

Arrochybeg to Australia

The story of MacFarlane pioneers - Part Two

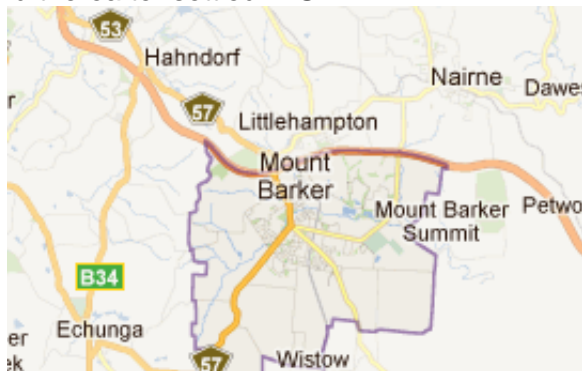
In the June issue of 'Lantern' we told the story of James MacFarlane (b.1796) who migrated from Arrochybeg Farm, Loch Lomond-side, 1824 and set up the first cattle station at Omeo, Gippsland, Victoria.

We now tell of his brother Duncan MacFarlane (b.1798) who became one of the very first settlers in South Australia. However, as we began to research the story, we immediately ran up against conflicting data which suggested there were two persons named Duncan McFarlane who both flourished in SA around the same period, the details of each becoming interlinked and therefore confused!

Undaunted, we struggled on and, at the risk of adding to the enigma, it is hoped to correctly identify the Arrochybeg Duncan.

Considering his social standing in the early period of SA, we have been unable to find his photograph among the few recorded references, yet his partners Dutton and Finiss managed to find a photographer.

The confusion over identity possibly arose from the fact that another Duncan MacFarlane arrived in Adelaide in the ship 'India' on 23rd February 1840, and who later is said to have married a fellow passenger, Elizabeth Norris, and thereafter settled in SA.



The Duncan MacFarlane we seek must have arrived in Australia much earlier – possibly on the ship 'Triton' with his brother James – arriving in Australia 1824 (more on this later). He is on record arriving at Port Adelaide on 26th December 1838 on the vessel 'Parland' (Capt. Tait) with a cargo of sheep and horses from NSW. Also on this ship was William Hampden Dutton who, along with Capt. John Finnis and Duncan MacFarlane formed a partnership which was successful in purchasing the very first special survey of land in SA (11th January 1839).

The partners paid £4,000 for 15,000 acres in the Mount Barker area, each partner had the first choice of 4,000 acres and the rest was sold to the public at £1 an acre. Duncan set up his sheep station near the present town of Mt. Barker.

Later still, the three partners were instrumental in assisting German immigrants who arrived on the ship 'Zebra' (Dec.1838, Captain Dirk Hahn), by allotting some land and farming gear for the establishment of the town of Hahndorf. This was largely organised by the partner Dutton, born in Hanover where his father had held a British diplomatic post – moreover he could speak fluent German.

To further clarify some of the confusion surrounding our clansman Duncan, although some reports give his date of birth (1793) and that he may have had a marriage (1818) in Scotland, we can find no evidence of him being married. Our research via the International Genealogical Index (IGI) reveals only one Duncan MacFarlane, born 1793, in Buchanan parish, who married a Margaret McFarlane in March 1818, and whom we think is not of the Arrochybeg family.

Some reports do state that Duncan and James MacFarlane both arrived on the 'Triton' in 1824, a fact which seems to be supported by the following notes on the outward voyage.

The 'Triton' (Capt. James Crerar) was bought by the then newly-formed Australian Company in 1823 and sailed from Leith on 7th September that year for Van Damien's Land (Tasmania). On board were 23 cabin passengers and 33 steerage plus crew. *En route*, she stopped at Cape Town, 5th December where an article in the Cape Town Gazette & African Recorder (dated 13th Dec..1823) names some of the cabin passengers part of which reads:

(Sic) "...Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm, and two Messrs. M'Farlane, Settlers, in the Cabin;- and 30 Men, 2 Women. And a child, ditto in Steerage"

We believe the two "M'Farlanes" were James and Duncan from Arrochybeg.

Although the 'Triton' eventually arrived at Hobart Town, 18th January 1824, it may have later sailed to NSW, where the brothers began their respective careers. Both are frequently described as seamen, and since neither really appeared prominently in Australian records for nearly a decade, they may have become actively engaged in the then lucrative whaling and sealing industry in the southern waters; we know that Duncan's later partner Capt. John Finnis was actively involved in this (Next Page)

venture, from which he became quite wealthy. One has to wonder where the MacFarlane brothers, having come from a none-too-affluent Highland parish, earned enough cash to buy land and livestock with which to enter their later pastoral lifestyles.

Yet another source of intrigue surrounds the sailing brig 'Parland', this being a name which should catch the eye of every MacFarlane – do we have here a Clan connection? It was an immigrant ship and was used to bring Irish settlers out of Londonderry; it is also on record for bringing coal miners from Fife to Australia.

Duncan MacFarlane prospered in SA, and probably saw the fertile soil around Mt. Barker not only as a grazing area, but as a potential wheat growing region, to which end he and his partners may have supported the introduction of a steam powered flour mill by miller John Dunn.

Noted in the website '*Historical Background of Hahndorf*' are brief references to Duncan and his partners some of which reads:

(Sic) “. . .Scottish-born MacFarlane arrived NSW 1824 as a sailor, and then began squatting in the mountains near present-day Canberra. Duncan came to SA 1838 with his friend, William Dutton, on the brig Parland.”

The present town of Mt. Barker was laid out by the partners on part of Duncan's sheep run during 1840, and other Scottish shepherds were encouraged to settle in the district. A sales office was opened next to the homestead. Later, due to scab and increased settlement the land became less fit for sheep and Duncan moved his stock further south. He is said to have bought shares in the Glen Osmond silver-lead mine, where he set up home and where he retired in old age. It appears also that he was made a Justice of the Peace, although it seems that his name was 'mistakenly' omitted from the last nominal roll.

Like his brother, James, there are few in-depth reports on his life in SA – and those that are accredited to him may be tainted by being mixed with the other 'Duncan' MacFarlane, whose real fate seems even more obscure.

There were other MacFarlanes who settled near Duncan, and who knew him well. Among these we note Allan MacFarlane (1792-1864) from Caithness, who became MP for the Mt. Barker district. Another was Lachlan MacFarlane (1806-1892) who came from Argyllshire, listed as pastoralist, publican and stockholder, Mt. Barker. He it was who built the impressive mansion, now known as the Auchendarroch Hotel in the town. It is on record that these

Scottish farming families socialised frequently, and one can only imagine the good humoured chat that must have ensued – much of it no doubt in the soft-lilting Gaelic tongue – as each patriarch recounted the many interesting stories of his early life and travels from the heather-clad hills of Alba to a new, and very different, homeland so far, far away!



Auchendarroch House (originally The Oakfield, 1861) Mt. Barker, was built by Lachlan McFarlane, Duncan's friend.

Some reports tell of Duncan being married to the aforementioned Elizabeth Norris from Leith, but we cannot at this time confirm this. Likewise, the 'marriage' names children, Margaret, Benjamina and Duncan Lennox, but whose births do not appear on record in SA. We are of the opinion that these details actually relate to the elusive Duncan McFarlane who arrived on the 'India' 1840. Perhaps in the future a more professional research will reveal the truth of the matter.

Neither do we have accurate knowledge of our Duncan's subsequent contact with his brother James, or other family members.

Duncan died 27 October 1856 at his home in Glen Osmond, SA, and is believed buried somewhere in Adelaide.

Whilst every effort has been taken to present and accurate historical account of the life and movement of each of the MacFarlane brothers from Arrochybeg, we fully realise that there might be areas of discrepancy, and for which we take responsibility. Nevertheless, we would like to hear from clansfolk in Australia, Scotland or elsewhere who claim descent from the proud and worthy Arrochybeg MacFarlanes.

End Calum Curamach.

References: Much of the research data has come from various websites, too many to list here. We acknowledge the assistance obtained from Andrew Macfarlane (NZ) and Chevalier Terrance Gach MacFarlane (USA) with grateful thanks..