

## **NOTES ON DONALD McLEAN AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WHEAT CROP**

The late Mr. Donald McLean's old home was situated in Argyleshire in the Highlands of Scotland where he held a lease of twenty square miles of land known as the Douskie Estate, Ardgore, near Fort William. He reared cattle and sheep, grew oats and barley, and was also interest in herring industries. Mr. McLean, his wife, and family of five sons and five daughters arrived in the Navarino in 1837, landing at Holdfast Bay. There were no houses in South Australia at that time and Governor Hindmarsh was living in a reed hut on the banks of the Torrens. Mr. McLean, soon after landing, sent his son to Tasmania for supplies, and he returned with bullocks, horses and drays, and also seed, wheat, etc. Mr. McLean brought his land order no 454 from England. This entitled him to an eighty acre section of land near Adelaide. As this land had not been surveyed he had to wait until the sixth of June, 1838, for a land meeting held for eighty acre section at Adelaide. Mr. McLean had twelfth choice - section chosen - no. 50.

Mr. McLean's sons Allan and John lost no time in yoking the bullocks to the plough, which they had brought with them, and put in twenty acres of wheat, on section no. 50 where a good crop was hand reaped towards the end of 1838.

It was on this section that Mr. McLean built his house.

This has always been acknowledged as the very first wheat grown in South Australia; in fact it has never been disputed although it appeared repeatedly in the Adelaide newspapers.

Mrs. Calaby of Mt. Barker arrived in 1839 and died several years ago, about 90 years of age. Since her death, an article appeared in the papers relating to her experiences in south Australia. She stated that Mr. Ottaway, several others and herself had eaten bread made from the very first wheat grown in South Australia and that this wheat was grown by the late Mr. Donald McLean on his section no. 50 near Hilton. Mr. William Greig of Hindmarsh, who came to South Australia in the same ship as the McLean family, declares that he is positive that this was the first wheat grown in South Australia. He died about four years ago at about 90 years of age and colonists often spoke in reference to this being correct. A Mr. Crosman, a descendant of an old pioneer, has a printed book wherein it is recorded that the late Mr. Donald McLean was the first to grow wheat in South Australia, also that the amount was twenty acres near Hilton. It is also recorded in a book in the Public Library that no wheat was grown in South Australia before 1838, and only twenty acres was grown in that year. There are plans in the Public Library describing that Mr. McLean was granted section no. 50, also that the number of his land order was 454.

Mr. McLean was also one of the first to purchase large holdings around Strathalbyn also on the Angas and Bremer Rivers and on the frontage of Lake Alexandrina, including Mundoo Island. The old two storey homestead and outbuildings are still standing, adjoining the River Angas, near Strathalbyn.

The late Mr. Donald McLean passed away in his 85th year. The two sons, Allan and John, who really did the cropping of the very first wheat grown in South Australia on their father's land, passed away, one over 90 years and the other a little under 90 years of age.

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Above notes supplied to Archives Department by members of the McLean family.

***From information supplied by the West Torrens Historical Society.***