

'Donald's Plough'

Overview of Donald McLean's life

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www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com

How to use these notes

- The working title, 'Donald's Plough' is linking his oat and barley cropping in Duisky, the plough he took on the ship, his first wheat crop in Hilton, farming of properties around Strathalbyn, and the social life associated with ploughing competitions in the new colony.
- Our other docs: This is one of a series of research notes which are interconnected. These can be found in the Small Print directory on the left of the homepage. Each are these referred to throughout this document.
- Feedback: This is a draft. Your corrections and comments will be welcomed - via 'Contact us' on the homepage.
- Authors: These notes were compiled by Don Gordon, in collaboration with Lorna McLean. Don and Lorna are Donald's and Christina's GGG-grandchildren.

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Summaries

These are two ways of quickly capturing the lives of Donald and Christina. We need these in quite a range of situations - such as on our consent forms, at the beginning of researcher's notes, and on the home page etc :-

- Donald McLean and Christina, nee McPhee lived in the Western Highlands of Scotland for 5 decades before migrating to the new colony in South Australia with 10 children in 1837. For a few years, they farmed near Adelaide where they grew the first wheat crop in the colony. Then they were pioneers in the Strathalbyn district.

Or

- Donald McLean was born in 1779 and Christina McPhee was born in 1787 – both in the Western Highlands of Scotland. They had 12 children between 1811 and 1835. Donald leased Duisky estate which is on the southern shores of Loch Eil. He built a dwelling house and reared cattle and sheep, grew oats and barley and was also interested in the herring industry. In 1837, the family migrated on the Navarino to the new colony in South Australia. They grew the first wheat crop near Adelaide and then, after a few years, were among the first families to develop farms around Strathalbyn. Donald was subject to a highway robbery in 1848. He died in 1855 and Christina died in 1869.

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Scotland

Donald McLean was christened on 26th Sept 1779 in Blaich in the Western Highlands of Scotland. His parents were Allan McLean and Rachel, nee Rankine. Christina McPhee was christened on 28th April 1787 in Crieff (at the end of Loch Arkaig, 30 kms from Blaich). Her parents were probably John McPhee and Christina Cameron. We are still searching for any details about Donald's and Christina's grandparents (**D30, D40 & D50**).

Donald was probably in Blaich in his childhood (**G30**) and his early working years (**G35**). He leased Duisky farm from Alexander McLean, the 13th Laird of Ardgour (**F30**). Duisky was a large estate, next to Blaich on the southern shores of Loch Eil. Donald built a dwelling house and reared cattle and sheep, grew oats and barley and was also interested in the herring industry (**G40**). He became comparatively prosperous (**G92**) and would have been a prominent figure in the local community even though he was not directly related to the line of MacLean lairds of Ardgour who controlled the area (**F20, F30 & F35**).

There were only about 200 people living in a string of crofts at Blaich and Duisky (**E20 & E40**). It was a time of changing farming practices. Clan traditions were declining – accelerated by the disaster of the battle of Culloden in 1746 (**F40**) which was three decades before Donald was born. Life was difficult in the highlands and many people were considering moving to the larger towns or migrating.

Donald and Christina had twelve children between 1811 and 1835. They were all born in Blaich or Duisky. Two died in infancy and ten migrated with their parents, and survived to adulthood.

Australia

The family migrated to the new colony in South Australia when Donald was already an old man of 58 years. This was on the Navarino which left London in August 1837 and arrived in Holdfast Bay on 6th December of that year (**G45**).

The colony had been officially proclaimed only 12 months before the McLeans arrived. There were less than 6000 settlers and the basics of community life, civil society, agriculture and commerce were only beginning to take shape. People were living in make-shift structures and there were not many substantial buildings.

Before leaving for Australia, Donald had pre-purchased (with Land Order 454) 80 acres near Adelaide. The small farm, country section 50, is currently bounded by Richmond Rd, South Rd, Barwell Ave and Bruce Ave. It became known as Hilton in Donald's time and is now the suburb of Marleston (**E52**). He also purchased a half acre in Hindley Street - on west side of Fenn Place where the Kaurna Gallery is now (**E51**).

The McLeans grew the first wheat crop in the colony – 20 acres on their 80 acre farm acres in 1838 (**G60**). In that year, the colony cultivated just 86 acres of land (including the Mcleans' 20 acres of wheat). In the next year, there were 440 acres of cultivated land, then 2500 acres in 1840 and 6700 acres in subsequent years. Wheat had become the dominant crop - after being just a quarter of cultivated land in the first two years, it was three-quarters in 1840 and was the dominant crop from then on.

Donald built a sizable house he called Duisky (**E52**). The family were near Adelaide for about three years (**G55**) and during this time the colony was rapidly growing around them. More than 3000 new settlers arrived in 1838 and in the following years there were 500, 3000 and 780 immigrants. By the colony's fifth year there was a total to 15,000 settlers.

In 1841, the McLeans were among the first families, along with the Rankins and the Dawsons, to establish farms around Strathalbyn which is about 60 kms south-east of Adelaide. Donald built a two-story family home called Auchanada's that was one of the first substantial buildings in the area, and he also built a large barn/stables with a loft (**E53**). These structures were next to the Angus River. There are no signs of the house now, but the barn/stables is still there – as a residence.

As the children of this large family grew up and married, they established an extensive presence in the farming community over the following decades. They purchased many properties around the area Strathalbyn, Lake Plains, Bremmer and Lake Alexandrina areas. These included Auchananda's, Meadow Bank, Melrose, Belvidere Hotel, Navarino, Coowey, Waterloo, Angas Park, Crickhowall, Watulunga, Balmarino, Lakeview, Mapelmore, Innisvale and Burnside. Each of these are described in researchers' notes (E55).

In 1848 Donald was bailed up by highway robbers near the Mountain Hut, just out of Adelaide on his way home to Strathalbyn. Seventy-five pounds was taken from him at gun point. The money was never returned (G85).

In contrast to their initial prominence in farming in the general area, after 3 decades (one generation) the McLean presence was declining by the 1880s, after many of the McLeans had moved elsewhere.

Donald died on 11th Oct 1855 in 1855 at the age of 76 years. He had been in the colony for 17 years. Christina died 14 years after Donald, on 4th Sept 1869, aged 81 years. They are both buried in the Strathalbyn cemetery. Our research notes about their final years (G90 & G95) includes comments about what sort of people they were.

Children

Christina and Donald's children (full details and biographies are in their profiles on the website):-

1. Allan: Born 1811 in Blaich. He married Catherine Dawson and they had 11 children from 1845 to 1869. He was a prosperous farmer, based at Meadowbank, with several properties around Strathalbyn but sold everything in 1878 and tried to establish a farm 200 kms north in Collinsfield. This failed, and Allan became bankrupt within a few years. He died a poor man in Plympton in 1890, aged 79 years. Catherine died in 1892.
2. Mary: Born 1813 in Blaich but died 1813 as an infant.
3. Hugh the elder: Born 1814. He married Christina Black and they had 10 children from 1850 to 1869. His farm was Coowey, at Milang, near Lake Alexandina. In 1853, he was in gaol for 9 months for stealing a horse. He later farmed at Meningie. He died in 1876 in Meningie, aged 62 years. Christina died in 1907.
4. John: Born 1816. He married Mary Stacey and they had 13 children between 1846 and 1871. After Mary died, John married Elizabeth Dixon and they had 3 children from 1875 to 1877. So John had a total of 16 children. His home farm was Waterloo on the Angas Plains - and he acquired many other properties in the area. He died in 1903 in Angas Plains, aged 87 years. Elizabeth died in 1907.
5. Mary: Born 1818. She married Adam Abercrombie and they had 4 children between 1841 and 1848. They were living in Hindley St, Adelaide. In 1848, tragedy struck the family with the accidental death of Adam and 3 children - leaving one child with Mary. She later married Duncan McCrae and they had 6 children from 1852 to 1860. So Mary had 10 children altogether. The McCraes farmed Kintail near Milang. Mary died in 1889 in Strathalbyn, aged 71 years. Duncan died in 1901.
6. Anne: Born 1820 in Duisy but died as an infant.
7. Archibald: Born 1821. He married Ann Soward Janeway and they had 7 children-from 1847 to 1859. In the 1850s, he went off to the Victorian gold diggings and did well enough to buy land when he returned. Melrose, on the Angas Plains, was their home farm. Ann died of pneumonia when their youngest child was 2 years old. In the mid 1870s, he sold up and took purchased a property at 'The Gap' between Bordertown and Naracoorte. Archibald married Christina McKenzie but they did have any children. He died in 1899 in Naracoorte, aged 77 years.
8. Ann: Born 1823. She married Robert Leslie - they did not have any children. He was a blacksmith in partnership with Jeff Jeffries in Strathalbyn. Robert drowned after they had been married 6 years. She married Jeff Jeffreys. and they had 6 children from 1851 to 1861 (plus one adopted). They went to the Victorian goldfields twice and got enough to purchase properties in Belvidere - including their home farm Crickhowall, brickworks and hotel - but their main business was blacksmithing. Jeff died in 1881. Ann died in 1910 in Strathalbyn, aged 87 years.
9. Rachel: Born 1825 in Duisy. She married Ewen McDonald and they had 10 children from 1850 to 1867. Ewen was a shepherd for Donald (father of Rachel). He did well with the Victorian gold digging in the early 1850s and on return, he purchased many properties around Lake Alexandrina and Finnis River from 1851 to 1857. Their home farm was Balmarino. In 1874, they sold up and re-established themselves at Noradjuha in Victoria. Ewen died in 1905. Rachel died in 1908 in Noradjuha, aged 83 years

10. Margaret: Born 1827. She married James Keating and they had one child, in 1851. James died in 1860. Margaret married Richard Johns in Queensland and they had no children. Margaret died 1912 in Geelong, aged 85 years. Richard died in the same year.
11. Jane: Born 1830. She married John Cheriton and they had 3 children from 1850 to 1854. John went to the Victorian gold field several times in the early 1850s and did well. He bought land at Belvidere and Angas Plains. Their home farm was Field View Lodge. He became increasingly involved in local public life (chairman of various organizations) and was elected to Parliament in 1869. He became an auctioneer and passed his farm to his son and moved into Strathalbyn. Jane died 1886 in Strathalbyn aged 56 years. John died in 1917.
12. Hugh the younger: Born 1836. His first partner was Ann McBain and they had one child. He married Margaret Tannahill and they had 10 children from 1863 to 1878. Hugh lived in Strathalbyn all his lived – he grew up in Auchananda's and then lived in a house called Ardgour. Margaret died in 1891 and Hugh died in 1921 in Strathalbyn, aged 85 years.

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