is no formal hierarchy of one laird over another, in our case, since the Laird of Ardgour initiated the lairdship in Blaich, and because the Blaich line faulted a few times, the Laird of Ardgour took back the role, and thus asserted his ascendance by default.
- Feudal superior: The chief of the clan can, through a court, become the feudal superior of a barony if the next laird apparent is not legally ‘entered’ to the estate. For example, after the death of John, the 4th laird of Ardgour, he “*was presumably succeeded by his second cousin Allan, who failed to be legally ‘entered’ to the estate. As a result, the barony of Ardgour was for many years held from Duart as feudal superior. The Ardgour family remained in occupation but it was not until 1685 that they were to hold their barony again directly from the Crown*” (Maclean-Bristol p144)

Branches

- Branches are also called ‘cadets’. Also of course, there can be sub-branches where there is a close alliance.
- As we see it, whether or not a group of Highlanders are considered to be a branch depends on:-
 - Leadership: Whether they have an acknowledged figurehead – a Chief or Laird.
 - Seat: Whether there is a specific castle or grand house which the family has occupied for many generations.
 - Territory: Whether this is a defined geographical area - particularly if they control extensive properties which indicates their dominance over the district.
 - Property: Whether there is substantial land or wealth to be handed down through the generations.
 - Identity: Whether the descendants identify themselves as a separate branch.
 - Capability: Whether they can organize themselves to act together. In the past, this might be the assembling a small army for attack or defense. Or, in current times, the ability to convene a major reunion.
 - Size: A large group, with fecundity in its earliest generations, have a stronger claim to being a branch.
 - Biases: Certain groups will push their claim. For example, as descendants of Donald and Christina, we could consider ourselves to be a sub-branch of the McLeans of Blaich and/or Ardgour.
 - Origination: Sometimes a branch has a clear beginning – eg when Donald ‘The Hunter’ overpowered the McMasters and took control of Ardgour in 1420. Or sometimes it is after a family moves to another area and has many sons and grandsons – then in retrospect, it comes to be regarded as a branch – eg this is how our branch of the McLeans developed after getting established in Strathalbyn.
 - Heraldry: Most branches have created their own patronymic, shield or tartan etc
 - Boxes: Rarely can a branch tick all these boxes. In many cases, a branch may base it’s claim on just a few of these considerations.
 - Other researcher’s notes:-
 - 02. [‘Chiefs of Clan MacLean’](#)
 - 04. [‘Macleans of Ardgour’](#)
 - 05. [‘Lairds of Blaich’](#)
- How various researchers describe the different branches depends on:-
 - The author’s biases: For example, Gregory was writing for McDonald so would have, perhaps unconsciously, tilted the story to the patron’s liking.
 - The era: For example, the branches identified in the 1400s are different from those in the 1800s.
 - This partly explains why there are so many different listings of the branches at the beginning of our notes [‘Chiefs of Clan MacLean’](#).

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Our Branch

It has not been claimed that the descendants of Christina and Donald McLean are a branch. Any claim would not be strong as it would rest only on size, origins and perhaps identity - but cannot tick the boxes of leadership, capability, heraldry, territory, property or seat (except perhaps Trevor McLean's farm, 'Navarino' in Strathalbyn).

Leadership: But let's imagine that the descendants of Christina and Donald McLean have formed a branch, and that mantle of leadership has passed to the oldest living son. The succession could have been:-

- Donald – died 1855
- Allan ID 3 – died 1890
- William Donald ID 6 – died 1911
- William Dawson ID 11 – died 1941
 - He is the second son of William Donald whose first son, Donald Sinclair Homer ID 10, died before him in 1909.
- Laurence Albert Allan ID 1434 – died 1956
 - William Dawson had no sons.
 - The oldest brother of William Donald was James Dawson ID 1240 who died in 1931, but had no sons
 - The next brother of William Donald was Allan ID 1430 who died in 1930, and whose eldest son was Laurence Albert Allan
- Angas Allan ID 1472 – died 1976
- Allan ID 1480 – he was born in 1946 and might still be living
- Shannon ID 1486 – he was born in 1974

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Succession and inheritance

How did the McLeans organise themselves when they were in control of their lands?

The McLean lands were passed down from one laird to another. Sinclair (p495-497), explained the rules of inheritance of the McLean (Gillean) chief. Presumably the same rules applied to the lairds:-

- Male descendant: The general law of succession prescribes the eldest legitimate son descended in the male line from the founder of the clan. This of course includes a son born in wedlock, but it also includes an illegitimate or 'natural' son, who has been validated by an act of parliament, a letter of legitimation, or the marriage of his parents after his birth. However, a different male descendent may be appointed if the eldest son does not have the capability.
- Capable: He must possess the intellectual and physical qualifications required for the performance of the duties required of him as chief.

If there are questions about either of the above, it is resolved by:-

- Chief: The current chief designates his heir
- Inner circle: Those 'attached' to the chief provide advice to him
- Election: The electors and process is not specified
- Deposing: A clan has the right to depose a chief and to elect a more suitable person
- Assassination: There have been incidents when a group of clan members with the means, have murdered their chief and placed themselves under the command of another relative. (Sinclair p497)

So, in effect, it is usually the eldest son, but only if he has the general support of powerful clan members. *'In order to be chief, it was always necessary that a person should be acknowledged as such by the majority of the clan. It is no use for a man to call himself chief unless he had enough followers to maintain him in that position..... Theoretical claims are not of much value to a man unless he can obtain a possession of that which he claims.'* (Sinclair p497)

There is another facet, which Sinclair does not highlight, that is the question of who has the real control when someone becomes heir at a very young age. Presumably it is those 'attached'. They are sometimes called 'tutors'. Examples from our 18 lairds are xxxxx. Also, there is a question of who, in effect, is in charge when a laird is old and frail? Examples of this are Allan 7th, Crubach 8th and xxxx.

The last few changes of the Lairdship of Ardgour are examples of how the transfer from one to the other is changing – ie the 17th was a woman and the 18th is a nephew rather than the son.

“Once a family obtained landed rank it was determined to maintain its status and to ensure that its possessions, reputation and honour were handed down intact. In order to make sure that its position was at least equal to that enjoyed by previous generations, it was essential that the inheritance was not divided. Younger sons, if they did not enter the church, were given land which was held from their father or his successor. In the Scottish Gaeltachd in the fifteenth-century the kin-based system of inheritance by which brother might succeed brother, just as son might succeed father, was often the custom. It evidently was in the Ardgour family and probably in Clann Tearlaich. However, Duart, Lochbuie and Coll handed down their estates by primogeniture and the eldest son succeeded his father in his ancestral home and retained that portion of the inheritance, where the lineal memory was most deeply rooted, in his own hand. Only Duart established cadet branches which survived for any length of time” (Maclean-Bristol p 63).

Land ownership

How have methods of the transfer of land ownership in Scotland changed in the different eras?

Some examples :-

- By force on a small scale: In the 15th century a small band of McLeans raided the area in Ardgour occupied by the McMasters – they were a stronger force and slaughtered the McMasters and then took over – and this was later ratified by the King.
- By force on a large scale: Large regions, or even whole countries have been taken over by an invading army, in the name of the King.
- By colonization: An outside group establishes control – with or without use of armed force – and with or without formal sanctions. For example, South Australia.
- Treaty: This happened in New Zealand with the Maoris – but not in Australia with the aborigines.
- Clearances: During the 18th and 19th centuries a significant number of people were forcibly displaced from traditional land tenancies in the Scottish Highlands, where they had been small-scale farmers. This was by the actions of the land owners, punitive actions by the government (eg after Culloden) or from enclosures of common lands for farming sheep.
- By grant: The Lord of Isles or the King or some other authority can grant an area of land as a reward for someone’s support – they would be granted a favour for having organised their family members to fight on the side of the Lord or King.
- Inheritance – ie to eldest son: This is the method for the Lairds of Ardgour.
- Wakefield scheme: The new colony in South Australia was based on the idea that the government should not grant land or sell it too cheaply. This would be an incentive to use the land productively and the funds raised would bring out migrant labourers. It would ensure that there were enough workers for the land and the workers would need to keep working for a period to save up to buy land of their own. Our Donald paid for his property before he left for the colony.
- Purchasing: The present arrangement where anyone can buy any land they want, providing the owner is willing to sell at an agreed price – and then this agreement is registered with the government lands department in the form of a title deed.

Over six centuries, our family has been part of this evolution - from armed force to the rule of law:-

- Donald the Hunter killed the MacMasters to take over their land.
- The Lord of the Isles encouraged this action at the time
- The King ratified it 70 years later.
- The arrangements for the establishment of the lairdship in Blaich (including the creation of a Balony)
- The colonization of South Australia and the Wakefield scheme.
- In London, Donald purchased South Australian land.
- Donald continued to buy and sell farming land around Strathalyn.
- Robin sold part of the Ardgour Estate in 1996.
- Up to the early 1900s huge areas of Scotland were owned by just a few major land owners and there were few changes over many decades. This was the case that, for six centuries, Blaich and Duiskey, along with a score of other farms, had been part of the massive Ardgour Estate owned by the laird. But soon after Donald migrated, half of the estate, including Blaich and Duiskey, was sold to the Earl of Morton. Then in more recent years, these properties were sold by the Earl to smaller land owners. Thus, the present owners are xxxx.

- In the past century, property was sold rather the conquered – eg we bought Duart in 1911 and sold Ardgour House in 1996.

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Distinctions

- Land title Vs clan title – the nexus between land ownership and chief/laird
 - What is the difference between the title of laird/chief and a land title? For example, could a person be the 5th McLean of Ardgour, but not own any of the land? Is inheritance of the lairdship the same as inheritance of the property?
 - What are the interconnections between the various titles and methods of holding land – barony, ‘seat’, estate, owner, proprietor, leaser, laird, tack, tenant, crofter, chief & chieftain etc.
- Estates Vs farms Vs crofts

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Names

- McLean Vs MacLean Vs Maclean Vs Gillean. In our notes, the different spellings are interchangeable.
- Not Maclaine?? (of Lochbuie)
- Donald signed his name variously as - McLane - MacLean - McLean - McClean
- Duiskey = “Duskey Farm” in Hilton, or - undoubtedly poor spelling of the Duiskie or Duiskey Estate. Also correspondence about Aboriginal Reserve =
- We refer to ‘our’ Donald, ‘our’ Christina and ‘our’ McLeans. The use of the apostrophe is a shorthand way of identifying those we are trying to track - when there are so many people with similar names.
- Using capitals for lairds and chiefs when it is the title of a specific person, and lower case when discussing these positions generally. For example, Alexander was the laird in ‘our’ Donald’s time – he is known as Alexander Maclean, the 13th Laird of Ardgour.
- Traditional Scottish naming patterns – see the notes on “Donald’s parents & grandparents - our strategies”.

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Conversions

The values used in these notes can be converted as follows:-.

| Area | | Distance | Pounds |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 square mile = | 640 acres = 4,856 hectares | 1 mile = 1.6 kms | 1 = guess |
| 6.25 squ miles = | 4,000 acres = 1,619 hectares | 2.5 miles = 4 kms | Note that this xxxx |
| 18.75 squ miles = | 12,000 acres = 4,856 hectares | 30 miles = | |
| 20 squ miles = | 12,800 acres = 5,180 hectares | | |
| 156.25 squ miles = | 100,000 acres = 40,469 hectares | | |

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Sources

References & library

'Donald and Christina McLean and Their Descendants' was published in 1995 and it has all been placed on the website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com (except that details of living people are not normally visible). This is our primary source and is the starting point for all subsequent research. The book was originally produced in a big red book so we refer to it as the BRB. It was compiled before the internet and sources were not as available as they are now. It does not identify sources for most family details but does acknowledge the contributions of Margaret Stephenson, Douglas MacLean, Dianne Facey and some others.

All our sources are listed in '[Library](#)' where there are comments about each of the items, and how to access them.

Scotland

- PURPOSE: We are gathering together a comprehensive picture of what life was probably like for Donald at different periods of his life from several sources which describe Kilmallie and Ardgour. These are specific to what was actually happening in this area – not generalizations about the Highlands as a whole. Most of these are original sources which were written near the time – rather than historical reviews. Also, because the population was small, we can be reasonably confident that these descriptions encompass Donald's experiences.
- START: Our starting point was the information in the BRB (appendix A), which has a few details about Donald's life in Scotland.
- NOTES: Our research notes which are particularly relevant to Our interest is in the Highlands before Donald and his family left there in 1837.
- SOURCES: There is a detailed list of all our sources in '[Library](#)' but, we have mainly relied upon the following:-
- ANCESTORS
 - OPRs
 - Scotland's people
- Maclean history
 - * 'Breif Genealogical Account of the Ffamily of McLean' by xxxxxx * '*Historical & Genealogical Account of Clan MacLean*' by a seneachie (John Campbell Sinclair or Lachlan McLean) in 1838, * '*History of Clan McLean*' by John Paterson McLean in 1889, * '*Clan Gillean*' by Alexander McLean Sinclair in 1899,
 - 'A Breif History of the Maclean Ffamily' - written before 1850 – see appendix in Duart Chiefs.
 - Seaneachie – 1838 – See appendix in Duart Chiefs
 - Gregory – 1836: This was written about the same time as Seneachie but is a broader history of the Western Highlanders and the neighbouring Isles - ie all the clans in that area whereas, Seneachie focuses on the Macleans.
 - JP MacLean
 - Sinclair
 - Wikipedia
- Scottish history
 - Wikipedia
- Places in Scotland (especially Ardgour, Duisky & Blaich)
 - Ardgour papers '*First Statistical Account*' by Alexander Fraser in 1792, * '*Second Statistical Account*' by Donald McGillvray in 1845, * '*Bygone Lochaber*' by Somerled MacMillan in 1971, * '*Back O' the Hill – Highland Yesterdays*' by John G Gibson in 2008, * '*Archaeological Survey of Garvan*' by Jennifer Robertson in 2008.
 - Local historians: Iain Thornber and Les Horn have both been a great help. Lochaber Archives Centre has assisted but we have not had a response from the Lochaber & North Argyll Family History Group (LANAFHG) except that Les Horn is a member.
 - Maps: We have found many maps for different eras of this area – see E20 & E25 below.
 - Laird: The current Laird Robin Maclean and his wife Fiona will be good informants, but we have hesitated to test their patience until we have explored other sources.
 - Webster
 - Wikipedia

Australia

The McLeans are well organized.

- The Clan McLean Association is a worldwide organization based at Duart Castle. There are three associations in Australia – they are independent but acknowledge the standing of the Duart association.
- The descendants of Donald and Christina are a small part of the great McLean Clan but we had our own formal organisation, the Donald & Christina McLean Genealogical Council Inc. They first met in 1986, arranged a re-

union in 1988, published the BRB in 1995 and ceased to function in 1997. The official records of the council are placed in the Small Print as '[Previous Council](#)'. Since this council has ceased, the copyright of the BRB is now held by the NTSA.

- An informal C&D McLean Committee began meeting in 2005. It has connections with the Strathalbyn branch of the National Trust of South Australia. We are managing a website, www.christinaandmclean.com and have inputted all of the BRB and are adding other information.
- The BRB is the source for most of the genealogical details (profiles and family trees) and biographies which have been placed on our website. New details are steadily being added from our own research or from descendants who offer more particulars.
- Each entry in the website cites the source – either the BRB, a descendant, or other sources such as xxxx.
- It is best to look at individual profiles for full details and sources if you want to explore things more closely. You should draw your own conclusions about how much you trust the accuracy of a particular detail, depending on the reliability of the sources cited.
- Births deaths & marriages
- Places around Strathalbyn
 - Wikipedia

Access

- You are welcome to 'Contact us' on the website www.christinaanddonalddmclean.com if you want assistance in accessing any of the above sources.

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Collaboration

The researcher's notes are drafts and anyone is welcome to contribute via 'Contact us' on www.christinaanddonalddmclean.com.

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Glossary

- Baillie: An local official – an alderman or magistrate
- Branch: See above
- Cadet: See branch
- Chamberlain: eg Ewen, 2nd Laird of Ardgour
- Chief: See above
- Chieftain: See above
- Croft:
- Dower house: A dwelling that is intended by the widowed mother of the owner of an ancestral estate.
- Laird: See above
- Liferent:
- Lord of the Isles:
- Manrent:

- Merkland: An amount of land in Scottish deeds and legal papers. It was based upon a common valuation of the land. Merklands (1m = 13s 4d) were compounded (2m = 26s 8d etc) or divided ($\frac{1}{2}$ m = 6s 8d etc). They were sometimes expressed as shillinglands or poundlands. So a 3m land could be described as a 40s land or a £2 land; a $7\frac{1}{2}$ m land would probably be called a 100s land or a £5 land. (ref: Denis Rixson, Glossary in Land Assessment Scotland)
- Merk: A merk was a Scottish silver coin.
- Progenitor:
- Seat:
- Seneachie: *“It was customary with the best and almost all the families in the highlands of Scotland to keep their Seanachies, or family historians to record the publick Exploits of the great men of their families, as also their Genealogyes, marriages, and all their notable transactions”* (13th MacLean, p2).
- Seneschal: eg Ewen, 2nd Laird of Ardgour
- Tacksman: See above
- Teinds: Property assessed for tithes – ie one tenth to be paid to the church
- Tutor

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Appendix A

From BRB p8

The Donald McLean of this present history had ancestry back to 1420 as has already been shown and that he was of the Blaich branch of the Ardgour McLeans. He used the surname McLean, not the older form of MacLean.

Tradition was that only a kinsman of the Laird might lease any of the estate so it follows in having 12,000 acres of Duiskey by Loch Eil, Donald belonged. The old house at Duiskey is no more, and even a later one which Donald may have occupied is now used as a farm building together with the huge stone barn. It was owned in 1933 by an English absentee landlord, the Earl of Morton.

Records are sketchy, but Donald and his family seem to have resided for the most part in the Lochaber district. It is said he brought them to South Australia to escape prosecution for the illegal distillation of whisky, when he was aged 65. However, the 1836 famine in Scotland due to harvest failure, which contributed to the Highland Clearances, is a more likely explanation.

It is evident that he was not without resources as he was able to pay £1,000 in cash (in golden sovereigns, the family maintains) at London in July 1837 for a land section of 80 acres, "sight unseen" at the new Colony of South Australia (Land Order no, 454).

So, Donald made his move, together with his wife and family, and left Scotland and London and travelling by the "Navarino" arrived in December of 1837.

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