

*MCLEANS FROM DRIMNIN, MORVERN AND MITCHELLS FROM KINGAIRLOCH, LISMORE AND APPIN AND THEIR LIVES IN SCOTLAND, NEW SOUTH WALES AND QUEENSLAND DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

**Bruce Runnegar<sup>1</sup>**

*INTRODUCTION*

Family folklore has it that our mother's brother, Uncle Bill (William Alexander Ronald Cowdry, 1903-1996) was named for his three grandfathers, *William Cowdry* (1850-1924), *Alexander McLean* (1842-1918) and *Ronald Mitchell* (1834-1893). This is puzzling because both William Cowdry and Alexander McLean had enjoyed long and happy marriages. So, who was Ronald Mitchell and how could he be Bill Cowdry's third grandfather? Family history research provided the answer but it also revealed how three men displaced by the Highland clearances from nineteenth century Scotland helped develop the emerging state of Queensland. It also showed how bleak were their prospects in Scotland and how successful Queensland was for them and their families.

Alexander McLean and his mother's brother, John McLean, both became master mariners of the Queensland coast, commanding the well-known vessels *Leichardt* and *Governor Blackall*, amongst others. Ronald Mitchell and his family were immigrants on the Black Ball barque *Ariadne*, which famously carried 259 British migrants to the developing port of Maryborough in 1862.<sup>2</sup> That was just before James Nash's discovery of gold at Gympie in 1867, an event which both rescued Queensland and substantially enriched nearby Maryborough. Similarly, John McLean's pioneering entry into the Trinity Bay inlet in the *Leichardt* in 1876 was in response to a need for a port to carry supplies to and from the recently discovered Hodgkinson goldfield; the city of Cairns is the result.<sup>3</sup> As to Ronald Mitchell, he became the first Crown Lands Ranger of Fraser Island (K'gari)—the world's largest sand island—and is credited with planting an enormous number of kauri pine seedlings with the help of his son Alexander (1863-1930), an early experiment aimed at sustainable management of the heritage-listed island's hardwood and native conifer forests.<sup>4</sup>

The 'third grandfather' conundrum was solved with the discovery that Alexander McLean's mother, Margaret (Peggy) McLean (1820-1874), had married Ronald Mitchell's father Donald Mitchell (1792-1877) in 1860 (Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Runnegar is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Los Angeles and an Emeritus Professor of the University of New England, Armidale. He is also Alexander McLean's great-grandson.

<sup>2</sup> Kay Gassan and Judith A. Grimes, *Tall Ships on the River: Ariadne 1862 A turning Point in the History of Maryborough* (Maryborough: Ariadne Committee, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> 'Fifty Years Ago', *Brisbane Telegraph*, Friday 8 October (1926), p. 8, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article177796310>; J. W. Collinson, 'Trinity Bay - First Ship to Enter', *Courier-Mail*, Saturday 12 September (1936), p. 24, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37019412>.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Williams, *Princess K'Gari's Fraser Island: A history of Fraser Island* (Emu Park, QLD: Fred Williams, 2002), p. 99.

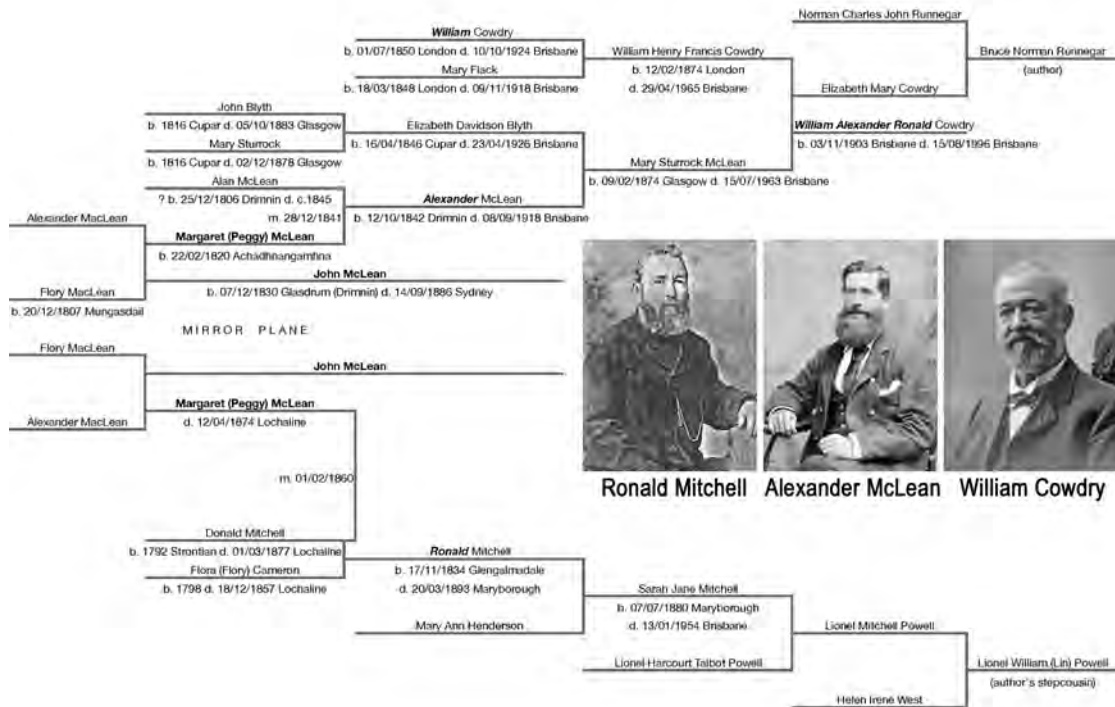


Figure 1. Skeleton trees to illustrate the relationships of the ‘three grandfathers’ of William Alexander Ronald Cowdry (1903-1996): William Cowdry (1850-1924), Alexander McLean (1842-1918) and Ronald Mitchell (1834-1893) and their connection by the second marriage of Donald Mitchell (1792-1877) to Margaret (Peggy) McLean (1820-1874). For additional details see Appendix 1.

Margaret’s first husband, Allan McLean (1806-1845), had died soon after they were married, and she became a widow and pauper for about 15 years. During that time, she and her children, Alexander and his sister Raonail (Rachel), were evicted from the Drimmin estate—a traditional MacLean stronghold on the coast of Morvern opposite Tobermory in Mull—to Lochaline village, a repository for those cleared from the farm lands (Figure 2). There she met Donald Mitchell, first as servant and lover, and had four illegitimate and legitimate children, all probably with him, between 1853 and 1863. They were married in Lochaline after the death of Donald’s wife Flora (Flory) Cameron (1798-1857) by the same Presbyterian minister, Rev. John McLeod, who had married Margaret and Allan in 1841.

Ronald Mitchell was born and grew up on another traditional MacLean estate, Kingairloch, on the western side of Loch Linnhe, then part of the parish of Lismore and Appin (Figure 2). Ronald and his family left Kingairloch sometime after the 1851 census, when they were living at ‘Loch Corry’ and ‘North Corry’, settlements at the head of Loch a’ Choire, and before 1860 when his father Donald married Peggy McLean in Lochaline. By 1860, Ronald had moved to Glasgow, courted and married Mary Ann Henderson (1841-1917) and welcomed their first son Archibald (1860-1946).

### *ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPLORING LIFE IN SCOTLAND*

How did Alexander McLean get to know Ronald Mitchell? Presumably, they met in Lochaline after Donald and his family moved there. One assumes that Ronald would have visited his father at least at the time of Donald’s marriage to Peggy McLean or

before he and his family emigrated to Australia. However, Alexander was a ‘visitor’ in Lochaline village during the 1861 census and so may have already have moved to Glasgow and known Ronald there, prior to the departure of the Mitchells for Australia. In any case, Alexander had become a merchant seaman working out of the port of Glasgow by 1866, and he was married to Elizabeth Davidson (Eliza) Blyth (1846-1926) in 1868.<sup>5</sup> They had three children in Glasgow before Elizabeth and the children joined Alexander in Sydney in 1876.

There is no record of John McLean in Morvern after the 1841 census and his death certificate indicates that he was married in Sydney prior to 1860. As Alexander’s uncle, he presumably saw him grow up and may have acted as a surrogate elder brother following the untimely death of Alexander’s father. It may be surmised that he helped Alexander make the transition from agricultural labourer to mariner, as he himself must have done. What is clear however is that Alexander lived with John McLean at his home in Riley Street, Surry Hills, NSW—an inner suburb of Sydney—after he emigrated to Australia in 1874. The arrivals log of the *Nineveh*, the sailing ship that carried the McLean family to Sydney in 1876, records: “Husband in Colony, Alexander McLean, Riley St., Surrey Hills.” Furthermore, John’s wife Margaret Stephenson was a witness to the birth of Alexander and Elizabeth McLean’s fourth child, Archibald, in Sydney in 1878. Additional support for a close relationship is provided by the publication in Brisbane newspapers of memorial notices for the death of ‘John McLean, master mariner, who died in Sydney 14<sup>th</sup> September 1886, in his 53rd year’; these can only have been inserted by Alexander McLean and his family, who had moved to Queensland by 1885.<sup>6</sup>

Did John McLean also know Ronald Mitchell in Scotland? It’s likely. The McLean family (Margaret, Alexander and Rachel) had moved to Lochaline village by 1851 and Margaret’s first illegitimate child, who died unnamed at the age of 15 months, was born in 1853. If his father was Donald Mitchell, as seems likely, then the Mitchell family may have interacted with the McLeans as soon as the early 1850s. Some support for this timing may come from a terse sentence in Elizabeth Runnegar’s summary of contact between the McLean and Mitchell families in Queensland (Appendix 2): “When he heard Ronald Mitchell had come to Maryborough, Capt McLean hurried up from Sydney to see him.” If true, this “Capt McLean” can only have been John McLean; Alexander was still in Scotland in 1862 and he was not made a master mariner until 1882.

During the time after he emigrated from Scotland and before his family arrived in Sydney (1874-1876), Alexander was second mate of the Australasian Steam Navigation (ASN) Company’s mail steamer RMSS *Macgregor* trading to San Francisco. In June 1875, the *Macgregor* encountered extraordinarily dangerous conditions in the Tasman Sea during a crossing to New Zealand, as reported in great detail by a passenger, who concluded:

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<sup>5</sup> By the time he was 21, Alexander McLean had become a merchant seaman in Glasgow. He served on the sailing ship *Three Bells* (594 tons) from August 1866 to July 1867 and the steamer *Cumbrae* (387 tons) from March 1871 to January 1872, certificate dated May 10, 1872, General Register and Record Office of Seamen, Adelaide Place, London Bridge, E.C.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Births, Marriages and Deaths’, *Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday September 14 (1887), p. 4, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3478671>; Friday September 14 (1888), p. 4, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3485138>.



Figure 2. Maps of places in Scotland and Brisbane mentioned in the text. Insert silhouette of Scotland shows locations of the Morvern peninsula (M, orange), Glasgow (G), and Edinburgh (E).

“Too much cannot be said in praise of Captain Grainger and his officers for the coolness and ability which they showed throughout the trying circumstances.”<sup>7</sup>

How robust are the nineteenth century relationships shown in the Mitchell and McLean trees (Figure 1)? The Old Parochial Registers (OPRs) for the parishes of Morvern and the Loch a’ Choire region of Lismore and Appin (now part of Ardgour) compiled by ministers of the Church of Scotland have been digitized and microfilmed and are available for purchase from ScotlandsPeople or for examination free of charge at the Lochaber Archive Centre, Fort William, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Although these are an invaluable resource, and were diligently maintained in Morvern by the Rev. Norman McLeod (1745-1824) and his youngest son and successor, the Rev. John McLeod (1801-1882), they do not include deaths and are incomplete in their coverage of inhabitants. Nevertheless, they have revealed family relationships that were unknown even to the grandchildren of Alexander McLean, all of whom are long deceased. Furthermore, when coupled with the decadal census returns from 1841, 1851 and 1861, they provide a view of domestic life during the period of interest (1800-1870). Using these documents—still readable in the original hands—it is possible to gain an impression of life in the rural settlements of Morvern and Ardgour during the first half of the nineteenth century.

There is also an excellent context for this kind of thinking. *Morvern Transformed* by Philip Gaskell summarises and catalogues a vast amount of historical and archival information about Morvern in the nineteenth century in a superbly scholarly fashion and also provides details that could only be obtained by extensive field observations at the time it was written.<sup>9</sup> It was an invaluable resource, as was the Drimnin House Archive, generously made available on three separate occasions. The well-preserved and partly reconstructed traditional village of Auchindrain, south of Inverary, has furnished period cottages and other buildings that one can enter and compare with the ruins of similar structures at the Morvern settlements of Auliston and Uladail. Other surviving early structures, most of which have been extensively modified, are still in service (Figure 3). Last but not least, one can meet local inhabitants and try to find those few who have some personal connection to, or knowledge of, this distant past. Iain Thornber of Knock House, Lochaline is one such person. His books, pamphlets and regular contributions to the *Oban Times* connect Morvern’s past and present in enlightening and entertaining ways. Of particular importance is Thornber’s edited and extensively annotated version of Norman MacLeod’s nineteenth century bestseller *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish*, which MacLeod (1812-1872) wrote as a celebration of his grandfather Norman’s and uncle John’s stewardship of the parish for a total of 107 years.<sup>10</sup>

So how good are the family trees? In the Mitchells’ case almost watertight. There were very few Mitchells in Lismore and Appin and even fewer in Morvern. Furthermore, they mostly stayed together. So, although there are some loose ends,

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<sup>7</sup> ‘The late voyage of the *Macgregor* from Sydney’, *Queensland Times*, Tuesday July 20 (1875), p. 4, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article122069376>.

<sup>8</sup> ScotlandsPeople at <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed: A Highland Parish in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Norman MacLeod, *Morvern: A Highland Parish*, ed. Iain Thornber (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002).

such as Ronald Mitchell's movements between 1851 when he was an unmarried animal herder at Kingairloch, and 1860 when he married Mary Henderson in Glasgow, the record of this particular branch of the Mitchell clan is unexpectedly complete.



Figure 3. Surviving early nineteenth century buildings in rural Scotland. See Appendix 1 for details.

Ronald Mitchell's grandfather, Alexander Mitchell, was born in the parish of Ardnamurchan in about 1755 and probably died at Kinloch Teacuis in Morvern, where he and his wife Janet (née Cameron) were living with their youngest son Hugh (b. 1818) during the 1841 and 1851 censuses. According to the OPR and census records, Alexander was a blacksmith and passed that trade on to Hugh. They had at least four other children: Donald (b. c.1792), Ronald's father and Margaret McLean's second husband; Allan (b. 1805); Archibald (b. 1808 at Scotstown, a village that serviced the Strontian lead mines); and Cathrine (b. 1811, also at 'Scots Town'). Janet had been born in Strontian and Alexander was a blacksmith in Scotstown so it is probably safe to assume that Donald was born in or near Strontian. Donald's brother

Hugh is probably immortalized in an old Morvern song about a rat plague that followed the great potato famine of 1846-7.<sup>11</sup>

Rinn iad a mach Ceann Loch Tiachdias  
 Gharr iad lion air Eoghan Meidseal  
 Mhill iad muinntir Thor-an-eighinn  
 Gus an d'fhuair iad ceithir chait.

They headed out by Kinloch Teacuis  
 They cut Ewen [Hugh] Mitchell's net  
 They despoiled the people of Torr-an-eidhinn  
 Until they acquired four cats.

Lead mining and smelting in Strontian prospered during the Napoleonic era but was phased out by about 1850 as the effects of lead poisoning became well understood.<sup>12</sup> Whether the postwar decline in the demand for lead had any effect on the movements of the Mitchells is not known, but they were in 'Lismore' (Kingairloch) by the time Hugh was born (c.1818). Their eldest son Donald married Flora (Flory) Cameron (1798-1857), daughter of a tenant farmer named Alexander Cameron, two years later. Donald and Flory had seven children, most on various parts of the Kingairloch estate (Figure 2): Donald Jr (b. c.1820, no OPR record); Alexander (b. 1821 at 'Kingairloch'); Mary (b. 1830 at 'Kinloch', a farmhouse on Kinloch Teacuis, NW Morvern); Allan (b. 1832 at 'Glengalmadale'); Ronald (b. 1834, also at Glengalmadale); Jean (b. 1837 at 'Kennacollie' [Ceann na Collie], a pasture on the west side of Kingairloch near Loch Uisge); and Janet (b. 1840, also at Ceann na Collie). The Mitchells were still at Ceann na Collie in 1841, sharing the property with a Donald Cameron and his family (possibly relatives of Flora), but by 1851 had moved to 'Loch Corry' (Loch a' Choire), where Donald Mitchell was described as a labourer and cottar, in other words, landless. After then, the family members of interest (Donald + Flory and Ronald) must have moved to Lochaline village and Glasgow, respectively. In Glasgow, Ronald Mitchell lived in Barrack Street, east of the Central railway station. He married Mary Henderson at her nearby home, 1 Little Dovehill, on June 1, 1860. Their first son, Archibald, was born on November 15 at 133 Sydney Street, just around the corner from Barrack Street, and they left Liverpool for Queensland on June 5, 1862.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Iain Thornber, *Rats – An Old Morvern Song* (Oban: Iain Thornber, 1989), endnote 12.

<sup>12</sup> Strontian is famous for giving its name to the element strontium, which was isolated from strontianite (strontium carbonate), which was also mined profitably in the early nineteenth century; Guenter B. Risse, "“Mill Reek” in Scotland: Construction and management of lead poisoning", *Clio Medica*, Vol. 78, pp. 199-228 (2005).

<sup>13</sup> Remarkably, there is still a detached cottage at 131 Sydney Street, Glasgow G31 1JF. The original building is overgrown, obscured by twentieth century additions and embedded in a parking lot. However, judging from the exterior brickwork and the fact that the fireplace and cooking area are separated from the rear of the cottage, it seems to be period. It is the headquarters of C. & W. Summers, glass and glazing contractors, a family-owned business established in 1848, presumably at this site. Investigation of the history of real estate on the block with the assistance of the Property Information Team, Keeper of the Registers of Scotland, has revealed that this cottage was embedded in block of four-story tenements (flats plus shops) when the Mitchells lived there. Thus, it is apparent that they left the slums of industrial Glasgow for life on almost pristine Fraser Island (Appendix 2).

With regard to the McLeans, it had originally been thought to be a hopeless quest to move backwards in time as Alexander McLean's mother, Margaret McLean, had married an Allan McLean and there were many similarly named McLeans living in Morvern when Alexander was born. However, the OPRs, census records and the Drimnin House Archive have revealed a rich and complex set of relationships for Margaret and her side of the family. Unfortunately, the same is not true for Allan's side, but even he appears briefly but certainly in the OPR and Drimnin House Archive documents. However, the OPR birth record tentatively attributed to him is not yet confirmed by any independent source. One reason for being skeptical of the McLean genealogy is the fact that it requires Margaret's mother, Flory McLean (1807-18??), to have been married at the age of 11 and to have given birth to Margaret ten months later, when she was nearing 13. This disconcerting discovery seems believable for the reasons set out below.

The Margaret McLean, who we presume was Alexander McLean's mother, was born in 1820 at Achadh nan Gamhna, a farm bordering one of the freshwater lochs north of Lochaline. Her parents were Alexander McLean and Flory McLean. She next appears in the 1841 census living at Achleanan, a farm on the Drimnin estate (Figure 2), as an unmarried female servant aged about 20.<sup>14</sup> She married Allan McLean, a stonemason at Drimnin, later that year and they had their first child, Alexander, 10 months afterwards. A second child, Raonailt (Rachel), was born two years later. Then Allan died and Margaret became a widow and pauper who required and was granted parochial support (three shillings per month) under the Poor Law Act of 1845. Towards the end of 1850, she and her children were evicted from their house at the Mains of Drimnin, the 'Home Farm'. Copies of reports of the Inspectors of the Poor beginning in 1845 that were assembled by Joanne Semple and are now held in the Drimnin House Archive record this eviction: "Widow Peggy McLean, formerly at Drimnin. She has now been ejected from her dwelling there and is now without a place to shelter herself and her children. The committee instructs the inspector to take immediate steps to procuring a house for the applicant."<sup>15</sup>

Also relevant are a series of letters written by Henry Nisbet, a Tobermory solicitor retained by Lady Helen Gordon, the estate owner, to carry out the legal work needed to enable the evictions (Appendix 3).<sup>16</sup> One reads: "I have your Ladyship's note of yesterday. I can see no greater hardship in the case of Peggy McLean than any other ordinary ejection. She was duly charged to remove and she knew what the result would be unless she went away of her own accord, that she would be put out by force. Of all this she got proper notice. The officer also did well to postpone the ejection till she returned home in the evening. I return you Dr McLeod's letter as directed." Thus, it seems that the Rev. John McLeod attempted to intercede on the McLeans' behalf to delay or prevent the eviction. For that, we applaud him! Henry Nisbet drafted a reply to McLeod in which he suggested that Lady Gordon could avoid further complaints by finding accommodation for Peggy McLean. The revised version of the draft, which

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<sup>14</sup> In 1841 Margaret was living with John Ramage and his family at Achleanan. By 1851, the Ramages had moved to Bonnavoulin, where Ramage became the tenant of an 80-acre farm. He was clearly a key person on the Drimnin estate as he was the first summoned to help save the contents of old Drimnin House when it was being consumed by fire in 1849, see Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> 'PAUPERS 1845-1864', Parochial Board Reports, Drimnin House Archive.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Nisbet, *Nisbet Letterbook*, handwritten copies of letters written by solicitor Henry Nisbet to clients and others (Mull Museum, Tobermory, 1847-1850).



was sent to McLeod, omitted this suggestion. Possibly the idea was vetoed in the meantime by Lady Gordon (Appendix 3).

However, Lady Gordon was not entirely to blame. The proximal reason for the ejection is also well known. Peter McNab, manager of Achranich—a property on the eastern side of Loch Aline—and his son Alexander were granted the lease to the Mains of Drimnin after the previous tenant William McKillop and his family left for New South Wales.<sup>17</sup> Alexander took over as tenant in 1840 and then borrowed a substantial sum (£500) in order to purchase stock and make improvements. He was not successful and the McNabs and their subtenants and cottars were required to leave by Whitsunday 1850.<sup>18</sup> The house that Peggy McLean and her children had inhabited was made available to her by the McNabs in exchange for service and therefore she had never been considered a tenant by Lady Gordon or the estate's Trustees (Appendix 3). Consequently, Margaret McLean had no ability under Scottish law to contest the eviction, even if she had been able to do so. Presumably, this arrangement with the McNabs developed after her husband Allan died and there was no longer income to pay the rent.

By March 30, 1851, the date of the 1851 census, the McLeans were living with another family in Lochaline village. Margaret is described as the head of a family of four (herself age 29, Helen sister 14, Alexander son of head 8 and 'Rejinald' (Raonailt) daughter 7). She is still a pauper receiving some support from the Parochial Board but is also a 'general servant'. The presence of Helen is especially important as she provides the first direct link to Margaret's siblings, with whom we have had no previous connection.

The OPRs attribute five other children to Margaret's presumed parents, Alexander and Flory McLean. All were born at the Drimnin settlement known as Gasdrum (Figure 2), a row of scattered cottages running in a northwesterly direction from Achnacriche, then an inn that was enlarged to accommodate the Gordons after old Drimnin House was destroyed by fire 1849, and now a guesthouse at the entrance to the Drimnin estate (Figure 3A). In chronological order, Margaret's presumed siblings are young Flory (b. 1822), Alexander (b. 1825), Marjory (b. 1828), John (b. 1830) and Helen (b. 1833). Helen is the sister who was living with Margaret and her children in Lochaline village in 1851; the reported age discrepancy (14 versus 18) is not remarkable for early census records. Equally important in this context is the younger son John, because the John McLean who housed Alexander McLean in Sydney is described in his New South Wales death certificate and obituary as having been born at Glasdrum from a father named Alexander.<sup>19</sup>

What is known about Margaret's mother, Flory? She was born in 1807 at the adjoining estate, Mungasdail, just across the Mungasdail River from Glasdrum (Figure 2). Her parents were Donald McLean and Anne McLean [née McLean]. This parentage is supported by Margaret McLean's statutory marriage and death certificates, which list her mother's maiden name as McLean. Furthermore, Flory's parents Donald and Anne McLean had another child, Donald, who was born at Drimnin in 1805, two years before Flory. He married a Mary McInnis in 1829 and

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<sup>17</sup> Drimnin House Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Drimnin House Archives and letters on the following pages of Nisbet (1847-1850): 306, 374, 399-400, 402, 470, 515, 527, 534, 543, 626, 627.

<sup>19</sup> NSW death certificate; 'Deaths', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuesday September 21 (1886), p. 1, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13642180>.

they had at least three children at Drimnin between 1830 and 1839. According to the 1841 census record, there were two families living next to one another in Glasdrum, one headed by Flory McLean, aged 40 (plus Archibald [sic; Alexander] 15, Marjory 12, John 9) and the other headed by Donald McLean, aged 40 (plus Duncan 8, Archibald 2, Janet 8, Helen 1). It seems inescapable that Flory—who was apparently widowed by 1841—and her younger children including John were living next to her brother Donald and his family. The big discrepancy is between the dates of their marriages, Flory's in 1819 when she was 11, and Donald's in 1829, when he was 24. However, Flory's daughter Flory was born in 1822, only two years after Margaret. So even if Margaret's inclusion in this family group were erroneous, Flory McLean would still have been remarkably underage in modern terms (14) at the time of her daughter Flory's birth. There seems little doubt that the relationships shown on this part of the McLean tree are correct.

Glasdrum was 'thinned' by Lady Gordon in 1850, so it is hardly surprising that there is no trace of Flory and Margaret's siblings in Morvern during the 1851 census. Their ejection from Glasdrum may have led directly to John McLean's emigration to New South Wales and that may, in turn, have influenced Alexander McLean to follow him, at least on an exploratory basis. Although John McLean was married in Australia for approximately thirty years, he died prematurely from cancer without issue in 1886 so nothing is known about him through family anecdotes or written records.

Alexander's sister is also a shadowy person. She was given the beautiful Gaelic name of Raonailt, but as was seen from the 1851 census where she was listed as 'Reginald', it was difficult for others to spell and perhaps pronounce. We know her as Rachel—the English translation—from the 1861 census, when she was living in Lochaline village, and from Alexander McLean and Elizabeth Blyth's marriage certificate, which she witnessed. That marriage took place at the bride's father's holiday cottage at Kemback in Fife, so at least in 1868 she escaped from Morvern. Whether she lived or married in the Lowlands is, unfortunately, unknown. The collection of books, newspaper clippings, documents, drawings, photographs and objects that have come down from Alexander McLean and the Blyth side of the family makes no mention of Rachel.

Alexander's father, Allan McLean, is also not well documented. There are several Allan McLeans of about the right age in the Morvern OPRs, but the most likely candidate is the Allan McLean born at Drimnin in 1806 to Charles McLean and Flory MacEachern (the other Allan McLeans were born elsewhere). Apart from this, we know that he was a stonemason at Drimnin when he married Margaret McLean, that he was employed doing roadwork at Drimnin in 1843 and that he died around 1845. It has not been possible to find anything more about his parents or any possible siblings and there is no record of his death. He may have been buried in a graveyard such as the one at Mungasdail that is associated with the ruined church of St Fintan, Cill Dhonnaig (Figure 2), but a field burial in an unmarked grave is also likely. Conditions in Morvern for the working class at that time were little better than they were in the Middle Ages. This is clear from James Boswell's detailed diary of the tour of Scotland he made with Samuel Johnson in 1773.<sup>20</sup> Although they did not visit

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<sup>20</sup> Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett, *Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, L.L.D. (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1936).

Morvern, Boswell's descriptions of their transport and the homes and meals provided by their titled hosts in Tobermory and other parts of Mull are remarkably medieval.

#### *CONTRASTS BETWEEN OPPORTUNITIES IN SCOTLAND AND AUSTRALIA*

Alexander McLean did well to grow up in rural Morvern and prosper in suburban Brisbane. He survived the loss of his father at the age of three; the almost synchronous sudden death of the Drimnin estate owner, Sir Charles Gordon, and all of the uncertainty that must have engendered; the great potato famine of 1846-7; the destruction of old Drimnin House by fire in 1849; and the bankruptcy of the McNabs and his family's eviction from their home on the Drimnin estate in 1850, when he was seven. Alexander's mother Peggy was illiterate, not even being capable of signing her marriage registration form in 1860, and she may have spoken only Gaelic. In 1843, forty percent of the inhabitants of Morvern were illiterate, and the educational needs of the parish were served by one part-time schoolmaster and two teaching assistants. At that time, there were only three schools, two at Lochaline and one in Bonnavoulin.<sup>21</sup> Similar conditions probably prevailed at Kingairloch, where Gaelic-speaking children may have been given some schooling by itinerant teachers prior to 1847, when a Mrs Jane McLaren was appointed as teacher by the parish. The first dedicated school building was built in 1857 as an adjunct to the Kingairloch church.<sup>22</sup> This discrepancy in educational opportunity may explain why Ronald Mitchell remained a forest ranger for the rest of his working life whereas John and Alexander McLean were both able to achieve the advanced qualifications needed to become master mariners. We can also speculate how the infamous 'clearances' of the Highlands and Islands applied to these particular small family groups. Achadh nan Gamhna, where Margaret was born, and two adjacent farms, Agh Choire and Unibeg, were held as a cooperative 'club' until they were purchased by the notorious Patrick Sellar as part of the Acharn estate in 1838.<sup>23</sup> However, by 1822 when Margaret's sister Flory was born, the family had already moved to the Drimnin estate (possibly to Glasdrum) where they were in 1841. As has been seen, Margaret was at Achleanan in 1841, just a few months before she married Allan. He was also on the estate, possibly at the Mains of Drimnin, a settlement midway between Glasdrum and Auliston (Figure 2).

Achleanan was cleared about 1840.<sup>24</sup> However, the Ramage household, where Margaret was at the time of the 1841 census, was not affected and the house was still occupied by family members in 1851 after John Ramage and his wife had moved to Bonnavoulin. Margaret presumably moved to the Mains of Drimnin when she married Allan at the end of 1841. Both the Mains and Glasdrum were downsized around 1850, at the time when Margaret and her family were evicted from Drimnin and moved to Lochaline village. As mentioned previously, Margaret's immediate family had also

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<sup>21</sup> Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Anne E. Cameron, *Kingairloch Church and School, Kingairloch* (Scotland: Yeoman (Morvern) Ltd, 1999), p. 33.

<sup>23</sup> Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, p. 156.

left Drimnin by the date of the 1851 census but her cousin's family, Donald and Mary McLean and two of the children, Janet and Archibald, were still at Glasdrum in 1851.

With the considerable advantage of more than a century and a half of hindsight, is it possible to say whether the clearances were good or bad for this family? There are far too many descendants to be able to answer this question in anything more than a general way, but it may be instructive to look at one male product from each of Bill Cowdry's 'three grandfathers', William Cowdry, Alexander McLean, and Ronald Mitchell.

Bill Cowdry and his wife Elsie had no children, so hope for the Cowdry name was pinned on their nephew, Corporal Herbert Cameron (Cam) Cowdry, who died in action on December 19, 1942 fighting the Japanese in Papua New Guinea. In contrast, the McLeans are an enormously successful clan with numerous, high-achieving descendants. A celebration to mark the centenary of the arrival of Alexander's family in Sydney in 1876, held at the St Lucia home of his grandson Gordon McLean—a retired physician—gives some impression of their success.<sup>25</sup> As to the Mitchells, it is notable that Ronald Mitchell's great-grandson, Lionel William (Lin) Powell, who is step-cousin and a childhood friend of the author, is a former Speaker of the Queensland Parliament. So, the answer is 'yes', it was hard at the time, but the outcomes seem well worthwhile.

#### *LIVING AND WORKING IN QUEENSLAND*

Both John and Alexander McLean rose rapidly through the ranks of the ASN company<sup>26</sup> and sequentially captained the two vessels, *Leichardt* and *Governor Blackall*, which routinely served coastal cities between Brisbane and Cooktown during the 1870s and 1880s. The *Governor Blackall* may have been Alexander's first command, for he kept his orders dated September 10, 1884: "You will be good enough to take command of the 'Governor Blackall' leaving tomorrow for Maryborough and Bundaberg." There is also a gouache of the *Governor Blackall*, apparently off Sydney Heads, with the inscription "Captain Alexander McLean, 1884" on the back (Figure 4). However, he was soon relieved of that command in favour of the senior ASN captain T. A. Lake when the ship was completely refurbished in order to carry Sir Peter Scratchley and his staff to New Guinea in 1885. Sir Peter had been appointed High Commissioner for the newly created protectorate in November 1884, and the trip was made to organize an administration in Port Moresby and to explore the island. Tragically, Scratchley contracted malaria during his travels in New Guinea and died at sea during the voyage back to Australia.<sup>27</sup>

In 1885, the McLean family moved to Brisbane, travelling on the ASN ship *Raneleagh*, built in 1881 and damaged on Kings Reef near Cardwell in 1882. Some concept of the voyage may be gained from Anthony Trollope's account of his travels on ASN vessels, which may be regarded as the forerunners of modern airlines.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Sunday-Mail*, Brisbane, Sunday November 14 (1976), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> John McLean joined the ASN Co. as an able seaman in 1862; in 1866 he was made Chief Officer of the *City of Brisbane* and in 1877 given command of that ship (ref. 19); his nephew Alexander McLean was certified as a master mariner by the Marine Board of NSW in 1882 (certificate no. 266).

<sup>27</sup> J.W. Lindt, *Picturesque New Guinea* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1887).

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1873), p. 187-8.

I had already made four voyages under the auspices of the A. S. N. Company and I found the boats to be fairly comfortable when not crowded—but wretchedly uncomfortable when full. Everything is provided for the passenger and included in the fare paid—except of course wine, or beer, or spirits. When the room at the table is ample, and the stewards and cook are not overworked, the food given is excellent, and a good sailor can enjoy his meals. As soon as the servants are overtasked everything becomes abominable. Nor is the trouble of the table by any means the worst trouble. Men who have travelled much know what it is to be “doubled up”, and the doubling up on board the A. S. N. Company’s boats is intolerable. It is probably only for two or three nights, and therefore the space allowed to each passenger is very small. That it should be so is, perhaps, reasonable. Larger vessels would create very much increased expense, and probably might not pay, and, north of Sydney, the towns lie on rivers which will not admit of deeper keels. I make no complaint, acknowledging that the company does its best to suit the traffic.

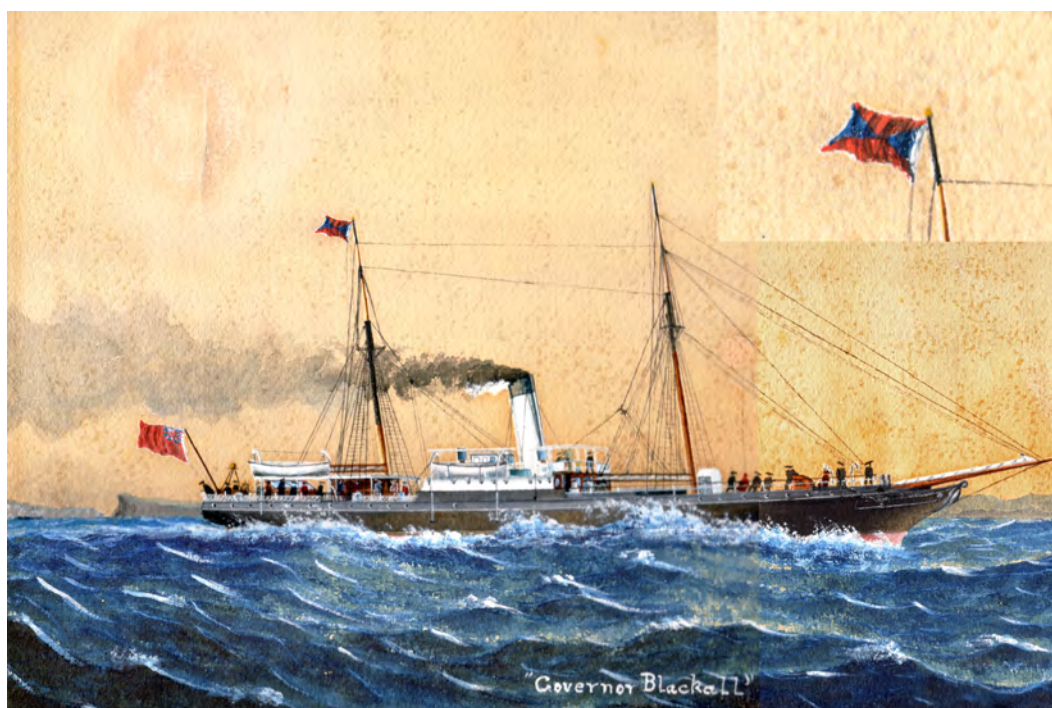


Figure 4. *Governor Blackall* just north of the entrance to Sydney Harbour (left horizon) flying the Australian red ensign and the ASN house flag (enlarged in the insert).

The zenith of overcrowding seems to have occurred during John McLean’s time on the *Leichardt*, when he had to deal with insolvent prospectors fleeing the overcrowded Etheridge and Palmer goldfields, who had overloaded the ship in Cooktown and refused to pay or disembark at other northern ports.<sup>29</sup>

In 1884, land in East Brisbane that had belonged to the Mowbray family was subdivided and sold as the Mowbraytown estate.<sup>30</sup> Two allotments at the southeast end of Geelong Street were donated by Williamina Mowbray for the Mowbraytown Presbyterian church, which was founded in 1885.<sup>31</sup> Alexander McLean and his wife

<sup>29</sup> ‘Endeavour River’, *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, Saturday June 27, (1874), at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article162480010>.

<sup>30</sup> Wikipedia at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowbraytown\\_Presbyterian\\_Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowbraytown_Presbyterian_Church).

<sup>31</sup> *A Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of Mowbraytown Presbyterian Church Brisbane* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co. Ltd, 1935).

Elizabeth (Figure 5) were founding members of the church and the McLeans built a house, which they named ‘Morven’, on land they purchased at the other end of Geelong Street. Both the Mowbraytown Presbyterian church—now heritage listed—and the McLeans’ home ‘Morven’ (Figure 6) still exist, although both have been considerably modified.

Alexander McLean’s maritime credentials were carried in a cylindrical metal container with the handwritten paper label: Captain Alex McLean, Schooner “May”, Geelong Street, Mowbraytown, Brisbane. The schooner *May*, built at Southwick in 1869 and brought to Brisbane from Sydney in 1888<sup>32</sup> was one of many vessels employed for the Kanaka ‘recruiting trade’ in Melanesia and the South Sea Islands<sup>33</sup>. Although we have no other evidence for Alexander McLean’s involvement in this profoundly regrettable business, he did acquire a collection of Pacific-island artefacts and shells, some of which survive. For example, there is one valve of the giant clam *Tridacna gigas* from a pair that were used as garden ornaments and an ebony lime spatula that resembles those from the Trobriand Islands. So, it seems likely that he did participate in one or more of the recruiting voyages of the *May*, hopefully after the Queensland Government strengthened and began enforcing its regulations for the control of the Pacific Island labor traffic.<sup>34</sup>

When the McLeans first moved to Brisbane in 1885, they lived in Robert Street (now Lockerbie Street), Kangaroo Point and their daughter, Mary Sturrock (Figures 1, 8), went to the nearby Girls’ State School (Figures 2, 7). After they moved to their new home ‘Morven’ on the Mowbraytown Estate (Figures 2, 6), there was enough room for Ronald Mitchell’s daughters, Jessie Mary and Sara Jane (Figures 1, 8) to live with the McLean family and for the girls to attend school together. During the vacations all three of the girls returned to the Mitchell home at Bogimbah Creek on the west side of Fraser Island (Figure 8; Appendix 2). Thus, the McLeans and Mitchells remained part of a tightly knit family well into the twentieth century. This explains why Mary Sturrock’s first child Bill was named William Alexander Ronald and why one of the homes she and her husband occupied at Annerley (Brisbane) was named ‘Bogimbah’.

Ronald Mitchell died in Maryborough in 1893 but his widow Mary and son Alexander remained as caretakers of the Fraser Island State Nursery and Plantation, which father and son had established in 1882 by adding almost 60,000 kauri pine treeplings to a 125 hectare clearing with a similar number of immature self-seeded trees.<sup>35</sup> The Mitchells tenure at Bogimbah ended abruptly in 1897, when Archibald Meston persuaded the Queensland Government to take over the site for an island

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<sup>32</sup> ‘South Sea Traders’, *Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday March 21 (1888), p. 5, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3470697>.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Matthews, *This Dawning Land* (Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1986); Clive Moore, ‘The Kanaka generation: The visual heritage of Melanesians in Australia’, *Les Cahiers du CIÉRA* 2, 79-113 (2008).

<sup>34</sup> ‘Kanaka Labor in Queensland’, *Age*, Melbourne, Saturday May 21 (1892), p. 9, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article199339213>.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Timber Culture’, *The Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, Monday August 24 (1885), p. 4, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article52041165>.

containment centre to house troublesome Aboriginal people then living in Maryborough—and soon afterwards—in other parts of Queensland.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 5. Captain Alexander McLean (1842-1918), seated, and family, taken in Brisbane in 1908.

This decision proved disastrous for the Butchulla (Badtjala) people living and working at Bogimbah with the Mitchells and for those who were transferred to the Bogimbah Creek Reserve and the subsequent Bogimbah Creek Anglican Mission from other parts of the state.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to dreadful conditions of the government reserve, the Mitchells' long interactions with the Butchulla people appear to have been both respectful and affectionate (Appendix 2). For example, in supporting the continuation of Alexander Mitchell's role as caretaker of the kauri plantation and nursery, John Bartholomew, senior member for Maryborough, wrote as follows to the Home Secretary: 'He [Mr Alexander Mitchell] is thoroughly conversant with the mode and habits of the blacks, having been brought up as a child on the island. We respectfully submit that you allow him to retain his present position, and also give him superintendence of the aboriginals.'

<sup>36</sup> 'The Aboriginal Vote', *Maryborough Chronicle*, Saturday October 2 (1897), p. 2, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147690139>.

<sup>37</sup> Raymond Evans, "'Steal away': The Fundamentals of Aboriginal Removal in Queensland', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23:61, 83-95 (1999).

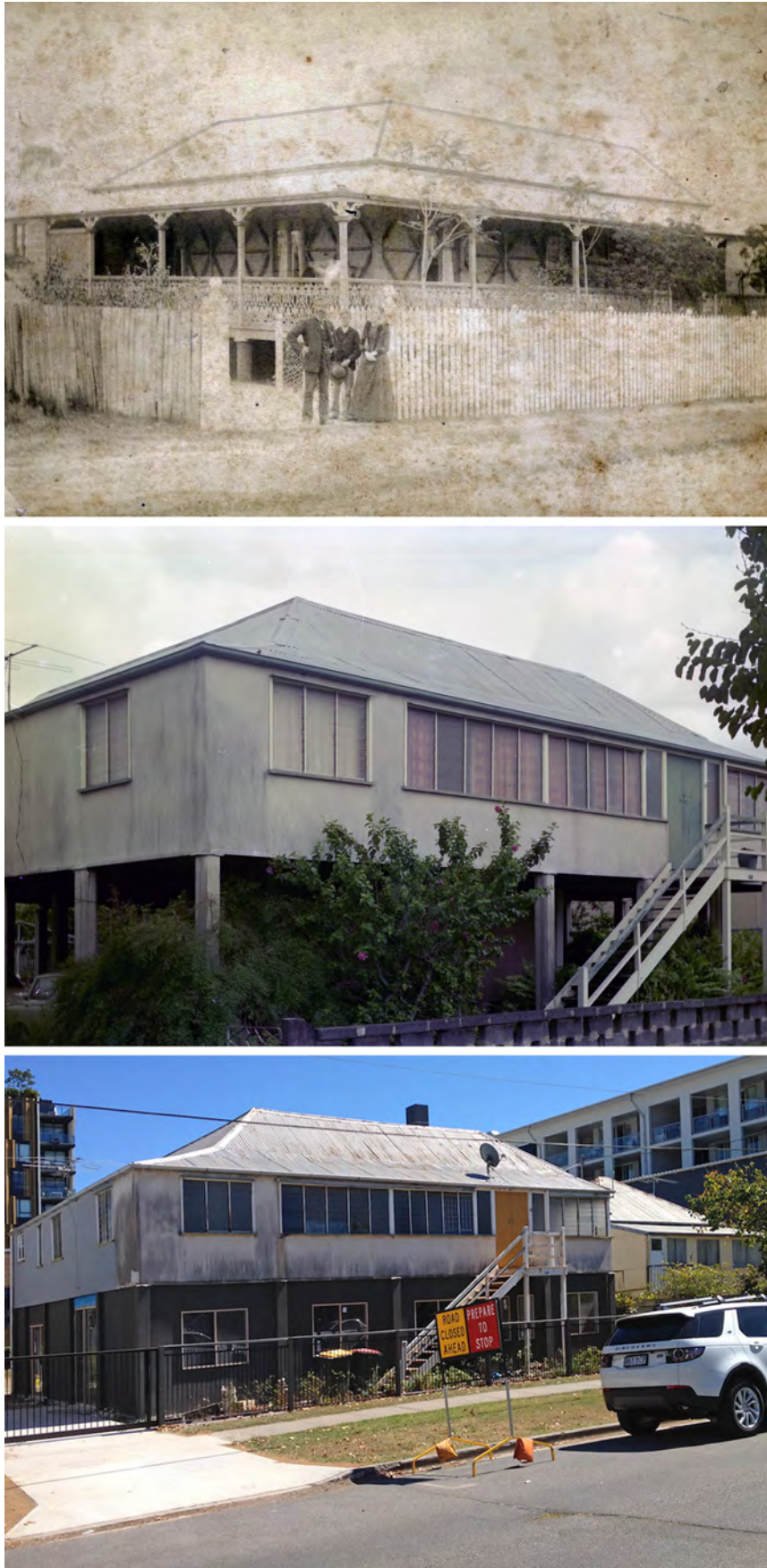


Figure 6. Alexander and Elizabeth McLean's home 'Morven', Geelong Street, Mowbraytown, East Brisbane (27.480°S, 153.043°E), c.1895, 1973 and 2019.



This was aggressively countered by Meston, ironically another Scot born in Aberdeenshire, who characterized Alexander Mitchell as a “deformed dwarf, of whom the aboriginals have a special horror, and who possesses not one necessary qualification for the position.”<sup>38</sup> The Home Secretary, Sir Horace Tozer, accepted this argument and the Mitchells left Fraser Island in September 1897. The sorry subsequent history of the government reserve and Anglican mission has been carefully and sympathetically documented by Sandra Armstrong.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Mitchells’ pioneering attempt at sustainability on Fraser Island succumbed to racist institutional policies, infectious diseases, and showmanship. Only eighteen months after they had departed, “Mr. Meston wishes to state that the men and women of Fraser’s Island will gladly give native articles in exchange for wearing apparel, cooking utensils, or any useful domestic cooking or household utensils. These articles would include very fine dilly-bags, various shell ornaments, shells, spears, shields, and boomerangs, or those who preferred could have ferns, orchids, and rare plants bearing beautiful flowers or foliage. The wild flowers of Fraser’s Island are in great variety.”<sup>40</sup> The rape of K’gari was underway.

Alexander and Elizabeth McLean survived well into the twentieth century. Alexander completed his maritime career with Harbours and Rivers in Brisbane. In 1904 he was selected to pilot the Government yacht *Victoria* when Governor-General Henry Northcote toured tropical Queensland.<sup>41</sup> He passed away in Moreton Street, New Farm in September 1918, just after his fiftieth wedding anniversary, and thus narrowly avoided the Spanish flu pandemic. He and his wife are buried together near the top of a hill in the Bulimba cemetery so that he can ‘see the sea’.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Access to the Drimnin House Archive was generously provided by the current Drimnin estate owner, Derek Lewis, the estate manager, Rhonda Newsham and the estate housekeeper, Janine Drew. Access to the Nisbet Letters was facilitated by Georgia Satchel, Archivist at the Mull Museum, Tobermory. Susan Larson of Kingairloch and Alex and Susan Hillman, ‘Kenmore’, Camasnacroise helped with local history. David MacKenzie of Inverness kindly explained the history of the terrace of cottages at Bonnavoulin, where he owns a croft, and Iain Thornber of Knock House, Lochaline helped with tracing the Mitchell family at Kingairloch.

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<sup>38</sup> ‘The Fraser Island Aboriginal Settlement. The State Pine Nursery. Official Correspondence. Removal of A. Mitchell’, *Maryborough Chronicle*, Tuesday September 14 (1897), at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article147686611>.

<sup>39</sup> Sandra Irene Armstrong, ‘The Failure of Noble Sentiments: Bogimbah Mission on Fraser Island’, (Ph.D. thesis, University of New England, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> ‘Fraser Island Blacks’, *Brisbane Courier*, Saturday April 29 (1899), p. 7, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3692836>.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Death of Veteran Skipper’, *Cairns Post*, Tuesday October 1 (1918), p. 4, at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40301933>.

Laura Dempster of the Property Information Team, Glasgow assisted with a search of the Register of Sasines, which helped identify where the Mitchells lived before emigrating. It was also a pleasure to be welcomed by the Rev. Donald McCorkindale and his congregation at the venerable Kiel Church of Scotland (Cill Choluimchille), Lochaline.<sup>42</sup> Flory Mitchell is buried there—as are the reverends Norman and John McLeod—and also perhaps Donald Mitchell (Lin Powell’s great-great-grandfather) and Peggy McLean/Mitchell (my great-great-grandmother).

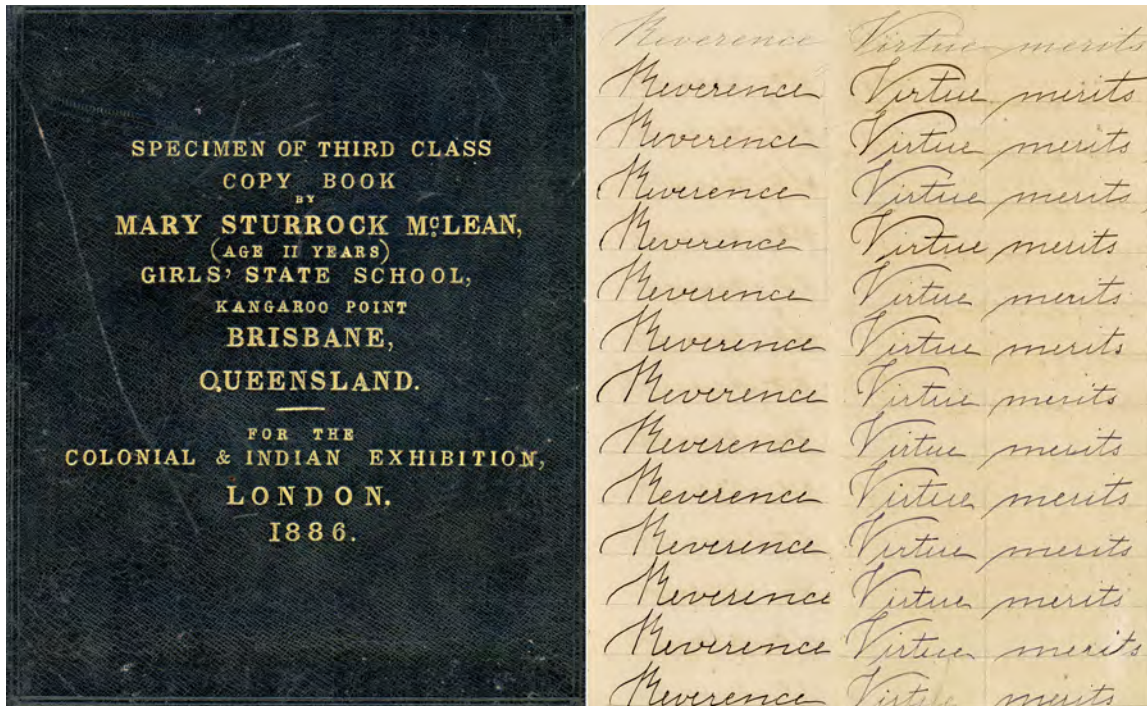


Figure 7. Cover and page extracts from Mary Sturrock McLean’s copybook, which was exhibited in London in 1886.



Figure 8. Mitchell family on Fraser Island about 1890 (centre) and nineteenth century photographs of Mary McLean (left) and Jessie and Sarah Mitchell (right).

<sup>42</sup> Iain Thornber, *The sculptured stones of Cill Choluimchille, Morvern, Argyll with notes on the early church and the tomb of the Spanish princess* (Lochaline, Scotland: Iain Thornber, 1975).

## Appendix 1: Expanded explanations of figures

**Figure 1.** Skeleton trees to illustrate the relationships of the ‘three grandfathers’ of William Alexander Ronald Cowdry (1903-1996): William Cowdry (1850-1924, Alexander McLean (1842-1918) and Ronald Mitchell (1834-1893). The Mitchells (below the mirror plane) and the McLeans (above the mirror plane) are linked by Margaret (Peggy) McLean/Mitchell (1820-1874), who is the great-great-grandmother of the author and married the great-great-grandfather of his stepcousin, Lin Powell. Margaret McLean’s brother, John McLean (1830-1886), may have encouraged both Ronald Mitchell and Alexander McLean to emigrate with their families from Scotland to Australia.

Image of Ronald Mitchell is of a photocopy, reproduced from ref. 4, of a photograph held in an untraced private collection. The image of Alexander McLean is cropped from a *carte de visite* made by Mathewson & Co., Brisbane, c.1890. William Cowdry is cropped from a studio portrait of him and his wife taken by Fegan, Vice Regal Photographer, Brisbane, c.1900.

**Figure 2.** Maps of places in Scotland and Brisbane mentioned in the text. Insert silhouette of Scotland shows locations of the Morvern peninsula (M, orange), Glasgow (G) and Edinburgh (E).

Upper left, the NW corner of Morvern, which is bordered by Loch Sunart and the Sound of Mull (Tobermory, Mull is 2 km W of the edge of this map); part of Ordinance Survey of Great Britain sheet 45, Sound of Mull, 1956, Crown Copyright, republished with a Creative Commons NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International licence; grid lines are 1 km apart; A, Auliston; M, Mains of Drimnin, where Margaret McLean and family were living before being evicted in 1850 and probable birthplace of Alexander McLean in 1842; D, Drimnin House; L, Achleanan; G, Glasdrum, birthplace of John McLean in 1830; C, Achnacriche (Figure 3A); B, Bonnavoulin (Figure 3C); and F, Cill Dhonnaig, ruin and graveyard of the Church of St Fintan; Mungasdail, the birthplace in 1807 of Flory McLean, Margaret’s mother, is near St Fintan’s; Lochaline village is about 14 km SE of Drimnin.

Upper right, part of Kingairloch estate, which surrounds Loch a’ Choire, E side of the Morvern peninsula and W side of Loch Linnhe; part of Ordinance Survey of Great Britain sheet 46, 1956/1960, Crown Copyright, republished with a Creative Commons Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International licence; grid lines are 1 km apart; k, Kingairloch House; sc, South Corry (Figure 3F); p, Old Post Office (Figure 3B); c, Camasnacroise; g, Glengalmadale, birthplace of Ronald Mitchell in 1834; cc, Ceann na Collie.

Bottom, nineteenth century map of central Brisbane (CBD, Kangaroo Point and sections of New Farm and East Brisbane); part of McKellar’s Official Map of Brisbane and Suburbs, Parish of South Brisbane, West Ward, East Ward, Kangaroo Point Ward, 1895, Queensland State Archives item ITM618817, Copyright State of Queensland (open access); 1, Robert Street (now Lockerbie Street), Kangaroo Point; 2, Kangaroo Point Girls’ School, where Mary McLean and the Mitchell sisters were educated; 3, the ASN (AUSN) wharf and headquarters, now conserved as the Naldam House precinct; 4, ‘Morven’, Geelong Street, East Brisbane, the McLeans’ residence (Figure 6); 5, Mowbraytown Presbyterian Church; 6, Moreton Street, New Farm,

where Alexander McLean died in 1918; 7, Parliament House and the Parliamentary precinct, where Lin Powell served as Speaker of the House. The distance between Robert Street and the Girls' School is about 1 km.

**Figure 3.** Surviving early nineteenth century buildings in rural Scotland. A, Achnacriche, now a B&B on the Drimnin estate (56.613°N, 5.979°W), served as the principal residence following the 1849 fire that destroyed old Drimnin House (ref. 14). B, the Old Post Office on the Kingairloch estate (56.618°N, 5.509°W), now a luxury holiday cottage, was originally a croft house known as 'Conach'. C, a small terrace of cottages on the shoreline at Bonnavoulin (56.611°N, 5.979°W) built in the early 1840s to house those displaced from the farmlands; the walls of the ruin at the end of the row shows the mode of construction—local basalt walls and (originally) Ballachulish slate roofs.<sup>43</sup> D, a restored cottage at Auchindrain (56.180°N, 5.174°W) near Inverary that resembles the ruined cottage in C in size and mode of construction; these small one room structures, ~4 m<sup>2</sup> in area, accommodated whole families and some animals on two levels. E, part of a field stone barn at Auchindrain with triangular air vents in lieu of windows (iron roof is not original). E, extensively-restored two-level granite barn with slot air vents and a modern staircase at South Corry (56.613°N, 5.526°W) on the Kingairloch estate. Locations of A, B, C and F are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 4.** *Governor Blackall* just north of the entrance to Sydney Harbour (left horizon) flying the Australian red ensign and the ASN house flag (enlarged in the insert). The house flag is quartered diagonally with red upper and lower quadrants and blue left and right ones, or in heraldic terminology, 'party per saltire gules and azure'. This gouache may have been a company publicity poster; rear surface is annotated 'Captain Alexander McLean 1884'.

**Figure 5.** Captain Alexander McLean (1842-1918), seated, and family, taken in Brisbane in 1908. The women with children are, from left to right: Elizabeth Campbell McLean (née Love, 1879-1958) and her son Alexander Ewan McLean (1907-1992); Elizabeth Davidson McLean (née Blyth, 1846-1926, wife of Captain McLean) and her granddaughter Elizabeth Mary Cowdry (1905-1998); and Mary Sturrock Cowdry (1874-1963), daughter of Captain McLean and her son William Alexander Ronald Cowdry (1903-1993). The man standing at the left behind his wife is Archibald John McLean (1878-1973), Captain McLean's youngest son; the man standing at the right is William Henry Francis Cowdry (1874-1965), son-in-law of Captain McLean and the author's grandfather. The group in the centre is probably comprised of Captain McLean's eldest son, Allan McLean (1869-1956), his wife Elizabeth Jane McLean (née Frazer, 18??-1953), and their son, Gordon Alexander McLean (1900-1984). The other couple may be John Blyth McLean (1871-1937), Captain McLean's middle son and his wife Annie Patterson McLean (née Smith, 1883-1983). The 1908 date for the photograph is based on the estimated ages of the children, Alexander (Alec) McLean (1), Elizabeth (Betty) Cowdry (3), Gordon McLean (8) and William (Bill) Cowdry (6). It is likely that the event being celebrated was Captain and Mrs McLean's fortieth (Ruby) wedding anniversary. They were

<sup>43</sup> Napier Commission, 'Evidence taken by Her Majesty's Commission of Inquiry into the conditions of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland' Vol. I-V, pp. 2297-2299 (1884); 'digitized and presented in pdf format by Lochaber College Mallaig' (2007).

married in Fife, Scotland on June 11, 1868. Captain McLean passed away in September 1918, a few months after their Golden wedding anniversary.

**Figure 6.** Alexander and Elizabeth McLean's home 'Morven', Geelong Street, Mowbraytown, East Brisbane (27.480°S, 153.043°E). Top, family photograph taken c.1895; figures at gate are, from left to right, Alexander McLean, middle son John Blyth and wife Elizabeth; note the X-frame timber construction, characteristic of the period. Centre, photograph taken in 1973, after the house had been raised. Bottom, image from 2019, when the whole structure was being renovated for Fofia Australia Pty Ltd., the current occupants.

**Figure 7.** Cover and page extracts from Mary Sturrock McLean's copybook, which was exhibited in London in 1886. Students were required to copy exactly the faint lines printed at the top of each page. In these examples, the phrases to be copied were '*Reverence your parents*' and '*Virtue merits esteem*'.

**Figure 8.** Mitchell family on Fraser Island about 1890 (centre), copy of a photocopy reproduced in Princess K'Gari's Fraser Island (ref. 4). The attribution is not certain but is plausible, as discussed below. Image on left is Mary Sturrock (Moll) McLean (Figure 1), daughter of Alexander and Elizabeth McLean, probably photographed in the garden of 'Morven' Geelong Street, Mowbraytown (Figure 6) about 1895. Image on right is a studio photograph of Ronald and Mary Mitchell's daughters, Jessie Mary and Sarah Jane (Sally), taken by C. Lords, George Street, Brisbane. At the time Jessie and Sarah were living with the McLeans and attending school in Kangaroo Point with Mary McLean.

If the attribution of the center image is correct, the people in it are—clockwise from the young man in front—John Mitchell (youngest son), Mary McLean (holiday guest), Jessie Mitchell (middle daughter), Mary Mitchell (mother), Alexander Mitchell (middle son), doubtfully Ronald Mitchell (father), possibly Archibald Mitchell (eldest son), Sarah Mitchell (youngest daughter) and Flora Mitchell (eldest daughter). The estimate of the date of the photograph, which differs from the earlier date of c.1872 used in K'Gari, is based on the ages of the children; this cannot be the Mitchell family if the 1872 date is correct. We know that Mary McLean spent holidays with the Mitchells on Fraser Island prior to and possibly after Ronald's death in 1893. In 1890, John would have been 22, Mary 16, Flora 24, Archibald 30, Alexander 27, Sarah 10 and Jessie 14. Thus, the ages and genders of all of the children are approximately in proportion to their appearances in this image, the correct number of people is represented and some of the comparisons seem plausible (side images). The identification of Alexander Mitchell is based on the disparaging personal comments made about him by Archibald Meston (ref. 39). However, the person identified as Ronald Mitchell bears no resemblance to only other photograph attributed to him (Figure 1), but that may be because: (a) he was the photographer, (b) he was already dead when this photograph was taken, (c) he was in serious physical decline or, (d) this is not a photograph of the Mitchell family. On balance, the last alternative seems least likely.

**Appendix 2: Elizabeth (Betty) Runnegar's notes on Ronald Mitchell and his family and their connections to the McLeans, written about 1995.**

A Presbyterian minister in Maryborough wrote to a colleague in Scotland and asked him if he could get together lots of families who were willing to come to live in Maryborough. 259 immigrants came as a result. They came in the Black Ball liner 'The Ariadne' from Liverpool and the voyage took 120 days. They travelled down the Queensland coast from Torres Strait and came into Maryborough past the northern end of Fraser Island (Sandy Island as it was then) escorted into Maryborough by an R.M. boat 'Scottish Hero'. When he heard Ronald Mitchell had come to Maryborough, Capt McLean hurried up from Sydney to see him.

Mamie Watson (Jessie Mitchell's daughter) has an old clipping from the 'Maryborough Chronicle' dated 8th of October 1862 [sic; 1882] in which it said they arrived 20 years previously. A reunion banquet was held for all who came on the 'Ariadne'. The captain of the ship (Capt. Joseph Brown) and it gave the names of 59 other people and where they now lived. Among them was Ronald Mitchell, now a ranger living on Fraser Island. Lots lived in Tiaro. (I don't know about the date of this article as Alexander McLean's date of birth in Scotland was 1842).

Ronald Mitchell, wife, and perhaps 1 child (Archibald) came on the ship and they had 5 more children. John [b. 1868] married Janet Eadie of M'boro and lived at a later date at Jondaryan, a boy called Alan [sic; Alexander, b. 1863], (who died young), and three girls: Flora [b. 1868], who married Harry Waldock and lived in M'boro (she died while still young); Jessie [b. 1876], who married Wm. Watson (and had 4 children Mamie, Ronald, Connie, Ella) and Sarah (Sally) [b. 1880] who married Lionel Powell, and had son Lin Powell [sic; in fact, Lionel Powell had a son named Lionel Powell and he, in turn, had the son who is Lin Powell (Figure 1)].

Ronald Mitchell was a Crown lands ranger on Fraser Island, and, with his family lived at a place called 'Bogimbah', 14 miles [sic; the distance is much greater] from Sandy Cape. The only other people on the island were the Henderson family, who lived at the lighthouse at Sandy Cape, and an English well born lady who lived with them and who taught the Mitchell and Henderson children. There was also a big blacks camp near Bogimbah who all loved Mrs Mitchell and particularly Flora. The Mitchells got all their supplies 6 monthly by sailing boat from M'boro. Capt and Mrs McLean's Mary used to go to stay with them quite often, and a house lived in by Mary's family in later years at Annerley was called 'Bogimbah'. Jessie and Sarah came to stay with the McLean family at Geelong St, East Brisbane and went to school for a long time with the McLeans.

The McLean children (and later their children) called old Mrs Mitchell 'Granny Mitchell' and the Mitchell children all called Mrs McLean 'Granny Mac'. Ronald Mitchell died in Maryborough at the age of 56. Mary McLean m. William Cowdry and their son was named William Alexander Ronald after his 3 grandfathers.

**Appendix 3: Transcripts of letters written by Henry Nisbet, Tobermory solicitor, regarding the eviction of Margaret McLean from her house at the Mains of Drimnin in September 1850 (Nisbet 1847-1850).**

559

Stodart Macdonald Esq,  
1850

13 June

S.S.C. Edinburgh

I am in receipt of your favor dated the 7th Inst – I shall attend to your instructions in regard to Christy Morrison & Margt Maclean but as none of the Subtenants received Notices to remove & unless these parties held under McNab I fear We cannot Eject them under the decree obtained agt the Principal Tenants – . . . –I am &c [H. Nisbet]

575

Stodart Macdonald Esq,  
1850

2 July

Rothsay S.S.C. Edin.

The two women mentioned in Your favor of the 7th Ulto – Margaret MacLean & Chirsty Morrison will not remove unless they are Ejected – Please say whether I shall put the decree in Execution against them – The one is 60 Years of age & they both say they have no where else to go to nor funds to carry them off the Lands Yours &c [H. Nisbet]

621

Stodart Mac Donald Esq,  
August 1850

13<sup>th</sup>

S.S.C. Edin.

I am in receipt of your favor dated the 7th and will attend to your instructions in regard to the two woman at Drimnin – . . . Yours &c [H. Nisbet]

469

Lady Gordon  
1850

14 September

of Drimnin

I have Your Ladyship's note of yesterday, I can see no greater hardship in the case of Peggy McLean than any other ordinary ejection – She was duly charged to remove & she knew that the result would be unless she went away of her own accord, that she wld be put out by force – of all this she got proper Notice – the Officer also did well to postpone the ejection till she returned home in the Evening

I return You D<sup>r</sup> McLeod's letter as directed – . . . I remain [H. Nisbet]

646

Rev<sup>d</sup> John MacLeod  
1850

21 Sept<sup>r</sup>

Morven

Lady Gordon has put into my hands Your letter to her of the 14<sup>th</sup> Instant – relative to the recent ejection of Widow MacLean from the possession of a house on Mains of Drimnin – In answer I have to state that that Ejection was legal and valid & that the

notice requires by the Decree was given to her – You are not aware perhaps that this person was never recognized as a tenant by Lady Gordon or any of Sir Charles Trustees – that she held under Alex<sup>t</sup> & Peter MacNab & was I am informed bound to give them service for the use of the house – that McNab's right ceased at Whitsunday last & with it also ceased that of the Widow whose cause you have espoused – and to strengthen the hands of the Trustees if such was necessary a decree of removing was obtained against the McNabs & their whole Subtenants Cottars and Dependents – On this decree the Ejectment was carried thro' it being unnecessary [*sic*] by the Law of Scotland to call the Subtenants as Defenders or to serve them with any copy of the Summons – I enter into this case because I consider that you have been misled and that your pinions have been formed on the *Ex parte* Statement of one who knows nothing about the matter –

I have no fear of the result of any proceedings which you may choose to adopt, – but considering the Statement which you have made in regard to McLean's destitution & believing that the Widow is in much need of a house I have advised Lady Gordon rather than receive any farther trouble to give her accomodation & on your sending her to Drimnin on receipt of this Lady Gordon will give directions – I am &c [H. Nisbet]  
[NOT SENT]

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Rev<sup>d</sup> John Macleod D.D.  
1850

24<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>

Manse Morven

Lady Gordon has put into my hands your letter to her of the 14<sup>th</sup> Inst relative to the recent Ejectment of Widow McLean, – from the possession of a House at Mains of Drimnin – In answer I have to state that that Ejectment was legal and valid and that all the Notice required by the decree was given to her – You are not aware perhaps that this person was never recognized as a tenant or Subtenant by Lady Gordon or any of Sir Charles Trustees – that she held under Alexander & Peter McNab & was I am informed bound to give them service for the use of the house – that the McNab's right to the farm ceased at Whity last & with it also ceased that of McLean – The McNabs left the farm at Whity last but the Trustees in the event of any difficulty had previously obtained a decree of removing against them & their whole Subtenants Cottars and dependents – on this decree (an Extract of which was in the Officers possession ) the Ejectment of which you complain was carried thro' – It is unnecessary [*sic*] by the Law of Scotland to call the Subtenants who have not been recognized by the Proprietor as Defenders or to serve them with any copy of the Summons –

I have entered into this case because I consider that you have been misled and that your pinions have been formed on the *Ex parte* Statement of one who does not understand the matter – I am &c [H. Nisbet]