

Hugh Sheridan McDONALD 12-4-1890 to 20-10-1980 & **Stella McDONALD, nee WOMERSLEY**

Biography as published in 1985 & 1995

Hugh Sheridan was the eldest child of Jack and Jessie McDonald and was born at West Wail. Four of his first cousins were also born that year: Norma S. M. McDonald at Norradjuha, Angus Lloyd Raggatt at Carchap, Edwin Harold McDonald at Nurrabel and Harold A. E. Mott in New South Wales. His grandparents were Rachel and Ewen McDonald and great-grandparents were Christina and Donald McLean.

Current events of the time included the accession of Queen Wilhelmina to the throne of Holland, the start of free elementary education in England, and the birth of the French statesman Charles de Gaulle.

Hugh was nearly 9 years before he began his formal education at the Wail West State School No 3329. Leaving school he worked with his father on the family farms until joining the Victorian Railways in 1914. He became a guard and a shunter. Hugh retained vivid memories of his early life in the house on the river bank: bagging salt from the lake; people pinching sheaves of hay from paddocks to fill bog holes in wet winters; a pair of pet black swans killed by shooters while the family was at lunch; stone axes and other Aboriginal artefacts found on the property; the Aborigines' big kitchen midden on the river bank just north of the house; hearing the whistle as the train passed through Pimpinio six to seven miles away on a clear frosty night; cooking snipe shot on the lake, and the fat turning pink. Children would pick wild flowers in the springtime and exhibit them at the Dimboola Show. Hugh found a previously unknown variety and took a party of interested people to where it grew.

In 1915 Hugh enlisted in the 1st AIF and became Private H. S. McDonald, 29th Battalion. While stationed in Egypt he was camped so close to the Suez Canal that he could almost step from his tent into the water. It was here that they would drag a spreader drawn by camels, smoothing the surrounds so that sand would reveal enemy tracks. Also in Egypt, he recalls men breaking ranks to embrace the trunks of thriving gum trees — overwhelmed by this reminder of home. From Egypt they were sent via Marseilles to the trench fighting in northern France. During the battle of Fleur Baix, Hugh was injured in the face by a shell blast, subsequently losing the sight of one eye. He was taken to a London hospital - and for the first time in his life he wore pyjamas. During, his hospitalisation the Army changed its system of marking leave in pay books. Hugh was issued with a new book but retained the old and scored two lots of leave. He spent his second leave touring Scotland and was fortunate enough to take a boat trip on Loch Lomond on a rare sunny day. Snow-capped Ben Lomond was perfectly reflected in the loch. They called at a village on the shore for lunch, caught a train from Glasgow to Fort William and hired a bike to visit Ben Nevis, and saw several good herds of wild deer on the moors.

On his return to Australia, to his parents at *Nerrin Nerrin*, the owner of the property gave him a party and it was here that he met his future wife, Stella. Her father managed the racing stud attached to *Nerrin Nerrin*. On June 7, 1918 Hugh was married to Stella Womersley at St Paul's Church of England, Ascot Vale, Melbourne, by the Reverend Gason. Stella was born on July 21, 1887, the daughter of Samuel J. and Sarah Jane Womersley, and attended the Dunkeld State School No 183. After the marriage Hugh undertook further study and became a land valuer with the Victorian Taxation Department. Hugh and Stella lived most of their married life in the Melbourne area, first at Surrey Hills until 1923, then 23 MacCiowan Avenue, Glenhuntly until 1940, Heatherdale and Blairgowrie. They had three children.

Hugh and Stella and their family were members of the Church of England, and Hugh was a vestryman. About 1953 he and Stella retired to Blairgowrie on the southern shore of Port Phillip Bay. They lived there for fifteen years before seeking a warmer climate in Queensland. They lived at Maroochydore for five years and returned to Melbourne early in 1974. Hugh received a TPI pension due to his war wound but for many years still had enough sight to play bowls and tend his vegetable garden.

Stella died, aged 86 years, at Camberwell Private Hospital, Melbourne, on June 25, 1974, and was buried at Springvale lawn cemetery. Supported by his family, Hugh lived alone in his unit at 105 Wattle Valley Road, Camberwell, until his sight failed completely. For the last eighteen months of his life he was a patient in the nursing home attached to the Villa Maria Society for the Blind Centre at Wanlirna, Melbourne. Hugh died on October 20, 1980, aged 90 years, and was buried at Springvale lawn cemetery.

Children of Hugh and Stella :-

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| 1. <i>Norman Wormersley</i> McDonald | Born 9-8-1919 |
| 2. <i>Jessie May</i> McDonald | Born 22-11-1921 |
| 3. <i>William</i> Hugh McDonald | Born 27-11-1923 |

- SOURCE : This biography was from page 199 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.