

Donald (Rover) McLEAN & Mary McLEAN, nee HILLARY

Biography as published in 1995

DONALD McLEAN - born 8/3/1857. Gaelic Bible and registration. Known to the family as "Donald the Rover" and hereafter as "Donald Rover" to distinguish him from other Donald McLeans.

Parents : Christina McLean (nee Black) & Hugh (the elder) McLean

Grandparents : Christina McLean (nee McPhee) & Donald McLean

He had an interesting life and a large family so there is a good deal to set out.

HISTORY: He was born at "Coewey", Lake Alexandrina. A newspaper article of later years said he was well known at the Coorong and at Kingston where his brother Hughie's family was. He was a pioneer of Narrabeen, N.S.W. from 1883.

Donald Rover left from Meningie aged 18 years in 1875 before his father's death there in 1876. By the time he was 19 he had reached Scotland and was soon shipping horses to India. This promising line of business failed due to a famine in that country which caused a decline in trading. He trained riders and supervised the breaking-in of horses after he joined the Indian Police Force, as a trooper, the first European to do so.

Then came an accident at Calcutta and he was in hospital there for three months. He left India to return to South Australia on 19/6/1877. Unfortunately his discharge papers and effects were lost at Adelaide.

He found work at the Jesuit College vineyards near Clare, 84 miles north of the city and at the time of his marriage his occupation was that of ostler.

MARRIAGE: details from the certificate - to Mary Hillary, spinster aged 18 (Donald was 23), daughter of Anthony Hillary. Donald's residence was then at Kapunda and hers at Nadalya, Woolshed Flat. They married at the Jesuit Chapel at Seven Hills near Clare, S.A. The witnesses were J. Corcoran of Auburn, S.A. and Margaret Hillary, spinster, of Nadalya, Woolshed Flat, S.A.

The first two children were born at Auburn, S.A. By late 1883, Donald had gone to N.S.W. to see what possibilities presented themselves. By the November, he was at Narrabeen. The Manly "Daily" of May 1924 had a full page article on the history of Narrabeen with a heading "at Narrabeen - 41 years with Donald McLean". A sub-heading said "Donald McLean discovers Narrabeen". This page can be obtained from D. & C. McLean Genealogical Council, cost \$5.

A summary begins that the year 1884 when Donald McLean's whiskers were not as iron grey as after 41 years residence when as a vigorous young man of 27 he had the map of Scotland on his weather worn countenance, but continued that he was a dinkum Aussie born at Milang near Lake Alexandrina in S.A.

He settled at Narrabeen in June 1884 and remained there. He entered the employ of O. B. West of the Mt Ramsay Estate and was in charge of growing com, wheaten hay, sorghum, and reared store cattle. It also said erroneously that his grandfather Donald McLean grew the first wheat in S.A. near " Glen Osbcrne" S.A. now a suburb of Adelaide (meaning Glen Osmond perhaps).

He found contract work more rewarding and constructed Middle Head Wharf roads, bridges and wharves and rebuilt the Manly Bridge, constructed Middle Head Wharf for the Defence Dept in the 1890s. The floodgate bridge

at Kogarah and another at Belmoe. He rebuilt the Pittwater wharves near Church Point and repaired the Narrabeen Bridge and was so occupied for over 20 years.

In 1904 he began a boating business and store with contract work interspersed. On his arrival in 1884 there were only 3 other families as neighbours. His own first house was near Wetherill Street, but in 1887 he moved to the corner of Devitt St. and Pittwater Road. Others arrived but until the advent of the tram the area was sparsely populated with only 21 residents within 2 miles of the Narrabeen Receiving (Postal) Office in January 1894. On 11/11/1896 Donald succeeded as

Post Master and the office was moved to his house which became also the Telephone Office in January 1897 and his salary was increased by 10 pounds (\$20) per annum as an Operator to add to his annual 15 pounds (\$30) for his services.

He built a new brick two storey house in 1912 and the P.O. and Telephone exchange were moved there. The population had risen to 115 persons and Donald only resigned in 1930 in favour of his son Kindor. The P.O. was in McLean hands for 65 years. The Rover had been busy otherwise over the years. He had built his first boat in 1904 and by 1924 had 14 on the Lake which he hired out for fishing and pleasure parties, however he had long since ceased to rove. He fathered 14 children, 12 of whom survived. As the newspaper article expressed it "Verily he had his quiver full".

DEATH: Donald died aged 75 years at Narrabeen on 31/5/1932 and was buried at Manly on 2/6/1932. Mary's death date is not available but was in the 1938/9 period.

A photograph (photocopy) of Donald the Rover aged 18 (and another dated 26/12/1910 of himself, Mary his wife and 12 children) is with the McLean memorabilia.

CHILDREN (14) OF DONALD THE ROVER AND HIS WIFE MARY NEE HILLARY.

1. Mary McLean - born 9/10/1881 at Auburn S.A. Died in infancy on 17/11/1881
2. Florence McLean - born 23/6/1883 at Auburn S.A. (birth certificate with McLean papers). Married: Parker Johnston at Narrabeen N.S.W. who was with the Victorian Commission Nursery, Bradford. Victoria which was created 1911 for growing pine trees. A note says that Parker's father was Commissioner of Forests, Victoria and lived near Bright. They had an only daughter, Muriel (Mrs Jack Elgin of Euroa, Victoria). There were 2 Elgin sons.
3. Mary Margaret McLean - born 28/10/1885 at the "Rock Lily" Tavern, Mona Vale. Married Albert Brabant. [See biography 5045](#)
4. Adelaide Narrabeen McLean b. 1887 at Narrabeen. Married: Jocelyn Giles. Resided: at Perthville, N.S.W. Died 1978. No children.
5. Donald McLean – born 18/12/1889 at Narrabeen. Married Pearl Kearns. [See biography 5046](#)
6. Christabel McLean — born c. 1891 at Narrabeen. Married after 1925. Frank Vaughn. No children. Died in the 1940s aged 52 years.
7. Anthony (Hugh) McLean born 27/8/1895 at Narrabeen. to Myrtle Annie Burge. [See biographies 5047](#)
8. Amy Maude Hillary McLean born 4/4/1897 at Narrabeen. Unmarried. Died aged 94 years at St. Vincent's Home, Mona Vale, N.S.W. on 10/6/1991.
9. John Thomas (Jack) McLean born 18/12/1899 at Narrabeen. Occupation: Hairdresser and tobacconist of Narrabeen. Married: Edith Kearns (or Cairns) about 1918. He died aged 58 years on 22/7/1960. CHILDREN: Adelaide & Christabel.
10. Allan Christopher Lancelot Duncan McLean born 20/1/1903 at Narrabeen. Married: Gladys Chisolm. [See biography 5048](#)
11. Archibald Edward Frederick Baden McLean born 20/1/1903 at Narrabeen. Married: Phyllis McCauley. His occupation: the McLean family store, Narrabeen, He died aged 79 on 27/3/1982. There were 2 children - Allan & Margaret.
12. Kindor Lawrence Geoffrey McLean born 13/3/1905 at Narrabeen. Married: Alice Newton (b. 1907 and living 1992, the last of her generation). Information from his daughter Betty: The Narrabeen

P.O. at the McLean family store was just one small counter. Mary their mother signed all official papers although Donald Rover had the title of Post Master. Those of the children who attended at the counter at varying times were Adelaide, Allan then Kindor. After his marriage, about May 1932, Kindor requested that he take full charge with the title of Post Master and the mail and telephone sections became completely separated from the rest of the business. So Kindor became the first full Post Master of Narrabeen until the office was moved to another part of the town. After that he was Post Master for 11 years at the Balmoral Naval Depot until his retirement. Death: He died aged 76 years on 19/12/1981. His residence was then at 11 Narrabeen Rd, Narrabeen. CHILDREN: an only daughter – Betty.

13. Septimus McLean born 22/7/1907 at Narrabeen, died there 3/8/1907.

14. Honor Victoria McLean born 23/1/1909 at Narrabeen. Married 3 times. 1st marriage: to John Cusack. 2nd marriage to Anthony Gleeson. 3rd to John Clare. The first two marriages ended in divorce and the third, in about 1962, he left her a month later. There was one son from each of the first two marriages - John (junior) Cusack b. 1934, and Michael Gleeson. She died 20/10/1962 aged 53 years. Places of residence not given.

- SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 219 to 224.
- 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.