



CLAN MACMILLAN SOCIETY (Victoria)

Newsletter No 9, December 1986

MACMILLAN

CREST BADGE : *A dexter and a sinister hand brandishing a two-handed sword, proper.*

MOTTO : *Miseris succurrere disco*
(I learn to succour the distressed).

GAELIC NAME : *MacGhille-Mhaclain.*

Office Bearers:

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The front page of our newsletter is usually reserved for a message from our president, Don Macmillan. As Don is a housemaster at Scotch College he is extremely busy at this time of year and has not had the time to write his article.

In lieu of Don's message I have included an article about Don himself, which was in 'The Age' on October 5th 1985. I thought, as many of our members have not met Don, that this is one way of introducing him.



THE HOUSEMASTER

Donald Macmillan, President of the Clan Macmillan Society (Victoria).

THERE ARE about 210 boarders at Scotch. They range from young boys in the lower forms to HSC students, and their parents pay an additional \$1241 per term to have them cared for on The Hill, or the residential campus overlooking the school.

Don Macmillan, 57, is housemaster of Schoolhouse and, like all the resident teachers, lives at the college free of charge in return for supervising the boarders. It is a time-consuming job, but one that he enjoys.

Boys are supposed to obtain permission before leaving the school grounds, but Mr Macmillan admits that sometimes students try to sneak out, or make up bogus excuses for an excursion. "We are very strong on alcohol and drugs," he explained in the rooms he and his family share on The Hill. "Boys are liable to be sent home or suspended if they play up. These boys are no angels, my goodness no."

Mr Macmillan, a former Olympic runner and coach of the first eight, knows how to handle the rebels. He recently bought a breathalyser kit from a chemist shop and

placed it on his desk so that when senior boys come back from an approved outing and look into his room to say, "I'm back Sir", they can see a device which will prove their sobriety. "Grog can be a problem," he said, "but I've told them, don't get into it or you're gone."

He thinks boarding develops a capacity to get on with people and self-reliance, but admits that "nothing can take the place of a home". He suspects that the day teaching staff consider the resident masters to be "a bit mad" living with the boys around the clock in what, he said, are "pretty primitive conditions".

Boys can have girls visit, but only when the housemaster knows about it, and only in one of the public rooms, not in the dorms. Don Macmillan rarely canes boys, and says, by and large, there are few problems. He said the school had its own way of compensating for the long hours involved in being a housemaster. When he injured his hip on a camping trip to Mt Bogong, he had one term off work, but his salary was paid and his family cared for.

Bob McMillan-Kay
Archivist and Editor



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CLAN SOCIETY BARBECUE

SUNday 12th October was our combined AGM and Clan Society Barbecue. I emphasise SUN, because as predicted or ordered by Don, we had a lovely sunny day as usual. I'm beginning to think that Don knows someone at the weather bureau or maybe someone of an even higher authority.

Unfortunately Don was not able to attend the meeting as he was called away at the last moment to attend a Scotch College project at Mansfield. In Don's absence the AGM was chaired by our treasurer, John T. Macmillan. John and his wife, Helen recently returned from a holiday overseas, including Scotland of course. A resume of their trip will hopefully be included in our March newsletter.

The AGM was over in a short time as the all existing office bearers, except for that of the treasurer, were renominated for their positions and accepted. John T. Macmillan however tendered his resignation, with no nominations for a replacement. So, should anyone like to take over this role, which is not at all difficult, I'm sure John would like to hear from you. I know it's not a difficult task, as I was doing it myself along with my own job on the committee while John was overseas for three months.

While on the subject of office bearers, Don Macmillan, our President, left a message with John that he would accept a nomination again for the position of President if there were no other nominations, but would gladly let someone else take over the role. I hope that some of you can give it some thought as Don has been President since the Society originated.

The gathering of the society had as usual a very friendly atmosphere. Many of those who attended are getting to know each other better, having met at previous AGM's. It was great to see two families from interstate, namely; Margaret Close and her father, Alfred McMillan from Finley, New South Wales and Frank McMillan and his wife from Linden Park, South Australia. And from outer Melbourne and country we had Colin McMillan from Ballarat and John Alexander McMillan from Geelong and their wives of course. Good to see that some members are prepared to travel those distances to join us on this annual get together.

As usual we had a raffle to raise funds to help supplement our costs. June Senior purchased three items of Scottish origin from Bill Gibson's House of Scotland to raffle, which raised us approximately \$22.00. A great effort, thanks June.

It was decided at the AGM also that because of our current financial position we will keep our membership fees at \$5.00 per individual or family and review them at the next AGM. All of those who attended on the day paid their fees, so it would be appreciated if those who did not attend the AGM please send their fees for 1986/87 in as soon as possible, and quote your membership number if you can. Printing and postage costs have risen considerably recently, so we require the funds to maintain our newsletter at the present standard and frequency.

The meeting also gained us two new members for the Society, namely; John Davey from Sydney, a brother of June Senior (committee member) and also Alfred John McMillan from Finley, New South Wales, Margaret Close's father. We welcome them to our society and hope that they enjoy our kinship.



ARCHIVAL UPDATE

I feel that it is time to update the archival information of our society, especially now that we have several new members.

Previously I requested each member to fill out a form to provide the details of their own ancestral background for our archives. On this occasion I have decided to include a copy of our ancestral records, which includes a blank line.

If your name does not appear on the chart and you can provide us with some of your ancestral background, or if you can add to any of your own existing information, please fill in the details in the blank portion and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

Hopefully in this way we will be able to maintain a reasonably up to date record of our society's ancestral heritage. The additions and alterations, if any, will be included on an up to date copy of the chart, hopefully in our next newsletter.

My thanks for your co-operation.



McMILLAN HOLIDAY RETREAT

You will no doubt all notice the inclusion of another advertisement in this newsletter which is for the 'McMillan Holiday Village' at Metung, Victoria. The complex is operated by John and Kaye McMillan and judging by the brochures, looks to be an ideal place to get away from it all. John and Kaye kindly provided the brochures to include with the newsletter as well as the postage costs.

I tried unsuccessfully to get accommodation for our family at the village for January and found it booked out, which was to be expected. But I'm now looking forward to staying there in September when I intend to taking some time off work. I'm sure John and Kaye will be pleased to meet any Clan Society Member who calls in for a day visit or longer.



Bob McMillan-Kay
Archivist and Editor

This newspaper item from 'The Age', dated 5th July 1986 was found by our Secretary, Steven McMillan who thought it may be of interest to our members. It may be that some of our members know of the family or are related in some way. We would certainly like to know if that is the case.

COBURG

Gallipoli inspired name for a house

NO ONE could argue that the old McMillan family home in Coburg is not original — it still has the smoke stains on the vestibule walls from the kitchen's wood stove, and that was thrown out years ago.

The yellowing, block-fronted late Victorian timber house at 7 Moore Street (just up from Sydney Road) is original from its rusted iron roof and bullnose "lace" veranda to the concrete troughs and burnt-out gas stove in the "cook-house" at the back.

Built about 1910, Hugh and Catherine McMillan bought the house in 1918, naming it Suvla Bay (a landing site at Gallipoli) in honor of three of their sons at war, Samuel McMillan, now 72, and one of the 10 McMillan children, was a four-year-old when the family moved in. He walked through the house the other day, remembering things as they were such a long time ago.

In the vestibule flanked by its painted pine dado board, he pointed to where the wireless used to be, just between the pantry and the bathroom. "I used to sit here and listen to the old wireless," he said. "I used to listen to Roy Rene and his mate..." In later years he tossed out the old tin bath from the bathroom and put in a green enamel one, with a matching basin.

When the gas was connected, the wood stove in the kitchen fireplace was discarded and a small gas stove put in the lean-to at the back of the kitchen, and this became the "cook house" and the laundry. Mr McMillan says his father built-in the



veranda at the back; he also built the fibro garage opening to Campbell Street at the rear, and the large, corrugated-iron workshop, still brick-paved but missing part of its roof.

It would not be unkind to suggest that the old house is well past its prime, but probably not beyond redemption. It is typical of its era, with four rooms off a central arched hallway, wide cornices, elegant ceiling roses, a couple of timber-mantelled open fireplaces — and lots of cracks, falling plaster and holes in the floorboards.

Nevertheless, the renovators and restorers no doubt will crawl out of the woodwork when it goes to auction at 10.30 am on Saturday 12 July. The agents are Thomas A. Riddell Pty Ltd (484 0664), of Thornbury, in conjunction with Nicholls Gledhill & Co (560 3777) of Glen Waverley.

The big advantage here is that anyone wanting to restore it authentically (and most of it is there) will only have to refer to Mr McMillan, who remembers it just the way it was. "The front was originally a picket fence," said Mr McMillan, referring to the chain-wire fence there now. "Two of the stumps are still in the shed up there."

Yes, there is not much Mr McMillan has forgotten. Looking down at the bricks of the somewhat crumbled concrete and brick-paved pathway to the front gate, he said: "The father did that."

SUMMARY: 7 Moore Street, Coburg. Timber; six rooms; land 13.4 by 40.8 metres. Thomas A. Riddell with Nicholls Gledhill.

KEVIN NORBURY.



The committee wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 1987.



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THE LIFE OF ANGUS McMILLAN (continued)

McMillan became an experienced bushman, drawing on his knowledge of farming in the Hebrides and applying it to his new job. He found his work stimulating and challenging except for one factor, the young Scot, like his father, he believed that all men were equal, could not accustom himself to the bondage of the assigned convicts. Previously he had had no contact with those who breached the law, but working with men who had been sentenced in England for theft or assault, or any of the other crimes which were punished by transportation, Angus realised that these men were not all bad. Most of them had the same aspirations as himself, for a chance to seek a fortune from this new land, to marry and rear a family, yet he witnessed daily the servitude the system demanded. Macalister treated his men fairly, yet even to him they were convicts or lags who could never shake off the stigma.

He doled out clothing and rations as the law required, but McMillan's nature rebelled at the daily sight of men regarded as little more than animals. Without the work of assigned convicts, the whole system of the colony would collapse and the wealth of the Macarthurs and Macalisters would not accumulate so readily.

McMillan did not like the way the convicts were treated. Punishments were harsh with frequent use of the whip for flogging. Privately he resolved to place himself with all speed beyond stations where floggings occurred. In one incident an entire gang of convicts was flogged for refusing to work in the rain. McMillan asked himself, "How can men treat fellow workers so vilely. In Scotland the animals were better treated".

His reasons for leaving Clifton were varied. His dislike of the treatment accorded to assigned convicts was genuine, and he felt he could not be part of a society which looked on a mass of humanity as little better than slaves. Another factor was the continuing drought. 1837, 1838 and 1839 were very dry years. Macalister, as all other settlers, was totally unprepared for drought. There were no water storages, therefore the only solution was to find new pastures and overland the stock. The paddocks were parched, the grass was shrivelled, and the Murrumbidgee River had ceased to flow.

Macalister refused to look on helplessly and watch his flock die. He told McMillan of the cold and bleak Monaro area where he had a working partnership with another highlander, James McFarlane, probably the first settler to establish a cattle run in what was later known as Victoria. McMillan said the conditions were similar to those in the Hebrides.

Another reason was his ambition to establish himself on his own land. By this time McMillan knew the system under which the selection of land was possible. Already the squatters had penetrated beyond the bounds of civilisation to where they hoped fortune awaited them. Over a million sheep and nearly half a million cattle were grazing over seven hundred stations extending from Moreton Bay to Spencer Gulf. Commissioners of Crown Lands collected the licence fee of ten pounds, and a penny for a head of stock. McMillan knew that if he could find 5000 acres he could settle down and build up his stock. The Scot looked at this as his ultimate goal.

The drought continued, sparse winter rains on which settlers had set high hopes were useless. It was imperative to move stock to avoid disastrous losses. In November 1838, McMillan was told to proceed to Shoalhaven, a station on the Shoalhaven River some 30 miles south where he was to select 500 heifers and to drive them to Goulbourn and proceed to form a station at Portland Bay in Victoria.

In 1834 the Henty's had crossed Bass Strait and pioneered their Portland Bay settlement. Two years later, Governor Bourke had commissioned the surveyor Thomas Mitchell to explore the country south of the Murray River to the sea. As a result of this journey the 'Major's Line', as the path was called, became the talk of the colony and the wagons and flocks followed his glowing reports until, by 1840 the country was occupied by competing squatters.

With the assistance of two convicts, McMillan reached Shoalhaven, selected his herd and headed towards Goulbourn. He discovered on reaching Goulbourn that his orders had been changed. Instead of travelling south-west to Portland, he was to proceed to Currawong in Monaro. Macalister was satisfied by now that McMillan was a trusted employee. His immediate aim was to find land less affected by drought on which he could pasture his starving stock. His long term purpose was to add to his holdings in an area where there was less competition for land. For these reasons, McFarlane's account of the country beyond the Snowy River had strong appeal.

Whilst McMillan was working for him, he had a valuable asset from whom he resolved to extract as much assistance as possible in furthering his ambitions. The young Scot on the other hand was eager for opportunity and responsibility. The idea of opening up new land was to him, both challenging and fortuitous.

The journey south to Currawong was arduous; the greatest obstacle apart from the drought conditions was the Australian Alps. The mob could only be moved in easy stages since McMillan knew that the shortage of feed and the more serious lack of water would rapidly bring about loss of condition and deaths by the track. It was a severe test of bushcraft; there was no defined route. Two hundred and fifty miles in these conditions was a test of skill and endurance. The two assigned convicts stood up to the journey well. The companionship of McMillan and the distance from the harsh hand of authority encouraged them to request that they be permitted to remain at Currawong. McMillan arrived at Currawong on 26-2-1839.

(to be continued). Taken from the book by Kenneth Cox 'Angus McMillan Pathfinder'

I have several copies of this book available for sale at \$7.00 each (including postage).

