

# highland family history society



# comunn sloinntearachd na gaidhealtachd

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Comunn Sloinntearachd na Gaidhealtachd

Welcome to this the 10th-anniversary issue of the Journal. Ten Years!

I haven't much room for me in this editorial as notes from other members inspired by the last issue are far more interesting. Donald Sutherland (no. 359) has sent me some of the entertaining census entries he's found over the years. In Nottingham in 1851 James Bowering was head of his family with Ann Bell, his "Concubine". Another family head was George Oscroft "Poet, Painter & Musician" and these accomplishments were reflected in the given names of his sons: Rubens, Byron, Handel, Luther and Newton. Then there was Sampson Morley, a framework knitter, whose wife's occupation was given as "She attends to her house and minds her own affairs." Was this the enumerators' opinion or Hannah Morley's snapped answer to a question? A USA census entry gave us Pleasant Lovelady (a male head of family whose own parents had a sense of humour) whose occupation was "A little of Everything".

Why did I ask for spelling variations of names? Gordon Richardson (no. 23) has beaten the McMullens with 220 kinds of Dalryell published in a 1909 Scottish Historical Review, and not including two more he found himself.

This leads us to errata. Mr Richardson also pointed out that in my summary of our Any Questions evening (Journal 9.4) where I reported that it was said that the First Fleet to NSW had no minister, this was queried at the time, and that Rev. Richard Johnson did sail as 'Chaplain to the Settlement' of NSW in the First Fleet, arriving in January 1788.

On to this issue. Mr Lannon's article on the Melvilles brings up the difficulty in reading old gravestones. I wonder if he tried any of the volumes of Monumental Inscriptions in New Register House? I was in one cemetery recently (we genealogists have great taste in holiday haunts) and saw no inscription where I wanted one, but the attendant did when he tossed some water over the stone. I still saw nothing, but I believed the man.

Thank you for all your offerings of the Mormon rationale for their interest in family recording. We decided on the article by Mr Renault as a man who has spent years working very closely with the church. He also has MacKenzie ancestry from Ross and wondered what took them a thousand miles away to the Channel Isles.

My thanks also to Donald Read (no. 805) for his article, regretfully too large for our small Journal, on his South Uist ancestors who went to the same small area of 'Upper Canada' as my Argyll ones and his neat summary on A3 of sources of genealogical information in Canada.

CONTENTS

Editorial .....	p 1
The Melvilles of Doll .....	p 2-8
The Mormons and their records .....	p 9-11
The Mackays of Kororareka & Lochalsh .....	p 12-15
News from the Record Office .....	p 16-17
Member's Research Interests .....	p 18-21
Queries (430-443) .....	p 22-24

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## THE MELVILLES OF DOLL

by Allan C Lannon

A general interest in local history and an impending visit to relatives of my father in Newfoundland, Canada led me into an extensive and still continuing family history research project. Initially I just wanted to know whom I would be meeting on the other side of the Atlantic and where they fitted into the family. The success of this limited information gathering exercise on opposite sides of the Atlantic, and particularly in Newfoundland, was the motivating factor in my research carried out over recent years into my mother's ancestry and also that of my wife's paternal and maternal lines.

This research has resulted in the collection of thousands of names, the construction of hundreds of charts and tables, many hours of work in Caithness, Sutherland, Inverness, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and London and much correspondence with relatives in Australia and New Zealand.

The main purpose of this article is to briefly outline my research into the Melvilles of the parishes of Golspie and Clyne with particular reference to their strong connection to the hamlet of the Doll between Golspie and Brora. The information is more a collection of thoughts rather than a well argued work. The material I have is so widespread, voluminous and intertwined that I have some difficulty in compiling a lucid description without the use of literally dozens of charts. However, should any reader wish to question me on elements of my work or further enlighten me on related individuals or families I would be pleased to hear from them.

My mother's maiden name is Melville - it is worth noting that the name was variously spelt as Melville, Melven and Melville and as late as 1850 a birth, in Lairg, to one of the 'direct line' Melvilles, was recorded as Melvin. My mother (b. 1923) is one of two remaining children from a family of nine born to George Melville (b. 1875) and Annie Fraser or Ross (b. 1875). George was a ploughman on Culmailly Farm, Golspie at the time of her birth but he was a native of the Doll in the parish of Clyne. Annie Fraser was the illegitimate daughter of Christine Ross (b. 1853) from Invercasley, Rosehall and, it is said, John Ross, a pupil teacher from that area who soon after fathering Annabella moved to England to study and died there. Christina Ross later married George Ross (b. 1854), blacksmith of Rosehall and Brora, and had a large family to him before he went to Canada to work on the building of the Duke of Sutherland's railway. George unfortunately died in Canada before he could send for his own family and Annie.

George Melville was also illegitimate. His father was John Melville (b. 1854), a farmworker from Strathsteven in the parish of Golspie. John later married Margaret Munro (b. 1861)

from Lairg and they had nine children born at various farms in East Sutherland where he worked. George's mother was Catherine Sutherland (b. 1854), known as Kate Roy, from the Doll. Catherine never married and as far as is known she had no more children. She died in the poorhouses at Mosshill, Brora in 1925 having been put there after her house in the Doll burnt down. It is said that she left some herrings in a covered pan on the fire to cook while she walked to Brora to take the sacraments and while away the thatch caught fire. Kate was interred in the old part of the Golspie cemetery near to the wall separating the burial area from the primary school grounds. The grave is unmarked but was shown to me by my uncle Neddie (Janatus) Melville before his death. He was present at the funeral and remembered the place of the grave. This grave is in the same section of the burial grounds as the graves of the Melvilles of the Doll but is some distance from their lairs.

While researching in the Brora records office, Jack MacLennan, the registrar, told me that he met Kate 'Roy' Sutherland in the early twenties as they shared the shelter of the Iron Bridge at Strathsteven in a particularly fierce storm. He was returning to Brora after watching a Boys Brigade football match in Golspie and she was making her way from her home in the Doll to visit George and his family at Culmailly. This was apparently a journey that she made regularly until near the time of her death. She would appear to have been a bit of a local character and quite distinctive in her severe looking all black outfit of a long skirt, long coat and large hat. Jack must have thought that he had met a witch that evening!

It would appear that though the Doll was in the parish of Clyne the majority of burials took place in the grounds of St. Andrew's church in Golspie. Despite the longer distance to Golspie and the more undulating route the families of the dead were happier to go to the extra effort rather than cross the river at Brora. The Brora cemetery was, however, not the one presently in use and the further distance to the old burial ground at Clyne Kirkton might have also been a factor. An earlier George Melville (b. 1803) and some members of his family and descendants are buried in the Clyne Kirkton cemetery. This is not far from where he farmed.

The Melville stones in Golspie were not very obvious until they were unearthed and cleaned by members of a Job Creation team a few years ago. The writing on the upright stones was cleared of algae and flat stones were found beneath turf. All the stones except two can be linked directly to known family members. One flat stone closely associated with vertical stones in the same plot is that of William Melville (Melven) and Ana Sutherland and comparison of names and the position of the stone leads one to believe that they could be the parents of my first certain ancestor, Alexander Melville of the Doll and Brora.

Nearby is a flat table stone with a considerable amount of carving upon it and some names and writing on it were easily discernable after cleaning though already the deterioration has been significant. This stone seems to pre-date all others and is a memorial to Adam Melvin and Elizabeth Elphinstone. Unfortunately the corner with the important date is badly worn and partly broken away. All efforts by various means to enhance the inscription have failed and there is little likelihood of it providing further information. The name Adam does not seem to appear again in the Melville family except in an interesting marriage between Melvilles in Australia which is outlined later. This makes the existence of the stone and its place in the family's history even more perplexing. Elphinstones were present in the parishes of Golspie and Clyne at least as early as the Melvilles and also there are some Elphinstone and Melville connections in the Doll in the early and mid-19th century.

In the tidied Golspie cemetery I came across two fragments of stone, one engraved Alex Melvin and the other Hector Melvin. The former stone also had the name Katr engraved on it. They were situated about thirty yards from the bulk of the Melville stones but the fragments looked as if they were out of place and the pieces about 2-3 feet square had been placed between other, larger existing stones. The name Hector is only found in one instance in the Melville family of the Doll but it is found in the Melvilles who lived in the Portgower area of Kildonan parish. Some of those Melvilles have only been indirectly connected to the Melvilles in my study.

Close to where the fragments of stone were found I noted more recent stones in a Ferguson plot with a Margaret Melville (b. 1818) on the memorial. This Margaret was the daughter of Henry Melville (b. 1785) and Christina Gordon (b. 1797) and she was the wife of John Ferguson (b. 1804) who worked as a farm servant. John Ferguson's family lived at Rose Cottage, Golspie and one of his sons became a tea planter in India and another was Factor at the Duke of Sutherland's estate at Lillieshall Shropshire. Henry's son George, mentioned above, married a Margaret Grant, daughter Euphemia (b. 1826) married William Turner and son William married twice and founded an Australian branch of the family. His first wife was Annie Macdonald, probably married before he emigrated, and his second wife, Annette Bayles, whom he wed in Australia.

Some family speculation on the origins of the Melvilles of the Doll suggested they were descended from a family of Melvilles who came to work at the Brora coalmine and further the extent in number of the family was not thought to have been very great. Both those suppositions proved to be untrue with the discovery that the Melvilles were in the area before family members went to work at, and eventually lease, the coalmine and the number of Melvilles in the Doll, Golspie and Brora areas was larger than had been imagined.

Not only were the individual Melvilles found to be large in number but also the complicated marriage and inter-marriage between the families of the area resulted in so many cross-links that constructing 'family trees' proved extremely difficult.

Four distinct but closely related Melville lines originating in the Doll have been identified by my research with virtually all Melvilles in the area linking into at least one of those lines. The lines appear to come from common ancestors William Melven and Ana Sutherland born circa 1730. While this earliest generation is connected circumstantially by grave records and other indirect evidence there is little doubt as to the other lines and their relationship to one another.

The direct line from my mother through, George (b. 1875), John (b. 1854), John (b. 1821), Henry (b. 1785), and Alexander Melville (b. c1755) takes us back to the mid-18th century. This line has three other related lines running in parallel with it. One is headed by a John Melville and Betty Munro and also originates in the middle of the 18th century. There is every likelihood that John and Alexander were brothers. However, as both lines are joined at an early stage by the marriage of Sarah Melville (b.1814) and Francis Melville (b. 1815) even if there had been no prior relationship they can be legitimately incorporated into the overall family tree. Sarah's parents were William Melville (b. 1779) and Elizabeth Sutherland (b. 1786) and Francis's parents were John Melville and Elizabeth Munro.

This John seems to have been a 'lad about town' and there are strong indications that he headed two other lines through illegitimate liaisons. In the first he fathered a child John to a Helen Macdonald and then a child John to a Kate Sutherland. Again those lines are connected to the other lines by a complicated system of inter-marriages.

John Melville of John and Helen, married in Cromarty and returned to the Doll. This family were the forebears of the 'Coalmine' Melvilles and later members of this line emigrated to Australia. An Australian descendant of this line, Richard Snedden, was a former member of the Highland Family History Society, and I corresponded with him for some time after I responded to a query of his in this journal. He sent me some information on his Australian relatives including the news that one relative was Kerry Reid (nee Melville) the former Australian and Wimbledon tennis star and another had wed Miss Australia 1947! John's liaison with Kate Sutherland originated a line which connects to many families still in the Doll and Brora areas including Murrays and McBeaths.

The legitimate John Melville/Betty Munro line produced a number of interesting family connections into other Melville families and other Doll families but it was often dogged by bad luck and

illness and never became as widespread as my own direct line from Alexander. However, those members who did survive and leave the area made good in the antipodes. There is also a line extant in the Doll at the present time.

I have corresponded regularly for some time with two avid family history researchers, Heather and Una Melville in New Zealand and through them I have received information from and about Melvilles in Australia and New Zealand, many of whom are connected. Sadly, Heather died in February of this year.

The various ancestors who went to Australia seemed to grasp the opportunities presented and to make their way successfully in their new surroundings. Medicine seems to have been the favoured profession though others did well in land speculation and another, Donald Melville, reached 'giddy' heights in government in Australia! By all accounts he was not the only politician as one Melville, an expert in forestry, brushed aside a question from Heather Melville about his ancestors by saying 'they were all mad politicians!'

The inter-linking of the Melville families in the Doll with their own lines and with other families seems to have continued in Australia and New Zealand. A number of members of the same family travelled to the other side of the world, met with 'cousins' from Clyne and Golspie and married. Some of those 'cousins' were close relatives while others were related distantly by marriage in the land of their birth.

Some of the Melvilles of the Doll settled in Canada and though I have not corresponded with their descendants I hear mention of them from time to time from other family members who are interested in family history research. Since a number of individual Melville family members, and at least one complete family, disappeared from 'the face of the earth' in the early years of the 19th century it is likely that while a number would have followed relatives to the southern hemisphere others probably crossed the Atlantic. The family I would dearly like to find held the lease of Crislich at the head of the Black Water to the upper end of Loch Brora.

An Alexander Melville, possibly a son of the earlier Alexander and his wife Sarah Mackay, was married to Margaret Graham and they had at least five children. John (b.1806), Katherine (b. 1808), Margaret (b. 1810), Jean (b. 1814) and William (b. 1816). The only tenous lead I have at present is the marriage of an Adam Graham Melville in Australia married twice to sisters Isabella and Mary Melville in Australia. The descendants in Australia say that Adam Graham Melville's ancestors came from Brora and that he married cousins. Since Isabella and Mary were the daughters of John Melville and Roberta Pope, the 'Coalmine' family, and other members of this family including a son Hector and another daughter Davidina went to Sydney, it is certainly possible that my missing family

were cleared from their croft and emigrated. The last reference to Alexander Melville and Margaret Graham is in estate papers in 1818 where they received the lease of Crislich at £60 per year.

Another interesting link within the Australian Melvilles is created by the marriage of Adam Graham Melville's great grandson to Christine Leslie who is described as his cousin. The Leslies were from the Doll but earlier, in Australia, Margaret Melville (b. 1833) married a cousin Donald Leslie. This Margaret was the daughter of Donald Melville (b. 1797) in the Doll and Margaret Jolly (b. Aberdeen) and the grand-daughter of John Melville (b. c1760) and Betty Munro (b. 1774).

The Sutherland origins of the Melvilles is unresolved at present though I am of the opinion that they were in the area from about the early to mid-1700's. A suggestion that they came in with the sheep as shepherds is unlikely as they tended to be lotters, crofters, and farmers and later many were farm labourers as their families grew and the small tenancies could not support all family members. In addition there seems evidence that they pre-date most, if not all, the clearances and suffered themselves with the advent of the sheep.

Since the Melville lines lead back to what appears to be a common ancestor around the time above stated, it is reasonable to speculate that a single family appeared in the area and enough time had not elapsed for a widespread structure of less closely related lines to develop. In other words, if they had been in the area for a long time prior to the early to mid-1700's it is likely that there would have been a number of lines that I could not link back to the common ancestry. With the exception of an Alexander Melville in Brora, who was an innkeeper, and his family, and the Alexander married to Margaret Graham, the only unidentified Melvilles are females born about the mid-1700's. They could easily be daughters of William and Ana and sisters to Alexander (b. 1755) and John (b. c1760).

'Golspie's Story' by Margaret Grant outlines a number of periods of improvement in East Sutherland and many of the influences that moulded the communities along the Sutherland coast. There was clearly a great deal of movement of people by land and sea into and through the area and the Melville family could possibly have arrived in one of those periods of change. It is possible their arrival was associated with changes at Dunrobin or the Sutherland Estate or they may have been connected to the Gordons of Carrol who, I believe, were landowners in the Golspie and Clyne area.

Movement from the Melville 'homelands' in Angus or Lothian might have been directly in response to the need for certain skills in the Sutherland area or it might have taken place in stages through Aberdeenshire and the North East of Scotland.

There is also a possibility that the Elphinstones, who appear to have links with the Sutherland family, may have been responsible for bringing the Melvilles north.

One final speculative suggestion on the origins of the Melvilles of the Doll is that they were the result of the settling in the parish of Clyne by a Melville from Loth or Portgower parish. Melvilles in those latter areas were fewer in number and the links between families is not nearly as easy to identify. Maybe those Melvilles were in East Sutherland longer than those in which I am interested.

Should this brief article be of special interest to any society members I will be pleased to hear from them. Whether it is a request for information from my extensive records, the correction of some points of fact in the above or the passing to me of new information the correspondence will be welcome.

My address is 'Torbeg', 6 Burnett Place, THURSO, Caithness.

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## THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AND ITS GENEALOGICAL RECORDS

by Kenneth Renault

Collectively known as the Mormons, this mainly American Church actually enjoyed a numerous following in Britain in the latter half of the last century. In fact, by 1880 some 100,000 Britons had left to join the Church in America.

It is unfortunate that because of lack of knowledge of their work the genuine research activities of the Mormons in over 40 countries throughout the world have raised doubts in the minds of people as to the true objectives and an unwarranted and slightly anti-Mormon attitude has arisen which is quite unfounded. It is no more than a doubt or suspicion and most of those who express it would find it difficult to substantiate or even to describe.

During the ten years that I have been associated with the Mormon Church in Jersey, on a very friendly basis, even though I am an Anglican, I have never experienced this attitude within myself or felt in the least compromised by having my family details recorded in Salt Lake City. There are possibilities that theological arguments and differences may support these doubts in some, but there are, after all, fundamental theological differences between all the major Christian churches.

The main theological argument against cooperation with, or assistance to, the research teams who travel the world microfilming a wide range of records, is to be found in the belief, held by some, that the Mormon Church intends to re-baptize into their faith all who have passed on. To do so, it is believed, they are obtaining the names and personal details of everyone for whom record can be found, be it in parish registers, wills, Court records or from any other base.

In my opinion, this belief is largely a matter of a faulty understanding or a biased interpretation of statements made by the Mormons in their various books on family research among their own church members, and reaction to these interpretations within other major faiths depends more upon the attitude of the individual, churchman, lay or pastoral. For example, I know a Bishop who has sanctioned the filming of registers within his own immediate jurisdiction and care, while incumbents in the same diocese have resolutely refused access. In any event, some 800,000 families and 2 billion names are already recorded and it would be futile to raise objection now to any action taken on them by the Mormons.

Never, during the ten years that I have enjoyed contact and pleasurable research in our local Family History Centre, as they are now called, has there been any attempt at proselytism



that the full alphabetical and supplementary indexes to be made on microfiche will make this Project the most useful and comprehensive medium of research ever devised for the whole of Britain. It will be particularly valuable for those Scottish families whose ancestors moved South of the Border during the previous 40 years from 1841. For example, it will enable a missing grandfather, believed to have moved to somewhere in England about 1872, to be located within a few hours for, at worst, if his intended destination was completely unknown a search through every county would be easily accomplished at those Centres or libraries which, hopefully, will carry the complete set.

My wife and I are coordinators for Jersey under the auspices of the Channel Islands F.H.S. and will be glad to answer any queries from Highland members.

For further details of the Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City and its records, members should read pp 86 to 92 of Mary Youden's book "Irish Family History" which gives a very detailed account of the Library. On a practical level I recommend any member who has not yet done so, to visit the nearest Mormon Family History Centre, not just to look up the I.G.I. but to ask to see the catalogues and indexes that are available on film and which cover an astonishing range of research material. The visit will not be wasted.

#### MORMON LIBRARY IN EDINBURGH

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now have a Family History Centre in Edinburgh. As well as the latest editions of their IGI, these centres all hold the Mormon's "Family History Library Catalog" which gives you a list of all the genealogical records they have micro-filmed around the world, and copies of which the centres can obtain for visitors to view or even borrow. The Edinburgh Centre is open on 3 days per week as follows :- Monday, 10am-3pm; Tuesday & Wednesday, 10-12.30 and 7pm-9pm. Centres in Scotland are at :-

- Aberdeen North Anderson Drive, Aberdeen, Grampian Tel 0224-692206
- Dundee Bingham Terrace, Dundee, Tayside Tel 0382-451 247
- Edinburgh 30a Colinton Road, Edinburgh 10 Tel 031-337-3049
- Glasgow 35 Julian Avenue, Glasgow, Strathclyde G12 Tel 041- 357 1024
- Kilmarnock Whatriggs Road, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire KAI 3QY Tel ???
- Kirkcaldy Winifred Crescent, Forth Park, Kirkcaldy, Fife Tel 0592-640 041
- Paisley Johnstone Ward, Campbell Street, Johnstone PA5 8LD Tel 0505-20886

towards me or my students. Always we have been invited, and felt quite free, to refer to the Centre as often as we wish, with no more than a modest donation, very discreetly suggested, and never verbally, in return. These donations are a contribution to the running costs of the Centre, telephoning and mailing for example, on behalf of enquirers for material needed from Church H.Q. in Britain or even from Salt Lake City. These donations are not a contribution to Church funds.

From personal experience I am very happy to acknowledge the tremendous work that is being done by field teams in many countries at this moment and I believe strongly that the Mormon Church has moved away from any possible previous commitment, if indeed it ever existed, and is now gathering information in the interests of worldwide research by people of all faiths. Anyone who has visited the Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City, founded in 1894, cannot fail to be astonished in the presence of the world's largest collection of genealogical data situated on five floors of a new building to which the general public are invited, as often as they wish, at no charge.

My wife and I spent two whole days there and could do little more than attempt to search our family names in the catalogues and indexes! There are several hundred film and fiche readers; we were there in the January snows, even so we had to search for a free reader on our floor. During the summer months an appointment is necessary, or at least desirable, to avoid waiting time, although there is so much to see and do that waiting is never wasted time.

The international value of the work already accomplished and still continuing is borne out by the ever-increasing number of record Offices, Museums, Libraries, Genealogical Societies and Family History Societies in the five continents, which are now persuaded by circumstances to take in, and keep updated, copies of microfilm and microfiche, particularly of the I.G.I. which is the principal starting point for most who are just beginning their research.

An example of this wider approach and official acceptance is seen in the latest move - the 1881 British Census Project which is being directed by the Genealogical Society of Utah and which has the approval of the Public Record Office and H.M. Stationary Office which have provided film and photocopies of the official Census books of England & Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Hundreds of volunteers from many Family History Societies are doing the transcribing and initial checking; the transcribed sheets are then given a final check by the G.S.U. before return to those Centres where 160 computers are being fed the data which will eventually produce alphabetical indexes of every name in the 1881 Census.

The Border counties are participating and it is hoped that all Scotland will be included. When completed it is anticipated

## THE MACKAYS OF KORORAREKA & LOCHALSH

by Neville McKay

One of the many regrettable effects of the enforced emigration from the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century was the loss for future generations of all knowledge of their cultural origins. This was especially true of Australia and New Zealand, where distance precluded any communication; the colonial environment also took its toll in early deaths with re-marriage for the sake of the children. There were few communities where the language and culture could survive except perhaps for Waipu in north Auckland, New Zealand, but this was a remote district and its people soon became scattered throughout the country. The result was just the relic of a surname and a vague sense of Scottishness with little more.

In the post colonial period the quest for roots is sometimes sparked by the awareness of the differences between Lowland and Highland Scottishness, as well as a desire to fit one's family into the stream of historical events. A typical case is a family of the name McKay (colonial spelling retained the 19th century script form) whose only link with the past was the knowledge of a Gaelic bible which belonged to their grandfather. It disappeared after his death but fortunately a fly leaf survived and came to light many years later. This contained the names of children born between 1841 and 1847 in Kororareka, the original European settlement near the northern tip of the North Island.

The subsequent efforts to trace the origins of this family have extended over more than thirty years and exemplify the many sources that can contribute to the process. Kororareka, later renamed Russell, was settled by some five or six hundred Europeans before the country was annexed as a province of New South Wales under the sovereignty of Queen Victoria in 1840.

A search of early colonial documents in the new Zealand national archives produced the original proclamation document, signed by forty British subjects including one Donald Mackay. The next task was to see whether he could be the original owner of the bible, as the known genealogy stopped a generation after this period. A search of colonial land claim records showed that a Donald Mackay or McKay purchased the site for a house from the local Maori chief in 1838 and paid with a double barrelled gun and about 60lbs of tobacco. His claim came before the newly established Land Court in 1844 and the sale was declared satisfactory by the chief Rewa, who signed the appropriate document with his "moko" or facial tattoo pattern.

Donald Mackay appeared in other contemporary documents but there was still no clue to his origins or family. As the main link with the British Isles was through Sidney at this time, the next point of search was the archives of New South Wales.

Here it was learned that planned emigration from the west Highlands took place under the auspices of the government of New South Wales and the Colonial Office between 1837 and 1840.

Families were selected by a naval surgeon appointed by the Colonial Office and details were recorded on certificates of character issued by the parish ministers. These certificates were held in the New South Wales archives along with the passenger lists, and had been copied on to microfilm by the Mormon Research Center. Although the film contained several Donald Mackays, none matched the requirements until an assistant remembered that there were no certificates available for the first arrivals on the ship 'William Nicol', but there was a passenger list. On examination this contained Donald Mackay with his wife and three children, and the information that they had been engaged by James Busby, and the official British Resident in New Zealand, to work for him at Waitangi, across the Bay of Islands from Kororareka, for fifty pounds per year and rations.

Subsequent research of Busby's correspondence with his brother in Sydney, held in the Auckland Institute Library, confirmed the circumstances of this appointment and the fact that the Mackays stayed at Waitangi for a year, after which Donald acquired the land for his house in Kororareka and set himself up as a boatman in the area. His death by drowning was recorded in 1848, when his son Duncan was only one year old. Duncan left home and went to the west coast of the South Island, where he too met his death by drowning, leaving an orphan son James aged four years. James inherited the Gaelic bible but his mother re-married and he was unaware of his real name until he left home, hence the loss of any Highland connection by his descendants.

The Ship 'William Nicol' on which the family arrived in Sydney was the next obvious point of research, and fortunately its departure was well documented. Some information was contained in the correspondence of the Colonial Office and more emerged through the efforts of Australian researchers around the time of Australia's bi-centennial. It was clear that the ship had departed from Isle Ornsay in the south of Skye, and that the 323 souls on board had come from Skye and the adjoining mainland. The surgeon's log for the voyage had survived, giving details of the privations suffered on the sixteen weeks voyage. However the only clue to the origins of the emigrants was contained in a press report in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 10 July 1837. It described their departure in the early morning after an evening of piping and dancing; each family had been given a Gaelic bible, and on passing Armadale Castle their ship received a twelve gun salute to which it likewise responded. More importantly for the purpose of research the report listed the districts from which the emigrants were drawn, namely Sleat and Strath in Skye, and Lochalsh, Glenelg, Knoydart, Lochaber and Lochbroom on the mainland.



At this point all documentation seemed to end and one was left to follow instinct. It had always been remarked in New Zealand that there was a strong resemblance in features between the descendants of Mackays who came to Waipu in 1851 and those descended from the 'William Nicol' family. The Waipu family was descended from Donald Mackay of Plockton in Lochalsh, who emigrated to Middle River, Nova Scotia, with nine children in 1820 or 1821. Eight members of this family joined the expedition to New Zealand under the leadership of Rev. Norman Macleod from Assynt, for which the emigrants built and manned their own ships.

Advice was sought from the late Calum Macleod of Arnish in Raasay, who was deeply versed in genealogies of the area. He was aware of families of Mackays in Lochalsh, Raasay, Rona and Kilmuir in Skye, all of whom were believed to be connected. He explained the value of patterns of first names in the absence of written records and here a new clue emerged. Eight of Donald Mackay of Plockton's children had identical names with those of John Mackay, piper to Macleod of Raasay, one of whose sons Angus was appointed piper to Queen Victoria in 1843.

Following on this advice further help was sought from Mr Sorley MacLean the Raasay poet, who had been headmaster of Plockton School. He was able to identify a descendant of Donald Mackay who was still living in Plockton and from her the next real breakthrough emerged. Mrs Williams' grandfather, Duncan Mackay, had told her that they were descended from a line in which the eldest sons were named successively Duncan and Roderick. They had "served the King in two wars," and the father and nine sons were given land in Lochalsh as a reward for their service. She was not able to enlarge on this information, so the next point of reference was the Public Record Office.

The office in London contained a letter from Lord Reay to one of the King's advisers recommending the settlement of old soldiers on the Jacobite estates forfeited in 1746, but nothing emerged from the London or Edinburgh offices to relate this to Lochalsh, which of course was part of the Seaforth estate already forfeited after the 1715 rising. The Forfeited Estate Papers relating to this earlier period are still being catalogued and are not yet available for inspection. However the Seaforth Muniments revealed a Donald Mackay and Alexander Mackay "of Plock" taking shares of a tack in Achmore in 1793; there is also reference to Duncan Mackay of Plock in 1798.

A new breakthrough came with the publication by the Gaelic Society of Inverness of the muster rolls of the Independent Companies which served in the government forces under Lord Loudon in 1745-46, including the company of Captain Alexander MacKenzie. It contained the names of five Mackays from the Lochalsh area, one of them named Duncan. This established that the family was well settled by this period, so the two wars quoted by Mrs Williams' grandfather must have been more remote.

The Mackays had supported the succession of Queen Mary in place of her father James II in 1688, and took part in the government campaigns of that period, as well as supporting them against the unsuccessful Stuart risings in 1715 and 1719. The Scottish Record Office was able to offer some interesting sidelights on these campaigns. These include a letter from Captain McKay, whose company was on garrison duty at Eilean Donan castle in Lochalsh in 1692, complaining about the need for urgent repairs to the building. When the Spanish force landed in Lochalsh to support the Earl of Seaforth in the Stuart cause in 1719 the Mackay regiment took part in their defeat at the battle of Glenshiel.

The two wars of family tradition could therefore be 1715 and 1719, with the settlement taking place some time after this. Although the Forfeited Estates Papers are still not available, an interesting extract from them occurs in the Highland Papers published by the Scottish History Society in 1916. This includes a rent roll prepared around 1726 for the commissioners who were then administering these estates, and gives the names of several Mackays (spelled McCay) including Duncan of Erbusaig and Rory Row (Ruairidh Dubh) of Plock. This information appears to vindicate the tradition of a Ruairidh/Duncan pattern, and one of these named may well be the original patriarch. We can also say that the introduction of military settlers after two wars is consistent with the documentary evidence so far available. It is difficult to believe that a family whose clan had fought the Jacobite MacKenzies between 1689 and 1719 on several occasions and had garrisoned their territory could have settled in the region other than with official blessing.

Donald Mackay of Plockton and Middle River had a nephew Iain Ruadh who emigrated to Grand River, Nova Scotia with his family in 1821, and both this branch and the Waipu branch in New Zealand have preserved family trees which tie in with the Roderick/Duncan succession. As far as Donald Mackay of Kororareka is concerned, only one more fact has emerged. His widow's death certificate dated 1877 was recently traced and gave her maiden name as Elizabeth Gillanders, born in Applecross and married to Donald Mackay in 1829. Neither of these events appears in the Parish Register, but the I.G.I. had the marriage as taking place in Applecross to Donald Mackay from Balmacara. The Mormon Family History Centre was able to produce a copy of the entry in the minister's diary which had not appeared in the surviving register.

It would seem reasonable to suppose that Donald Mackay Balmacara was descended from the Roderick/Duncan Mackays of the same area; the best evidence is probably the strong resemblance between some of their descendants in New Zealand. Although local tradition accepts the links between the Mackays of Lochalsh, Raasay and Kilmuir, and naming patterns give further support to this, it is hoped that more positive evidence might still emerge.

