



# The McConachy Clan

## GORDON & CATHERINE (nee McGregor) MACONACHIE

**Gordon Maconachie** was born in Forfarshire, North of Dundee, Scotland in 1836 & came to Victoria in 1855. On his voyage to Australia, Gordon was prepared for burial at sea because it was thought that he was dead from the prevailing illness at the time. Just before he was to be cast overboard, an early morning bystander thought he noticed Gordon move and thus, pure chance can change events. He prospected for gold at Mt Blackwood for a short time and worked on the Melbourne – Geelong railway line for a while. He then moved to Pleasant Creek (*Stawell*) goldfield and later becoming the Manager of the Rose of Denmark gold mine for six years.

His elder brother John, born in 1832, had immigrated two years earlier and after various moves to several Victorian gold fields, settled in Stawell where he worked at his trade of a saddler. He took up land at Marnoo around 1870 & his property was across the road from “The Ridge”, Marnoo, now owned by Colin Campbell. John’s land is now part of “*Mingawalla*”, owned by Austin Guest and is situated 5 miles west of Marnoo. He was married but left no children. Another brother – William – stayed in Scotland & more about that later.

Gordon Maconachie married Catherine McGregor in Stawell about 1864. She was the daughter of John & Christina (*nee McDougal*) McGregor who brought their family of three sons & two daughters from Perthshire, Scotland to Australia in 1853. John McGregor was a Blacksmith by trade, who, prior to leaving Scotland, had been employed by the Marquis of Breadalbane. Breadalbane is a district in North West Perthshire, situated between Atholl in the north & Strathearn in the south. The Campbell seat of Breadalbane still exists, but the title lapsed in 1922 for want of an heir. The McGregor’s and descendants farmed & still do farm the Callawadda district of Victoria.

All the earlier members of the family are buried at the Stawell cemetery, as also are most of the older Maconachie's. John & Christina McGregor died at “Burrum”, Marnoo in 1895, aged 91 & 85 respectively.

In 1866 Gordon & Catherine Maconachie selected a block of land at Callawadda, near their McGregor relations and after 2 years there, transferred to “Burrum”, three miles west of Marnoo to a larger selection. Here their family steadily grew to three sons and six daughters. Whilst farming at Callawadda, his first harvest was completely burnt just as it was stacked ready for threshing. The cause of the fire was the old fashion wax matches, common at the time, which burst into flames when the wagon wheel passed over them. His second harvest, stacked ready for threshing, was set alight by his two eldest children playing with matches. After these two setbacks, he wanted to try a less chancy means of making a living, but his McGregor relations persuaded him to try again and helped him financially.

In June 1910, Catherine died & in 1912 Gordon moved into Stawell with his two unmarried daughters, Elizabeth & Jean. He lived there in retirement at “Kircubbin” in Wimmera Street until his death at 84 in 1919.

He had been a successful farmer, adding considerably to his earlier selection & taking a leading role in district affairs. He was a member of Stawell Shire Council for eight years & being Shire President in 1884. With other landowners he was a member of the Marion Land Company which helped to pioneer the Brim district north of Warracknabeal. He was founding member of the Wimmera & United Waterworks Trust (*forerunner to the present channel system*), a shareholder in the Murtoa Freezing Works (*long since defunct*), a committeeman with others instrumental in getting the railway to Marnoo & an elder of the Presbyterian Church.

He and his elder brother John were the only members of their family to come to Australia. As mentioned earlier, their younger brother William stayed in Scotland and there is still firm contact with several of his descendants in various parts of the UK. Nothing is known of their sisters if any.

After his father moved to Stawell, the younger son, Malcolm farmed “Burrum” and married Martha Gilmour of Cope Cope in 1912. Elder brothers John and James were already on their own farms, “Bonnie Doon” &



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“Hazeldene” (*the homestead which was built in the early 1900’s is still in very good condition*) in the Callawadda district which is about 10 miles nearer to Stawell than Marnoo.

In 1920, due to Malcolm’s ill health, “Burrum” was leased for ten years and with his wife & three children he moved to Ballarat. He arrived in Ballarat the day Edward the Prince of Wales was visiting there. For a short time, they lived at 309 MacArthur Street & then moved to 411 Neil Street until 1928 when a move was made to Forest Street, Wendouree. By then the family had increased to six, with the addition of three sons.

In early 1929 Malcolm bought the property “Koonda” from W.L. McAlister. It adjoined “Burrum” at Marnoo and the family moved back there one year before the lease of “Burrum” expired. Later that year the old home on “Burrum” was destroyed accidentally by fire.

Malcolm died in 1933 only four years after returning to Marnoo & Martha died in 1944. Very difficult times then ensued due to the Great Depression of the thirties, but with a lot of hard work and better times after the Second World War, prosperity returned to the family.

As the family grew up one by one, it was decided to sell “Burrum” and “Koonda” in 1951. “Challicum Hills”, Baungor was bought that year with John, Malcolm & Lewis moving there in partnership. Gordon and his wife farmed at “Gwenap” a few miles south of “Koonda” for nearly five years after the sale of the two-family properties. Gordon moved with his family to Darlington in the Western District in 1955, thus breaking the direct link with Marnoo after nearly 90 years.

The original researcher of the history contained herein was:

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