

Oswald Allan McDONALD

3-11-1886 to 27-4-1968

Biography as published in 1985 & 1995

Allan was the fifth child and third son, one of twin boys, of Flora and Joseph McDonald, and was born at Nurrabiel. First cousins born that year were Arthur Harold Tucker in South Australia and, at Noradjuha, Ethel Jane McDonald and Amy Helena Victoria McDonald. His grandparents were Rachel and Ewen McDonald and great-grandparents were Christina and Donald McLean.

World events included the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In Australia the Amalgamated Shearers' Union was formed.

Allan attended Nurrabiel State School. On leaving, he worked with his father and brother on the family farm. In October 1958 he reminisced about his early years. Notes have been reproduced as closely as possible to his jerky style of speech.

The Nurrabiel country was covered with trees, especially bulokes. You couldn't see far through them. Near the Darragan Swamp there were a lot of animals in the bush, one being the native cat. It used to spit and fight. Others were kangaroos and wallabies. and kangaroo rats. Native companions brolgas, in abundance. They would eat the crop and we would shoo them off and sometimes shoot them.

We had an underground tank for water. It was lined with buloke slabs and was near the north end of the house. The wall fell into it one year. We used to cart water from the Wartook-Natimuk channel to fill it too. More rabbits in those days and they helped to feed many a hungry family. It was known as underground mutton. Rabbit skins were 11d per dozen, possum skins 3 to 4 shillings per dozen. We'd go hunting them after we'd finished ploughing. We'd buy groceries at the store at Noradjuha and we'd sell butter three pence per pound, and eggs. to the store. One year we had a man named Gilmour working for us. He put in a crop. and ploughed five acres a day with a double-furrow plough, walking behind with three horses pulling it. In those days you sowed by hand, broadcasting it. The bag of seed was held by straps around your neck. This man was good, 'cause he used both hands. Sometimes you would fight at losing battle with ducks pinching the seed.

When the 1902 drought was on we had to take sheep out on to the road. We used to eat salted meat and would buy bread and butter from farm houses on the way. We took them on to the roads around Miga Lake and Goroke and turned round and came back through Balmoral, Casterton and Coleraine. We started the last week in October and were home by Christmas. We sold the whole lot, over a thousand of them, on the road at 4/6d a head. They were sold later by a sharpster at 6/6d a head. And it was during this drought that we even fed the cattle with thatch off the shed roofs.

There were a lot more people around those days. All on their 320-acre blocks of land. We all worked long hours then; from daylight till dark.

We moved to the Mockinya land about 1905 and the whole family had to help to clear it; and this was done by axe and hard work. Some of the stumps were pulled out by horses, and we used to get our cousin Archie Raggatt to do all with his bullocks. We burnt the stumps when they dried out. The small sticks were picked up and heaped together for burning and this was called 'emu bobbing', up and down like an emu.

Soon after we came to Mockinya there was a mouse plague, mice everywhere. They'd run up your legs and sleeves and you had to tie string around your trousers at the ankles. Cats couldn't cope, too much to eat, it was no good at all.

For food sometimes we'd kill a pig or bullock and sell some or go halves with a neighbour. I remember old Dave Flack made very good sausages and blood puddings.

You know, I was never paid wages by my father for all the work I did. He was a hard man. The only money I ever had I got from trapping possums and rabbits and selling the skins. I was 38 years old before I owned land and had money from the farm. That was when my father died.

Allan was a genuine horse-lover and to use his own expression, would feed them like kings. It was only in his later years that he came to accept farm tractors and cars. He was also very fond of children and despite his gruff manner they liked him. Allan never married. When his parents retired to Horsham in the early 1920s he carried on his farming interests with his brothers, Bill and Ted, and later with Bill after Ted died.

After the death of their mother he and his sister Jessie lived in the farmhouse until 1950 when they moved to Horsham and lived at 47 McPherson Street. He still kept his interest in farming and eventually handed over to his nephews Ian and Colin. When Jessie died in 1963 he moved to the old farmhouse where Colin and his wife Lorraine and family lived, and spent the remaining five years of his life being cared for by them. At the age of 81 years, Allan died of renal failure following an operation at the Wimmera Base Hospital. He is buried in the Horsham cemetery. A headstone marks his grave.

- SOURCE : This biography was from page 104 of "History of Ewen & Rachel McDonald & Descendants" by Jill McDonald which was originally published in 1985. It was republished as part of "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" in 1995.
- 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 or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to discover more about your family – and about privacy and copyright.