

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

JULY, 2007

### NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF ORBOST PART 1

Compiled by Margaret Carlyon, Traralgon - 29/4/1963

These notes, on the History of Orbost, have been divided into a series of articles which will be used over several Newsletters. This is the first of a five part series.

To establish the history of an area we must as always begin with people, the people who were the pioneers of Gippsland and were the first to open up this land. They were hardy people, many of them of Scottish descent and Orbost history starts with several people like this, they were Mr. Peter Imlay and the McLeod family so I am going to give you a biography of these people so you will know about them personally.

#### PETER IMLAY

Peter Imlay was the son of a Scottish Doctor and the Imlay family held large runs in the vicinity of Twofold Bay, New South Wales. In 1842, Peter Imlay, brought cattle from New South Wales and settled on the eastern side of the Snowy River near where the Orbost Township now stands. He brought 800 head of cattle from Monaro and came down the Cann Valley and crossed at the Lower Bemm. Imlay had a lot of trouble with the blacks in the area and after many encounters and loss of cattle, Imlay abandoned the station and returned to Monaro, taking 500 cattle back with him. Imlay later held Fulham Station north of Kilmany Park, also Decameron Run with Mr. O'Shea, as his superintendent. Now the McLeod family enters the story of Orbost.

#### ARCHIBALD MACLEOD

Archibald McLeod was born in Skye, just after the middle of the 18th-century, the fifth son of Captain Norman Macleod of Bairnsdale, great-grandson of Roderick Macleod of Ulinish, and great great-grandson of Sir Rory Mor, 16th Chief, by his wife Anne, daughter of Norman Macleod 5th of Berners.

Archibald was thus the brother of Alexander, who succeeded to Bernisdale, and of William Macleod, 1st of Orbost, Scotland.

Archibald Macleod married Colina, daughter of John Campbell of Lochend, and Inistore, Argyllshire, and with his wife and elder children migrated to Australia early in the 19th century, and after a comparatively placid existence as a sheep



Mr Archibald Macleod

farmer, died at Bairnsdale in 1861 and is buried in the Sale cemetery. He and his wife were the parents of 10 children, Norman Roderick, John Campbell, Archibald, Donald, Dalmahoy Charles, Annabella, Ann, Williamina and Edith. During his lifetime, Archibald Macleod held the early Gippsland Runs of Ensay, 1843 to December 1847, Bairnsdale, August 1844 to December 1847, Orbost, 1845 to July 1847, Buchan, June 1845 to November 1850.

### **NORMAN RODERICK MACLEOD**

Norman Roderick Macleod, son of Archibald Macleod, arrived in Australia with his father and mother and two eldest sisters in 1821. He came in the ship, Lusitania, from London to Van Diemens Land, the voyage occupied six months. From Van Diemens Land, the family went to Norfolk Island, and to Sydney, and from Sydney to settle in Gippsland. Norman Macleod escorted Rev. Willoughby Bean on part of his first journey through Gippsland. He was a member of the Gippsland Company and arrived at Port Albert on the 2nd March, 1841, in the barque Singapore. During his life he held the Merri Creek run, 1841-42, Neumerella (Orbost), July 1847 to June 1850, and



**Mr Norman Macleod**

with his brother, July 1856 to October 1864. Also, with his brother, John, Buchan in September 1857 to May 1862. After living in Gippsland for some years he went to Mt. Rowan, near Ballarat, where he became an auctioneer. Interested in horses and raced in Melbourne for a time. He was the first president of the Ballarat Club. He married in 1875, Elizabeth Scott, of Camperdown. He died in 1882, leaving a widow and four children. His sons were both killed, one at the Great War, and the other as a result of an accident. He also had Bairnsdale Station, August to October 1864, and as Norman Macleod & Co. had Tabberabbera from September 1869 to July 1872.

### **JOHN CAMPBELL MACLEOD**

John Campbell McLeod, second son of Archibald Mcleod, with his father and brother had the following runs Ensay, 1843 to December 1847; Bairnsdale, August 1844 to December 1847, Orbost, 1845 to 1847, Buchan, June 1845 to November 1850. Alone, he had the Orbost run in July 1847 to October 1864. He married Miss J. McMillan of Strathavon, near Stratford. He died at Strathavon, Stratford, on the 29th March, 1889. He had no sons and his two daughters are dead, unmarried.

Now that you know the very first people to establish Orbost let us continue the story.

Eventually in the Orbost area there were three cattle runs: Orbost, Newmerella or Lochend as it was sometimes known, and to the East, adjoining those runs, was the Brodribb Run.

In 1845, Orbost carried 800 cattle and Newmerella or Lochend, which consisted of 16,000 acres, carried 500 cattle and 2,000 sheep. At this time and until 1853 these areas were held under licences issued by the Crown Lands Commissioner at Cooma, N.S.W.

In 1870, the station was taken over by well-known Victorian Pastoralist Sir William Clarke and his manager was Mr Robert Henry, and afterwards Mr C. N. Henderson. After the death of Sir William Clarke, the property passed into the hands of his



**William James Turner Clarke**

son, Sir Rupert, who offered it for sale at £4 per acre, but no sale resulted. The property was leased through few years by Mr J. Jeffers, and in 1898 was subdivided and sold at high prices to many, who today are still in possession of the farms.

During the early years, the Macleods had trouble with the blacks and a cook on the station known as Dan was speared and his hut burned. He was buried, and today his grave lies under the road of the present Butter Factory.

In 1858 Mr. T. T. Stirling took up a cattle run at Corringle and the site of his homestead became a

well frequented picnic ground, known as the 'Old Station'. When Mr Stirling left in 1866 to reside in Bruthen, Mr James Stirling, well-known at Marlo took over the Station.



**Mr James Stirling**

During the years 1864 and onwards, a series of wet seasons occurred and in 1870, the highest flight on record, swept down the Snowy River. The station homestead was surrounded in the night, and the hands had to take refuge in the loft where they remained until the water receded. During their sojourn in this unhappy position their only food was raw flour, and many anxious glances were cast on the flooded storeroom beneath them.

When Sir William Clarke obtained possession of the station, the Homestead, later in possession of Mr A. Rodwell was built and a good boat for crossing the river was procured.



**Mr Archie Rodwell**

News of the rich river flats of the Snowy River, soon became well-known and settlers arrived to

take up the area to raise fat cattle. Mr James Robertson, was the first selector, taking up land in



**Mr James A Robertson**

November 1875. Others followed, and soon farms sprung up and dairy cattle, pigs and maize started at prosperous era for Orbost.

Mr J. McKidd took a Pumpkin Point; Pat O'Dea, 'The Devils Backbone'; Cameron Bros. selected Brooklands, and many others including D. Gilmour, J. A. Watt, Richardson Bros., and H. Cameron were amongst the early settlers.



**Mr Hugh Cameron**