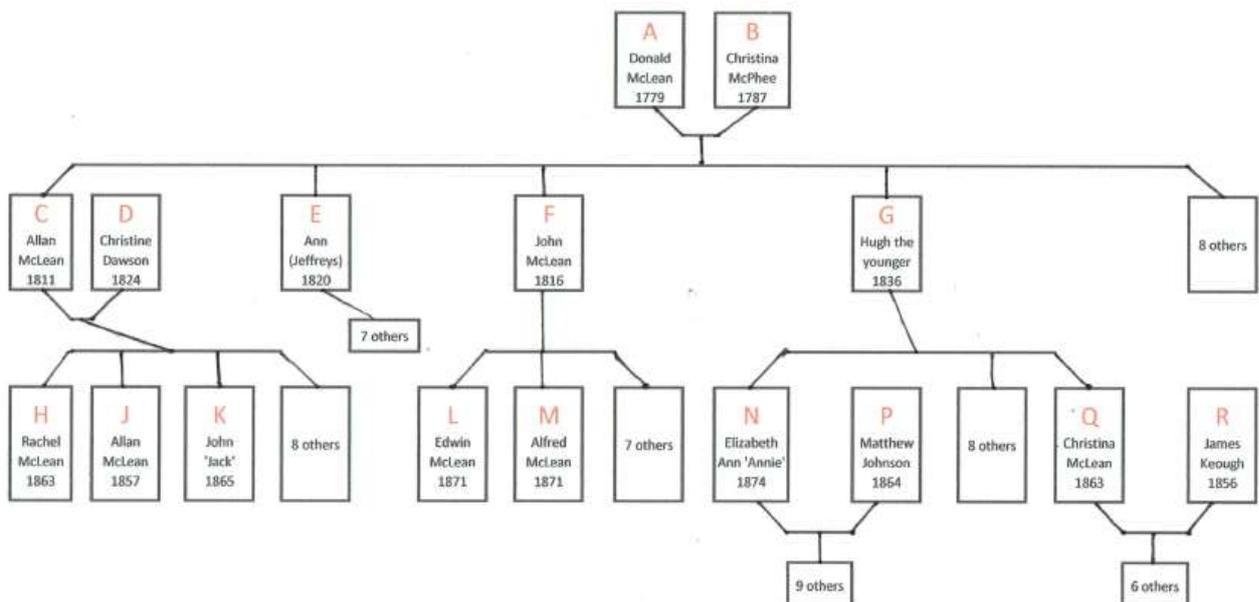


Edwin McLean's letter in 1946

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 June 2021

Source – Nancy Gemmell

- This letter was published on page 20 of Nancy Gemmell's book 'Old Strathalbyn and Its People'. Presumably Nancy obtained a copy from the family of the person who received the letter - Rachel Hornby (see below). Nancy wrote her book in the mid-to-late 1970s so the family might have considered it significant enough to hold the letter for several decades. Rachel's story in the BRB, which was published another few decades later, in 1995, was provided to Alf McLean by Rachel's granddaughter, Gloria Edwards, nee Hornby who was born in 1933 – but maybe she was not the source of a copy of this letter because, surprisingly, it was not included in the BRB.

Author – Edwin McLean = L

- It was written by Edwin (Ted) McLean who was born 1871 and died 1950, four years after writing the letter. Edwin was the grandson of Donald and Christina. He was born after Donald and Christina had died. His father was John McLean (= F) who was born 1816 and 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.

Date - 1946

- **"I am nearly 75 now"**: This means that the letter was written in 1946.

Recipient – Rachel = H

- Who was he writing to? The letter was written to a child of Allan McLean (b 1811) - **"I knew your father uncle Allan"**. This could have only been Rachel because she was the only one of Allan's eleven children still living in 1946. She was born in 1863 and died in 1949. All her brothers and sisters had died well before that, the most recent being Mary Nutt in 1940. Rachel was 83 years old when she received the letter. In 1946, the year Rachel would have it, she and her husband Bill had to leave a house they were renting in Mackay Street Port Broughton and, for the last three or four years of their lives they lived with various family members (ref: Rachel's profile). She eventually died at the age of 86 years - a few years after receiving Edwin's letter.

Significance

- This is the only source for the some details.

Original

- Because it is so important, it would be good to be able to get an image of the original letter – this might give other clues about its provenance. [Research: Get a copy.]

Why:

- We can only guess what prompted Edwin to write to his cousin. Edwin was living at Mapelmore and Rachel was at Port Broughton, 240 kms to the north. They must have had limited personal contact - otherwise, why write rather than just tell her. It seems that he did not know Rachel well but the wording of the letter indicates that maybe she had asked him to recall what he knew about her father and siblings. This is significant because apparently there had been a break with the rest of her family when Rachel had married Bill Hornby against the wishes of Allan and Catherine. Rachel's ongoing connection with the family was only through her sister Mary Nutt (ref: Rachel's profile.) So maybe, in her final years, Rachel was wanting some reconnection with her family of origin. Rachel then 83 years old at this time and she was the last surviving of 11 siblings, and Edwin was 75 years old and 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. 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 of 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 (snr) = C and Catherine Dawson = D

- Allan was born in 1811 and died in 1890. Catherine was born in 1824 and died in 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 stayed 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 (grandson of Edwin), 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 in 010 in Stories directory on the homepage).

- **"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 Duisky, before migrating in 1837. Maybe the local Lochaber historical group have records about these races.

Alfred McLean = M

- Alfred was born 1872 and 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 McLean (jnr) = J

- Allan was born 1857 and 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 Stuart Duncan (Jack) McLean = K

- Jack was born 1865 and 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 McLean, the younger = G

- Hugh the younger was 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. He also been called 'Hugh little'. 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. Hugh the younger died when Edwin was 50 years old.

Elizabeth Ann (Annie) McLean = N and Matthew Johnston = P,

- Annie was born 1874 and died 1948, and her husband, Matthew Johnston was born in 1864 and died in 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 died – 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 'Lizzy' 1957 (John)
 - Jane Ann 1961 (Hugh the elder)
 - Florence 'Flossie' 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 on a hotel in the Western Australian goldfields - Kalgoorlie, Mt Malcolm & Gwalia. They never returned to live in South Australia.
 - ***"I know she was a nice looking young woman"***: This photo was in 1901 – five years after her wedding.
 - ***"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, but could he have been mistaken. He was there, so he should know, but he was relying on his memory of an event 50 years previously, when he was 25 years old. Maybe he was getting mixed up with another wedding which was held at Hugh the younger's house 33 months before – that of Annie's youngest sister Christina McFee McLean who was married in 1894. In fact, this wedding was not held at Edwin's uncle Hugh the younger's home (Ardgour Cottage). It was held at the home of Mrs Anne Jeffreys = E (BRB p558). Mrs Jeffreys had a 'commodious house' (p486). This venue was in the BRB p558) and confirmed by contemporary newspaper items and marriage registration. At the time, Mrs Jeffreys was 73 years old. She was Edwin's aunty, and a sister of Hugh the younger.



McLeans in Strathalbyn:-

- ***"Well all the McLeans are gone now at Strathalbyn"***:
- The last of the original McLeans who had pioneered Strathalbyn was Hugh the younger who died in 1921. It is a question of how many of the descendants of the Christina and Donald's ten children were there in Strathalbyn in 1946. Edwin must have had the actual township in mind rather the surrounding farms because he was living at Maplemore which is about 15 kms from Strathalbyn – so, for a start, at least he was one of the McLeans who had not gone from around Strathalbyn. [Research: Which direct descendants were living in the district in the 1940s, and the present day? – Those with the McLean surname, and those with other surnames]
- Trevor McLean 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"* (O10 in Stories, p22).

Keough families - Christina McFee McPhee McLean = Q and James Keough = R

- Christina was born 1863 and died 1936, and James Keough was born 1856 and died 1923.
- ***"Several grandchildren named Keough [are in Strathalbyn] and some of them have grandchildren now"***: Hugh the younger's daughter, Christina, married James Keough in Hugh the younger's house in 1894. They had two daughters and four sons to carry on the Keough surname. The first four of the six children were born in Strathalbyn and then the family moved to Wentworth in NSW where the last two were born. They were all still alive in 1946. There were 21 grandchildren - 16 with the Keough surname.
- ***"They mostly have trades and are doing quite well"***:
- ***"There is not one drunkard in the lot"***:
- We would need to look more closely to confirm who were still living in Strathalbyn in 1946 (and who had trades, were doing quite well, and were not drunkards!). However, apart from the descendants of Hugh the younger, there would have been other descendants of Donald and Christina living in Strathalbyn but who do not have the McLean surname and some might not strongly identify themselves as such descendants.

..ooOOoo..