

ISABELLA MACDONALD

Isabella (McCauley) Macdonald (age 66 in 1891)



Murdoch Macdonald, from Glendale, Isle of Skye, had arrived in South Australia in 1855 on the 'Switzerland' with his first wife Christina, and small daughter Catherine. They moved from Adelaide to Yangery by bullock wagon, where Murdoch was employed as a shepherd by Roderick Urquart at 'Yangery Park'. While there, two sons were born, Alexander, 1856 and Donald, 1858. Christina died as a result of the latter birth, leaving Murdoch with three small children.

Fortuitously he was to remarry in 1859, at Yangery with **Isabella**, daughter of John McCauley, farmer and his wife Mary (nee McCrae).

Isabella's family were from Rosshire, and had come out from Scotland on the ill fated ship 'Ticonderogo' on which there had been an outbreak of yellow fever with many passengers dying.

In 1861 Isabella and Murdoch moved to become tenant farmers on part of WJT (Big) Clarke's Purnim West property. This farm had been named 'Gowrie' by a previous tenant, a retired sea-captain Godfrey Macdonald, no relation to Murdoch. Examination of the photographed image of Isabella's signature on the Suffrage Petition of 1893 (page 332 of the PDF), shows she has written her address as "Gowrie, Purnim" though the property name is indistinct and in the typed transcription it has been incorrectly rendered as 'Gowene'.

The farm was partially cleared of timber, with a house $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the main road and $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Drysdale Creek, with frontage to both creek and road. The family was to increase by the addition of five more children: John b. 1860; John Lachlan b. 1861 d. 1862; Lachlan* b. 1863; Mary Ann b. 1865 and John Norman b. 1868.

'Gowrie' was not offered for sale during Murdoch and Isabella's lifetimes. They continued to lease it, clearing the land and establishing a farm with crops, potatoes and sheep. It was purchased by their son John (known as "big Jack") in 1908, after the death of Big Clarke. At a time that the sons were old enough, the family bought 320 acres opposite 'Gowrie'.

The children attended a small private school on a nearby property owned by Mr McKenna. The school master's name was Mr Ryan, but apart from that not much is known about this school, which closed c. 1872. With their neighbours, the family worked for the establishment of the Purnim West school. They were also present at the opening of the Purnim West Presbyterian Church, though mainly drove the five miles to attend Grasmere Church. In 1890 Murdoch was chairman of the first meeting of the Board of Directors of Grasmere Butter Factory, however he declined a seat on the board when the factory was finally formed. Isabella died in July 1893, not long after signing the petition. Murdoch died in 1900. They are both buried in Tower Hill cemetery.

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