

Elizabeth Ann JOHNSTON, nee McLEAN & Matthew JOHNSTON

Biography as published in 1995

ELIZABETH ANN McLEAN born 9/12/1874 at Strathalbyn, the 8th child of Hugh the Younger & his wife (nee Tannahill).

Parents : Margaret McLean (nee Tannahill) & Hugh (the younger) McLean

Grandparents : Christina McLean (nee McPhee) & Donald McLean

MARRIAGE: on 13/11/1896. Notice in the "Southern Argus" of 19/11/1896:

"Johnston - McLean. At the residence of Mrs Jeffreys of Strathalbyn, the aunt of the bride, by the Rev. G. C. Love B.D. Matthew Johnston of Kalgoorlie, W.A. son of Mr Johnston of Woodchester. to Elizabeth Ann, daughter of Mr Hugh McLean " Matthew was born on 20/10/1865.

DEATHS: of Matthew Johnston in 1936 at Perth, W.A. interred at Karrakatta Cemetery. He was a son of John Johnston of Woodchester. S.A. & his wife Brigette (nee Corrigan). His birthdate has been given as 1865 and by another family member as 1856. Registration in S.A. was 3/11/1864.

Elizabeth Ann Johnston died at hospital on 17/11/1948 aged 74 years. at Merredin, W.A. She was interred at Karrakatta. Perth, according to family.

HISTORY from a descendant:

Matthew had opened a store at Kalgoorlie, W.A. in partnership with his brother Edward during the gold rush there in the 1890s and later one at Lakeside, then a branch at Mt Malcolm where they also set up an hotel. Matthew came back to Strathalbyn to the home of his bride's aunt, Mrs Jeffrey for the ceremony, as her mother was deceased. The witnesses were Mary Ann & Robert Johnston.

It was to arid Kalgoorlie and its environs that Elizabeth was taken to commence her married life. They travelled as far as Albany, W.A. by boat as it was not until 1917 that the railway reached W.A. and by this time the brothers were at Mt Malcolm, Elizabeth & Matthew reached there by wagon and the last few days their diet consisted of only ginger biscuits. From Malcolm they moved to Leonora & Gwalia as further gold discoveries were made.

Elizabeth found her life frightening amongst primitive aborigines and she feared to venture out of doors, so the natives advised Matthew to kill her, as they believed that she was sulky & "no good". Her first child survived only eight months. For the birth of her second child she returned to Strathalbyn which meant a journey of three weeks by stage coach to reach a boat. The effort was worthwhile as the girl child was strong and healthy (1899).

So it was then back to her husband at Mt Malcolm. Fortunately by the third child's arrival a trained nurse, Hannah Harper came to town & commenced a hospital and saw Elizabeth through the next several births. So great was Elizabeth's faith in Hannah Harper, that when she left Mt Malcolm to start hospitals at Armadale & Kelmscott (from 1910) Elizabeth followed her for the births of her two youngest babies.

Her fear of the blacks was not surprising as they were primitive & held their corroborees nearby & dispensed their justice that often ended in the death of the accused. When Elizabeth gave her wedding gown to one of the young women as it no longer fitted her, she had to witness other gins in their jealousy, tear it to shreds. When a gold robbery was reported to be imminent the mine manager had the Johnstons hide a large quantity in their chimney. In appreciation a brooch, a solid gold bar, was presented to each of the two eldest daughters, their names being engraved on them. Myrtle's is still in her possession, but Margaret lost hers in 1966 with other jewellery, a ruby & pearl bracelet & a brooch Matthew designed for Elizabeth to mark an anniversary, during a break-in by a thief.

At Mt Malcolm their residence adjoined the shop 8. the natives were continually robbing them of liquor and butter grease paper which they used to rub grease into their hair with red clay which hardened and rattled and gave them great pleasure. Owing to the heat and to the materials used in the construction of their dwellings fire was a constant danger, even mice chewing on wax matches causing them to ignite would start a fire.

During one fire a dressing table with a small drawer on each side used by Elizabeth & Matthew to keep their personal effects safe was burnt in the centre causing the two small drawers to fall together and bum and melted and interlocked their wedding and signet rings. These rings were on display in the window of a Perth jeweller where they had been taken for remoulding into one heavy wedding ring. This was stolen together with the other items in 1966.

Elizabeth mothered two of her grandsons when their mother died shortly after the birth of Russell, the younger. She had cared for children of family members whenever called upon.

Of other reminiscences: during the first court case in the town there was no Bible available to swear in the witnesses so a call was made to Elizabeth to lend the Bible given to her on her wedding day at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Strathalbyn (according to the writer of the above) but as has been seen in the newspaper notice the ceremony was at Aunt Ann Jeffreys house.

After the fire of 1903 at Mt Malcolm Elizabeth & Matthew built a block of shops at Gwalia. This business was sold in 1911 and they settled at Perth where Matthew worked for the council. After his death and during the war Elizabeth lived with her daughter Clover at Wagin. Then while visiting them at Merredin, W.A. in 1948 she died in the hospital.

Both Matthew's parents are buried at the Strathalbyn Cemetery in grave no. 1/225.

His mother Brigette (nee Corrigan) died at the age of 59 on 17/10/1892. His father John Johnston died aged 81 years on 25/9/1911 — so their birthdates were approximately: Bridgette in 1833 8- John in 1830.

CHILDREN OF ELIZABETH & MATTHEW JOHNSTON:

1. Robert Malcolm Johnston born 8/8/1897 at Mt Malcolm, W.A. Robert was the first white child born there and was given a parcel of land by the Council to commemorate the event. Death: of baby Robert in 1898 aged 8 months (the land was reclaimed). Interred at the Kalgoorlie Cemetery and a plaque was placed on the grave many years later.
2. Margaret Olive Johnston born 18/4/1899 at Strathalbyn S.A. [See biography 5219](#)
3. Myrtle Annie Johnston born 9/5/1901 at Star St. Mt Malcolm, W.A. Marriage to Frederick Clive Carless. [See biographies 5220](#)
4. Gordon James Johnston – born 22/8/1903 at Leonora, WA. Married three times – to Ruth Weller Long and then Agnes May Downing, and then to Patricia Thomas. [See biographies 5222](#)
5. Ivy Elizabeth Johnston – born 4/10/1905 at Leonora WA. [See biographies 5224](#)
6. May Johnston – born 25/5/1907 at Leonora, WA. Died in 1912 at the age of 5 years. Interred at Karrakatta.
7. Ivan Matthew Johnston – born 25/5/1909 at Gwalia WA. Married Ada Douglas. [See biographies 5225](#)
8. Clover Johnston – born 13/10/1912 at Armadale, WA. Married Robert Cecil Loder. [See biographies 5226](#)
9. Muriel Heather Johnston b. 4/10/1916 at Kelmscott, W.A. Occupation: (premarriage) Machinist. Married: George Sydney Loder - brother of Robert Cecil Loder who married Muriel's sister Clover Johnston. Wedding at Maylands Presbyterian church, Perth. Death: of George Loder on 14/5/1985. Residence: in 1955 of Muriel (in phone book, Tuart Hill) from the family, the same street (Morley Drive) but suburb Balcatta. History: none supplied. Four children – 1943, 1947, 1954 & 1958.

• SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 558 to 567.
• 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.