

Ewen Archer Hales RAGGATT 17-6-1883 to 30-4-1972 & **Mary May RAGGATT, nee BUTLER**

Biography as published in 1985 & 1995

Ewen Archer Hales was the fifth child, and first son of Mary and William Raggatt, and was born at Carchap. His grandparents were Rachel and Ewen McDonald and great-grandparents were Christina and Donald McLean.

The name Ewen was after his grandfather; Archer was after the winner of the first Melbourne Cup, run in 1861. This was the champion race horse from New South Wales which won the cup again in the following year, 1862. The name Hales was from jockey T. Hales who rode Grand Flaneur to victory in the Melbourne Cup on 1880. Three cousins of Archie were also born in 1883: Lucy Tucker in South Australia, Len Mott in New South Wales and Hector McDonald at Noradjuha. Lead and zinc were discovered at Broken Hill that year and the rail link between Sydney and Melbourne was completed.

Archie attended the Carchap State School for only three or four years, then simply said that he would not return, and so ended his formal schooling. There is a favourite family story from his boyhood, concerning a magpie's nest. Young Archie shinned up a tree to rob the nest, but while descending he noticed his grandfather standing at the base, swinging a rope. Grandpa's instructions were to put the eggs back at once and come down or else he'd use the rope to hang him. Reluctantly, the lad returned the eggs and was angrily attacked by the mother magpie as well as being lectured from the ground.

Archie worked often with his Uncle Jack McDonald on his farm at Wyn Wyn near Polkemmet and during this time obtained his steam engine driver's certificate. Uncle Jack had a threshing machine and did contract work at harvest time, using bullocks to move the machine from farm to farm. Young Archie was eventually put in charge, with up to twenty men working with him.

When his uncles Ern and Tom Raggatt took up land near Rainbow, Archie and his bullocks helped clear large areas of mallee scrub, for them, using a big iron roller. He also carted wheat, wool and any other merchandise. In 1905 at the Polkemmet Church of Christ Archie was married to Mary May Butler by the Reverend Combridge. May, born June 2, 1883, was the daughter of Henry and Mary Butler nee Morrison who were pioneer farmers of the Polkemmet area. May had attended Duchembegarra State School No. 2317 and later taught there. In 1915 the name of the school was changed to Nalimuk Lake. May's sister, Lily Butler, was the first wife of Alec Lampard who was later to marry Archie's sister, Jessie Raggatt.

Ella Jean White nee McDonald remembered attending her cousin Archie's wedding as a little girl and being impressed by the number of kerosene lights given the couple as presents. The young couple lived on a farm at Duchembegarra until their second daughter Elsie was about 4 years of age when they moved to a house and block in the nearby Pimpinio on the Western Highway. Later they moved to Horsham where their last address was 53 Stawell Road. Here they had six to seven acres of land adjoining, where the bullocks could graze. This area is now built over by housing and a motel.

When Archie's Aunt Flora, husband Joseph and family moved to Mockinya around 1906 he was often employed to help clear the land, pulling down medium-sized trees with his team. He did similar work on his Uncle William's farm Blackwood at Noradjuha. When his cousin Len McDonald was married in 1927 and had bought a house for removal, it was Archie and the bullocks that brought it to *Blackwood*. His Uncle William wrote in his diary of 1912: *'August 10th. Received cheque from Arch Raggati on account of bullocks 10 pounds. Deposited in Colonial Bank, Noradjuha 12/8/1912.'*

Bullocks were Archie's first love and every member of his team, which could number up to eighteen, had a name. Some still remembered are Cuddler, Star, Toby, dusty white Miller, Delver, Banker, Mick, Golden, Tinker and Curley. Archie became a well-known and colourful figure in the Wimmera area of Western Victoria. There is a yarn still recalled about the Horshain Volunteer Defence Corps during World War Two. Bill McDonald of Mockinya had an evil-tempered animal that was being worked in cousin Archie's team with the hope of quietening him. The VDC decided to hold night manoeuvres in Archie's bullock paddock on flat land between the hospital and Stawell Road. It turned into a rout with men heading for the nearest fence and the bull triumphant. He was sent to the next sale at Newmarket.

Arch Raggatt and his team were credited with being able to replace the two halves of a house to within a fraction of an inch. The Noradjuha centenary book of 1973 tells that in 1950 the trustees of the Methodist church, hoping to rid their building of white ants, had him raise it eighteen inches off the ground with his bullock team. Cost of the work was 14.pounds.

Archie and his bullock team were pictured in a Horsham newspaper of the 1950s with a brief report.

Sixty-seven year old Archie Raggatt, the Wimmera's last bullocky, doesn't smoke, drink, or swear at his bullocks. 'They're just like humans and I honestly believe they object to bad language,' Mr Raggati said. 'You must try a little tenderness.'

He rarely even touches his eighteen bullocks with his whip.

'Don't talk to me about horses — give me bullocks any day.' says Mr. Raggatt who is a Horsham carter and contractor.

'My team is booked up weeks ahead. We move at least one house every three weeks and also do ploughing, mallee rolling and all sorts of heavy cartage work. This team can pull twenty tons.'

The author Alan Marshall interviewed Archie and his wife, about 1955 for a Melbourne newspaper.

MY PEOPLE

Alan Marshall talks about

BULLOCKY WHO DOESN'T SWEAR

As far as I can gather there are three bullock teams still operating in Victoria — Archie Raggatt's team in Horsham, Bill Robinson's team in Gembrook and D. Lorimer's team at Dixon's Creek.

Of these Archie Raggatt's team is the biggest. He often uses 16 or 18 of the bullocks he has available.

Mr. Archie Raggatt is one of the best-known men in Horsham. He is 72 years old, thick-set yet active and looks at you with mild assessment while he puffs at his pipe.

Mrs. Raggatt has the fine, dignified face one often associates with women pioneers. She has a delightful sense of humor and her marriage is obviously a very happy one. The other day Archie brought her a spray of the first wattle, a ceremony he never misses each year.

It has been too wet for me to see his team in action but when I do I hope to describe it to you. However, I visited his home last night to have a yarn with him and sitting over a blazing log fire I soon realised that here was an unpretentious man with a wide knowledge of bullock driving.

Archie never swears. 'Once a bullocky swears he proves he is a bad bullocky,' he said, then added, 'But my old dad used to say I would never drive bullocks because I couldn't swear.'

While we were talking. Mrs. Raggatt came in to the room carrying a squat, straw hat which she handed to me.

'You won't know what that is,' said Archie.

But I knew all right. It was a cabbagetree hat of the kind worn by bushmen last century. It was yellow with age and the leather disc that decorated the centre of the crown was brittle and shrunken.

'My father wore that hat,' Archie told me. 'They were a great hat. The bushrangers always wore them.'

But it was Archie's great knowledge of bullock driving that I was most interested in.

'The old bullock drivers used to say that the handle of the bullock whip should be as high as you can reach,' he told me. 'I like a nine foot lash with a foot tail. To use a whip properly you must never cut a bullock, but you can drive them without using the whip on them.'

One of Archie's last jobs was in 1956 — to move the old Goroke hall to the back of the site to make way for the foundations of a new building. The town stopped work and the school children had a holiday to watch this historic activity.

Archie suffered a stroke in 1957 and spent the next fourteen years in Wimmera Base Hospital. He could not speak coherently but would communicate by the strong grip of his good hand and his expressive eyes. He was visited faithfully by his wife May and his daughters Rhee and Elsie, the latter going daily for all those years. When water beds became available Elsie and her husband bought one and had her father nursed on this by the hospital staff until he died on April 30, 1972 aged 89 years. The bed was donated to the hospital. May had died on March 11, 1969. Both are buried in Horsham Cemetery.

Children of Archie and May :-

1. Agnes Mary Raggatt Born 19-5-1906
2. Elsie May Raggatt Born 24-12-1912 - see Elsie's diary – biography 5228
3. Lynette Mary Raggatt Born 11-4-1936

- SOURCE : This biography was from page 178 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.