

# Donald GORDON & Annie, nee McLACHLAN

Version 2 – March 2018

## Highlights

Donald was born in 1856 in Strathalbyn and grew up around Belvedere and Angus Plains. He moved to Owen in his early 20s.

Annie was born in 1863 in Bunbury and her family moved to Owen when she was a baby.

Donald was working on Annie's father's farm and they married in 1884. They had four children – James, Katie, Linley and Annie.

They were key figures in the development of the Church of Christ in Owen.

They moved to Jamestown in about 1920.

Donald died aged 66 years. Annie died 11 years after him, when she was aged 71 years.

## Donald's early years

Two years before he was born, Donald's parents, Alexander and Jessie with three older siblings, John, Alexander junior and Kitty, migrated to South Australia from Scotland. Donald was born in Strathalbyn in 1856 and grew up on the family farm *Beaufort* in Belvidere area which is 3 kilometres from Strathalbyn.

Hugh was born in 1857 and Maggie was born in 1860. At some stage, Kitty went to live with Jessie's sister Catherine and Donald Gollan in Strathalbyn – see her own biography.

Donald's mother died in 1866, when he was 9 years old. At this time, all five of the children would have been attending school. Maggie was 6 years old and just beginning school, and John was 15 years and probably in his last years of schooling. Alexander, at 14 years was one of the older boys in the school. Donald and Hugh were in their middle years of schooling. The children might have attended the schools at Belvedere or Angus Plains - this latter school is still standing today, but unused. The school was 10 minutes by car (now-a-days) from *Beaufort*.

After his mother died, Donald's father had a housekeeper, Ann Campbell, and they married two years later.

The family attended the Presbyterian Church until 1868 when his father changed to the Churches of Christ. The whole family became active with the church in Strathalbyn.

A newspaper article from 28<sup>th</sup> October 1871 states that Donald, who was then 15 years old, was awarded two prizes in Mr BW Webb's school at Belvidere (ref : Colin Semmler)

After four years of their marriage, Alexander and Ann had a son, James Murray Gordon. At that time, in 1872, the household comprised of the father, stepmother and six children - John was 21 years old, Alexander jnr was 20 years, Donald was 16, Hugh was 15, Maggie was 12 years old, and baby James. Kitty was with the Gollans.

In 1877 there was a fund raising concert in Strathalbyn by the Sol-Fa class for the Indian Relief Fund :-

- Mr. D. Gordon sang a solo 'Golden Stair'. This is probably Donald who would have been 21 years old.
- A trio of messrs. Tregilgas, Phillips, and Gordon sang, 'To all you Ladies now on Land,';
- Another solo song and chorus 'Annie of the Vale,' by Mr. D. Gordon.
- Recitation 'The Minute Gun at Sea,' by Messrs. Tregilgas and Gordon;
- Recitation 'The Island of the Scotts,' by Mr. J. Cheriton, jnr (was he a McLean???)
- (ref : Southern Argus, Port Elliott, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 1877, p 3)

## The move to Owen

In the mid 1870s, farmers began looking at new land which was being opened up in other districts. There were quite a number of Strathalbyn pioneers, including the McLeans, who explored these other potentials. This might have been because some of the land around the Strathalbyn district was becoming less productive than it had been at first. This move away had a big impact on the local community, but many returned to the Strathalbyn district after trying things out for about five years.

So it was, in the late 1870s that Donald, his father and older brother, Alexander junior went to the Alma-Owen district. Alexander was possibly hoping that his sons would be able to obtain some good farming land. At that stage, the father would have been in his mid 50s, older brother in his mid 20s and Donald in his early 20s.

Although Alexander (senior) had purchased a number of farming properties in the Strathalbyn area over the years, they apparently did not end up purchasing anything in Alma or Owen [Question : Is this correct as in 1986 Robert Gordon and Natalie Semmler visited the ruins of an old home near Alma which they think may have been the Gordon's property of *Glen Roy*. What else is known about the connection with *Glen Roy*?] Donald never became an owner of farmland, but he bought a house in Jamestown late in life.

The district was only just beginning to be opened up and the first settlers had only begun to take up virgin land a few years before (ref : L7,1-2). For a description of what the township was like at that time, see David Finlayson's biography.

After a year or so, the two Alexanders returned to Strathalbyn but Donald remained in Owen.

Donald probably got work on local farms, and sooner or later, was working (and living) on *Dalkeith*, the property of James McLachlan. He spent most of his working life on this farm.

## Annie's early years

Annie was born in Bunbury very soon after her parents had migrated to Western Australia. When she was just a baby, her family moved to Owen. Her father initially worked on Mr Harkness's farm and the family probably lived there until he purchased *Dalkeith*.

*Dalkeith* was very close to the Owen township - it was not all that far to walk across a paddock. It was the initial site of the annual combined schools picnic which her father sponsored.

## The early years of marriage

Donald had been in Owen for about a decade and he and Annie had got to know each other when he was working on her father's farm (maybe he was living on the farm property) and also through the church activities.

Donald was 28 years old and Annie was 24 in 1884 when they had their wedding on her family farm. The witnesses were Donald's sister Maggie, and John McLachlan [Question : Who was this John - was he a brother of Annie's father?]. The marriage celebrant was William Judd who had baptized Donald's father and step-mother 16 years previously.

James was born in 1886, Katie in 1889, Linley in 1891 and Annie in 1895.

In 1895 Alexander (senior) died in Strathalbyn. It is not known whether Donald attended the funeral.

His father's will directed everything to Donald's stepmother Ann, and his half-brother James - and nothing to Donald or his full siblings (the children of Jessie). Although Alexander had various farming properties over the years, he was not a rich man when he died as his estate did not exceed 300 pounds.

At some stage Donald left the McLachlan farm to manage Verco's farm. This was probably the Verco Bros' farm in Dalkey which was the home of David Hammond who was another CofC pioneer. (ref : H.R. Taylors history of the CofC, p 141). The Verco's were a large family with extensive farming interests across the state. Thomas Benjamin Verco was in Bordertown and had selected land for his sons. Other Vercos had a flour mill

at Balaklava. Donald would have known them well because the Verco's were prominent members within the Churches of Christ in the city as well as in the country towns. (ref : p 230, "The Verco Story, hopes we live by" by Arnold Caldicot). Dr J C Verco attended the funeral of Donald's sister, Kitty.

[Question : Was Donald ever a store manager?]

## The church in Owen

His father had been intensely involved with the Church of Christ in Strathalbyn so it is no surprise that Donald was a key figure in founding the Church of Christ in Owen and that his family were involved in all aspects of leadership in church life there.

On 20th March 1881, thirteen members of the Alma church who were residing in the new scrub country in and near Owen, met in David Finlayson's home in Owen to consider starting a new church nearer to where they were living.

When they began planning for this chapel it was to bring together several small groups who had been meeting in homes in nearby locations – thirteen in Owen, several from Hammond's (Vercos) six miles away, and nineteen from Balaklava. Donald was one of the five trustees for the building of the chapel. James McLachlan was also one of the trustees. (ref : Owen Church of Christ Centenary). It was built about one and a half miles west of Owen, at Gorey's Corner which was at the eight cross roads on the road to Piney. (ref : L4,17,21)

The church was opened in January 1882. At that time the membership comprised of 20 from Owen, and 31 from the Dalkey group (L54,23). The first minister was William Judd ((L54,27) who probably knew Donald from Strathalbyn as Judd had baptized his father and step-mother about ten years before, and the year after that, he baptised his brother Alexander junior. Judd was to conduct Donald's wedding a few years later. (Note that there are two Judds???)

Donald was the first superintendent of the Sunday School which was commenced in September 1882 (ref : K5,11 Alma-Dalkey 1875-1975 p 54, and Owen Church of Christ Centenary).

He was one six of speakers in the first years of the new chapel – the others included David Finlayson, James McLachlan and four others. Indeed the names of Donald, David and James were frequently mentioned together in accounts of the activities of this church around this time.

In 1883 Donald was one of three men who sat together in the front seat to lead the singing. They did not have an organ because the church believed that organs were forbidden by the bible (source : Owen Church of Christ Centenary, and Jubilee). Quote the bible xxxxxxxxxx. The note was struck with a tuning fork and singing was led by men with lusty voices. (source = newspaper cutting)

We get an idea of the firm ideas which were prevalent at that time with comments from the history written for the church's centenary. *"In those far-off days there was no instrumental music in the Churches of Christ. Many of the old Scotch brethren considered it was not in accordance with Apostolic teaching; that an organ was a machine and therefore it was wrong for an instrument of music to be played in the House of God. Many of them, too, possessed strong and lusty voices that were by no means unmusical, and so good congregational singing was heard in many of our churches, and Owen-Dalkey did not lag in this respect. On 4<sup>th</sup> December 1883, it was resolved that brothers D Hammond, D Gordon and E Robinson should sit together as leaders of the singing (K5,18-23) ..... For the first quarter of the century church discipline was more rigorously endorsed than nowadays. Members were exhorted to walk circumspectly, to shun to a greater extent worldly amusements, and to abstain from things whereby their brethren were made weak."* (ref : K6,6-8). Following much discussion and considerable opposition, in 1908, an organ was eventually purchased.

In 1906 the original chapel was replaced by a new one located xxxxx.

Donald continued to be central to the life of the church. "This brief history would be incomplete without special reference being made to the work of Bros D Finlayson, D Gordon, D Hammond and W Marshman sen, who in the earlier days did so much for the Church and Sunday School in this district. Year in and year out, when there was no resident minister in this locality, they nobly carried on the work. In times of bereavement they used, in turn to conduct the burial service in the cemetery south-west of Owen and other centres." (Owen Church of Christ Centenary, Marshman 1932)

Donald was "one of the best preachers in the district. He also writes good verse" (ref : The Bunyip, Gawler, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1904, p 2). It is a pity we haven't got any copies of his poetry.

## Other service

In a broader way, Donald was involved in setting up a body to connect all the Churches of Christ in a 'brotherhood' throughout the state. He was on the first committee of the Evangelistic Union of Churches of Christ in South Australia which was established in 1883. It is interesting to note that the 15 committee members included four representing Dalkey (Donald, David Finlayson and two others), Henry Saltmarsh from Langhorne's Creek, three Vercos from various areas, and six others. (ref : H R Taylor, p 37)

Apart from his central role in the church at Owen, Donald also supported the work of other churches – notably Mallala and Alma. Mallala which is 20 kilometres south of Owen and towards the turn of the century, Donald took a leading role, along with others in 'successfully carrying out the work" a Mallala. (Jubilee History xxx) Also, at Alma, xxx kilometres east of Owen Donald and Annie were given a barometer inscribed "*From the members of the Church of Christ, Alma, 25.2.1920*". (Dora still has this memento) This was around the time they were moving to Jamestown.

In 1913, Donald delivered an inspiring address when he preached to a large congregation at the Baptist church in Georgetown (he was still living in Owen) (ref : Daily Herald, Adelaide, Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April 1913, p 8)

As well as church activities, Donald was also active in civic life :-

- Not long after he arrived in the area he was elected to the Dalkey District Council in 1880 (ref : L28,2).
- In 1893, Donald was a meeting in Georgetown to support reducing the fees for railings wheat on the Blyth-Gladstone line.
- In 1901 he was appointed to the Education Advice Board representing Georgetown. (ref : The Advertiser, Adelaide, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July 1901, p 7)
- And years later, in 1905, he was on the committee which established the Owen Institute Hall (ref : L15, xxx).
- And he continued, for example, he was still involved in local issues in 1922, when he was still in Owen but about to move to Jamestown, he wrote to the Adelaide Register about wheat prices and corn sacks (ref : The Register, Adelaide, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1922, p 15)

## Close links between the families

There were strong and enduring connections within this small community between several generations of three families – the Gordons, McLachlans and Finlaysons. :-

- James McLachlan was the father of Annie - Donald's wife
- David Finlayson was the father of Ruby - Donalds daughter-in-law
- James was born 1842, David born 1846 and Donald born 1857. So in 1885 for example, James was 43 yrs, David was 39 yrs and Donald was a youthful 28 yrs.
- The connections centred around the rich life of the church but extended to shared experiences within the small community and the children attending school together
- Donald worked at the McLachlan farm for xxx year - ie Donald married his boss's daughter.
- The church first met in David's home.
- David and Donald used to lead the church singing
- James and Donald were two of the five trustees of the first chapel in 1882.
- David and Donald were both on the committee which established the statewide brotherhood of the Churches of Christ in 1883. (ref : H R Taylor, p 37)
- David and Donald were two of the five trustees for the replacement chapel 1906. (Owen Church of Christ Centenary)
- When the new chapel was opened in 1906, the ladies appointed to wait table at the tea meeting included Annie, xxx McLachlan and Ruby - (Owen Church of Christ Centenary)
- Everard Finlayson was on the Institute Hall committee with Donald (p 15 Alma-Dalkey 1857-1975)
- The chief speakers of the first chapel were D Gordon, D Finlayson, J McLachlan and 4 others.
- In the church histories James, David and Donald are often mentioned together. Rarely is one mentioned without the others. "Tribute is here paid to the pioneers who assisted the church in its

early history, and such names as David Finlayson, Donald Gordon, David Hammond, J McLachlan, J Harkness, J Gordon, T Lawrie, and AH Richards are familiar." P 55 Alma-Dalkey 1875-1975

- In 1886, James was chairman and Donald was an auditor of the Dalkey Council.
- In 1882, Donald was a candidate for a counsellor with the Dalkey, and David was a candidate for auditor with the council. (ref : South Australian Weekly Chronicle, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1882, p 1)

Apart from the connections between these three families, there were notable linkages between other families which were prominent through the state brotherhood. Names which are repeated in the history of the churches were Marshman, Lawrie and Verco. These families were very much part of the world of Donald and his family - these names would have often come up in conversations around the Gordon's kitchen table. It stretched far beyond church activities - to friendship and business, across several generations.

## Georgetown

It seems that the family moved to Georgetown around 1900.

In 1901 Donald presided over a community occasion for the departure of some local men to the Boar war. LV Gordon gave a recitation. [Question : Who is LV Gordon? - The initials are wrong, but was probably his son Linley Matheson Gordon, aged 10 years – although it might have been either of Donald's nephews Lavington Alexander Lindsay Gordon, aged 13 years, or Linley Vincent Glenroy Gordon, aged 7 years old.] (ref : The Register, Adelaide, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 1901, p 6)

In 1904 Donald was in Georgetown, living in *Broadview* and was the manager of *Fairview* which is an estate of Mr Angus. (ref : The Bunyip, Gawler, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1904, p 2 and Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1904, p 2 and The Register, Adelaide, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 1904, p 4)

There is a record of Annie attending the Georgetown school (when???). The records are not complete and so it is not known if and when her older siblings, James, Katie and Lin, attended there.

[Question : When and why did they return to Owen?]

## Back to Owen

In 1912, Donald was appointed as auditor for the Liberal Union in Wooroora.

## Later years

James and Ruby were married in 1912. Jeff was born in 1913, Coralie in 1917 and Bill in 1918.

In 1914 Donald was one of the principal mourners at the funeral of his sister Kitty, Lady Way. She had been prominent in Adelaide society because of her marriage to the Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Way, and so her funeral was a major public event attended by many key figures. Donald was also was one of chief mourners for the funeral of Sir Samuel in 1916 which was said to be to have probably been the biggest funeral the state had ever seen.

Jeff can remember often visiting his grandparents because his parents (James and Ruby) were still living in the Owen township. He remembers an aeroplane used their paddock around 1917 – people had joy rides – there must have been great excitement as it was one of the first planes seen in the area. He spent a few weeks on *Dalkeith* when Lionel was born. When Jeff was about six he got a kettle drum for Christmas and he was proudly drumming as he walked through the farm gate. Grandpa Donald was trying to round up cattle at the time and they were disturbed by the strange noise Jeff was making.

There were other men working on the farm, employed by Donald. They all had the evening meal together – sitting around a big table in the kitchen. Grandma Annie did all the cooking. Jeff remembers that, when he was visiting at about seven years old, one of the men surreptitiously put some food on his lap and later took it to feed the cats. He tied a tin to their tails and the poor cats had a bad time! There was no radio or other night-time entertainments at that time. (in contrast, Dora can remember a gramophone when she was visiting her grandma Matthews.)

Katie married William REED in 1924 and they had one child, Donald in 1926.

Linley married Doris McBRIDE in 1921. Their children were Peggy 1921, John 1925, Pauline 1927 and Jill 1938.

## Moving to Jamestown

They moved to Jamestown around 1920. At the time of this move, Donald was aged 63, Annie aged 57, and Annie (junior) aged 26.

It seems that the other children did not go with them to Jamestown. Katie was 21 and Linley was 19 years. James and Ruby and their three children moved to Georgetown around that time.

Donald purchased a house in Parade Street – this was apparently the only property Donald had ever owned.

In 2011, when Don was compiling this history there was an old photo of a house which Dora did not recognise. Soon after asking Dora about this mystery photograph, Don found some notes which Jeff had left in a file with directions and mud map on how to get to Donald's house, but no address (at that time Don did even know it was in Parade Street). Don followed the directions on the street view of Google Earth and was astounded to come to the door of the house which he immediately recognised as the mystery photograph. Previously he had no idea that the mystery photo was of Jamestown. Attach the photo and the instructions.

At the time of the move to Jamestown Donald was in his mid 60s and it was probably as a form of semi-retirement, but he soon found work to do. This was probably on Verco's farm – going out by sulky each day.

Jeff said that Donald had a bad memory for names of people he met down the street, and grandma would patiently go through all the names until they got to the right one. James also had a bad head for names.

Jeff remembers his grandfather as an austere person but grandma as a loving, caring person who was very devoted to her husband and family. She was an outgoing person and was "an excellent quality person."

## Donald's death, and then Annie's

A few years after the move to Jamestown, Donald died at home at the age of 66 years. He is buried in the Jamestown cemetery.

Donald left an estate 200 pounds (The Mail, Adelaide, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1923, p 10)

After Donald died, the two Annies (his wife and his daughter), continued to live at Jamestown.

James and Ruby and their three children moved from Georgetown to Brooklyn Park in 1926.

Annie snr died in 1934 at the age of 71 years - 11 years after Donald had died.

Annie jnr had never married and had always lived with her parents. After they had both died, she lived by herself in Jamestown for a few years and then moved to Adelaide around 1939.

The house was then sold and the proceeds were distributed between the four children – James, Katie, Linley and Annie. Linley was the executor. Each received about 600 pounds - or perhaps this amount was shared between them.

Annie jnr eventually died in 1884, aged 89 years.

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These notes were compiled by Don Gordon. Donald and Annie were Don's great-grandparents. The notes are based on sources which are referenced throughout. At this stage it is an advanced draft and corrections or suggestions are welcome via 'Contact us' on the home page of <a href="http://www.alexanderandjessiegordon.net">www.alexanderandjessiegordon.net</a> .
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