



HISTORY ROOM

NEWS



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by Helen Halm and Carolyn Tucker

Carolyn Tucker's foray into family history began when she discovered family journals, photos and the book *Enquire within about Everything* (Newsletter No. 165). This led to her involvement with the Strathalbyn History Room and a major production *The Exodus of the 1870's* from the Strathalbyn region.

Spurred on by enquiries from people whose forebears had lived in Strathalbyn she began two years ago to search births records. With the help of other volunteers Pam Graves (genealogy) and Andrea Crawford, now an expert in searching lands titles, over 400 records have been established. Some are conjecture where unusual names appear later in other regions, rather than fact, so the work is unpublished, but enquiries from families whose forebears spent part of their life in Strathalbyn Council area are welcomed –

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Carolyn marvelled at the fortitude of families who left their homeland, pioneered in the small villages surrounding Strathalbyn, then were forced to move on as pioneers again, north or south from their new homes and even interstate. A glimpse into Trove – *Southern Argus* revealed problems – exhausted soil, red rust in wheat crops and drought.

One family whose details Carolyn is confident about is that of her great-great grandfather-in-law. Some of this has been gleaned from *The History of Ewen & Rachel McDonald & Descendants*. The story of Rachel McDonald's descendants can be found inserted in *The History of Donald & Christina McLean* a book available in the Strathalbyn Library's History Room.

What follows is an excerpt from *The Exodus of the 1870's*:-



“EWEN & RACHEL **McDONALD** [nee McLEAN] of “Balmerino”, **Lower Finnis**. Ewen was an Overlander, Shepherd, Farmer and Grazier. On his arrival in S.A in 1838, he went to Sydney and was engaged with other men to take a flock of sheep from there to S.A via the coast. That mob was the first to be successfully overlanded. The overlanders enjoyed great prestige among the settlers and were treated as heroes. For the next six years, Ewen worked on stations near the Murray River then three years cattle droving from Melbourne to Adelaide. In 1847, he married Rachel, the daughter of his employer, Donald McLean for whom Ewen was a Shepherd. Ewen and Rachel acquired a large area of farming and grazing land from Lower Finnis to Milang. His first Land Grant was for 77 acres in 1849, Section 2399 in Finnis Special Survey, Hundred of Hindmarsh. They built a large home on the eastern bank of the Finnis River, called “Balmerino” which, under later ownership, was renamed “Watulunga”. Their eldest daughter, Annie married Walter John Tucker of “Lake View”, Sandergrove in

1871. Attracted by the news of good land available in the Wimmera [known well in his droving days], Ewen and Rachel sold “Balmerino” to William Rogers in 1873 after 16 years at Lower Finniss. Ewen purchased 319 acres for £320 and the final payment was made in 1883. With the younger nine of ten children, ages 7 to 23, they moved in 1874 to their land selection, five miles south of the tiny settlement of Noradjuha, 22 miles south-west of the “small town of Horsham”, Victoria. Until Noradjuha had a Post Office in 1877, their address was C/O the Natimuk P.O. The older children also made land selections which were, at first all worked together with their parents. Farming and grazing success there meant their decision to move with the ‘exodus’ was the right one. Ewen died in 1905, age 87. Rachel died in 1908, age 85. Both were buried in the Nurrabel Cemetery. There are no headstones. Section 200 Alexandrina, CT (c) XIII 100. Lots 68, 70 to 73 West Milang, 79, 2368, 2369 Hundred of Alexandrina. And many more in Alexandrina. CT XXV 224 & XXIX 236. *[For more information about the exodus to Victoria, refer to “History of Ewen & Rachel McDonald and Descendants” by Jill McDonald. It was inserted by permission in The History of Donald & Christina McLean.]*”

I was intrigued by the lengths taken to bring gold back safely from Victorian goldfields – embedded in the axle bed of Ewen’s dray and of the way the family coped with food shortage towards the end of their journey to Natimuk. Also, having left a large home built on the River at Lower Finniss, Rachel, a 50 year-old experienced mother of 9 and more senior than the scores of young marrieds settled in Natimuk and Noradjuha, was in demand to assist with childbirths. This while helping make some kind of home for her large family with whatever materials were available. What resourceful people.

The Exodus contains entries relating to families from Angas Plains, Ashbourne [formerly Finniss Flat], Belvidere, Blackwood Park & Doctor’s Creek, Bletchley, Bull’s Creek, Dry Plains, Finniss [formerly Queens Own Town], Finniss Lower, Giles Flat & Giles Creek, Hartley, Salem & The Bremer, Highland Valley & Wheal Ellen Mine, Lake Plains, Langhorne Crk., Mosquito Crk., Tolderol, Long Valley, Milang, New Hamburg [Willyaroo since 1917], Point Sturt & Clayton, Red Creek & St. Ives, Sandergrove, Strathalbyn, Strathalbyn Mine and Woodchester.

We will bring you other stories in later editions of the Newsletter. Well done Strathalbyn History Room.

HAPPY RESEARCHING
Carolyn and Helen

Help is available in the Goolwa History Room when a volunteer is on duty. If you are travelling some distance it may be advisable to phone the Library on 8555-7000 to ascertain whether a volunteer is available. Family Historian, Jennifer Repper is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.30am – 2.30pm – bookings essential. (The Room and Family research database are accessible whenever the Library is open but some documents may only be viewed when volunteers are present)

At Strathalbyn’s History Room Volunteer Pamela is available 10 am – 4 p.m every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for family history – phone for 2 hour appointments. No appointments necessary for Local History enquiries on Thursdays 10 am – 4 p.m. However, if travelling some distance ‘phone to check Andrea or Carolyn will be attending. Written enquiries with contact can be left in Visitors’ Book at any time during Library hours.

For comments, suggestions or to receive this newsletter via email history.goolwa11@gmail.com

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