

## A SAD FAREWELL TO COLL IN 1837

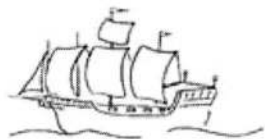
The Sailing of the "Brilliant" for New South Wales

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Early in the year 1837, the Rev. Hugh McLean of Coll and the Rev. Arch Nicoll of Tyree, together with Ministers of the Kirk in parishes throughout Argyll and some other counties of Scotland, received a letter from a fellow-minister and Scot, the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, of Scots Church, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Dr. Lang, a graduate of the University of Glasgow, who lived and worked in Sydney since 1823, offered free transport to Sydney for whole families of good character whose parents and elder children's qualifications would be of use in the colony. Knowing the faith the people had in their ministers, he requested that his offer be publicised from the pulpit. He proposed that his ship would sail from Tobermory in the coming September.

Dr. Lang had just visited the Continent, where he recruited a shipload of German vine dressers and their families, 250 persons, for work in New South Wales. Unfortunately, they refused to sail beyond Rio de Janeiro where many of their compatriots had settled. He had also, in 1831, brought a workforce of skilled Scottish tradesmen and their families, 100 persons, to Sydney on the 'Stirling Castle', to work initially on a college project of his own, and they had contracted to repay their passage from their wages.

When Dr. Lang reached England in late 1836, he was distressed to hear news of the severe famine from the failure of the crops in the Highlands and



Islands. The necessity to move some of the Scottish population from their impoverished situation reminded him of his oft-expressed wish for a more democratic society in New South Wales. He had been disturbed at the large number of Irish immigrants, and now saw an opportunity to right the balance. He attended a great public meeting in London on the subject of the famine and the plight of the people, and heard Lord Glenelg state that there were no funds available for migration to British America. Fortunately, the Treasury did grant £10,000 for immediate relief. Dr. Lang immediately called on the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rev. Dr. Norman McLeod, who had called the meeting, and told him there were funds available from the land revenue of the colony of New South Wales, which used to assist migration to Australia. In fact, thanks to Dr. Lang's timely intervention, eighteen shiploads of destitute Scots, totalling four thousand people, were landed, free of cost to them, at Sydney and Melbourne over the next three years, and proved a great boon to their adopted country. Dr. Lang was also assiduous in bringing Ministers of his Church, including some Gaelic speakers.

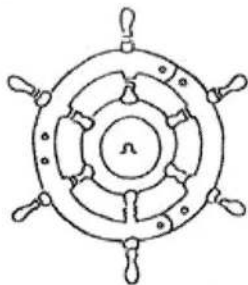
We can imagine the discussions and family conferences after news of the offer spread through the parishes. Although earlier emigrants in previous hard times had gone mainly to Canada, Australia would not have been unknown to Coll folk. Older people would remember Lachlan MacQuarie, who was Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821, and had been a frequent visitor to the New Castle from his home on Mull in earlier years; and Allan and Una MacLean and their family from Arleod Farm had sailed their own small ship to Tasmania as recently as 1832.

Gradually, minds would be made up, and the old folk who would have to stay would try to put on a brave front. Preparation for the new life was probably in the women's domain, as their means allowed — they would wish to make some lengths of the linsey wolsey and linen cloth woven on Coll, some wool, and warm clothes for their men and children. My own great-great-grandmother Euphemia McClean, who left Coll with her husband and two small sons, and expecting a third child, brought her spinning wheel, a feather bed and a laying hen, for which Donald would have made a crate. One piece of their luggage was a large plain wooden chest, with a small compartment at the side, just below the lid, for special items. These may have included Euphemia's Bible in Gaelic which she was still able to read in her old age before she died at 95.

The emigrants had to be vouched for by the Minister or other person of status. For instance, Hector and Mary McKinnon were noted by the Rev. Arch. Nicoll as: Character: "Very good"; Their State of Bodily Health,

Strength and Probable Usefulness was "Good"; their Religion "Presbyterian"; and under Remarks, Mr. Nicholl stated: "Reads and writes". The latter was not the general rule, for some people did not speak English, and others could not write, but "could read a little".

At last the time came for Coll's emigrants to farewell their friends and families, and make their way to Tobermory. Some of the pangs of parting would have been dulled in the confusion of getting themselves and their luggage aboard and into the best positions. Prayers were offered entreating their safety from the perils of the sea, and a final blessing given by their minister.



On 27th. September 1837 the sailing ship 'Brilliant' of 478 tons, Master, J. Gilkinson, laden with 312 emigrants including children; Duncan McPhee, Engineer; Angus Campbell, Surgeon Supervisor; Mr. I. McClure, Teacher; and an unknown number of crew, left the Island of Mull, Scotland. On 2nd December she berthed at the Cape of Good Hope for replenishment of water and stores. Passengers would be strictly supervised by the Captain and Surgeon Supervisor, and work allocated

to the men in order to keep everything ship-shape in the crowded conditions.

On 20th. January 1838 the 'Brilliant' entered the beautiful Port Jackson, and sailed up to Sydney Cove. All would be nervously eager to glimpse their new homeland; they had arrived in time to join in the celebrations, six days later, of the colony's fiftieth Year. Dr. Lang would be there to greet his prized new settlers and arrange for them to be looked after until they found work. In Australia as in Scotland, the network of the Church would

prove a strong foundation to their lives.

It is impossible to calculate the influence upon Australia of that one shipload of the 'Brilliant', but judging from the family known to me, their descendants must now number many thousands of fine Australians.

Some of us have made the pilgrimage to Coll and as we regretfully depart, we attempt to sublimate our thoughts into those of our dear forebears as they left Coll so long ago, never to return.

The passengers on the 'Brilliant' who appear to have been Coll People are as follows:—

- McFadyen, John, 32, Farmer; & Mary, 30; 1 s., 2 d.
- McKay, Lachlan, 45, Blacksmith, & Anne, 49; 4 s., 3 d.
- McKinnon, Hector, 32, Ploughman, & Mary, Dairy maid; 2 s., 2 d.
- McKinnon, Hugh, Joiner & House Carpenter & Agnes, 34, Home Servant; 2s, 5 d.
- McLaughlan, Hector, 35, Farm Servant, & Ann, 28; 2 s., 3 d.
- McLean, Allan, 49, Boat Builder & Carpenter, & Janet, 40; 5 s., 3 d.
- McLean, Allan, 28, Shepherd and Farm Servant, & Janet, 20.
- McLean, Donald, 28, Mason, & Margery, House Servant; 2 s.
- McLean, Donald, 30, Farm Servant & Euphemia, 28, Farm Servant; 2 s.
- McLean, John, 32, Farmer & Catherine, 28; 2 s., 1 d.
- McLean, Roderick, 30, Farm Servant & Flora, 22, Farm Servant; 1 s., 1 d.
- McLean, Marion, 68, Farm House Keeper.
- McMaster Hugh, 42, Blacksmith & Jane, 37, House Maid & Laundress; 3 s., 3 d.
- McPhaden, Donald, 35, Farm Servant & Janet, 36, Dairy Maid; 2 s., 2 d.
- McLean, Dugald, 30, Farm Worker.
- McLean, Hugh, 23, Shepherd & Farm Servant.
- McLean, Bell, 25; Janet, 29; Mary, 27.
- McKinnon, Julia, 27, Dairy Maid.

Other passengers came from Tyree, Iona, Mull, Skye, Inverness-shire, County of Larnach and Ayrshire and non-specified areas of Argyll.

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