



## BLACK Honorary Niel

**Parents:** Archibald Black and Janet MacChananich

**Siblings:**

- |           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Duncan | 5. John      |
| 2. Mary   | 6. Janet     |
| 3. John   | 7. Walter    |
| 4. Jean   | 8. Archibald |

**Birth:** 26 August 1804, Kilmodan, Argyll, Scotland

**Marriage:** Grace Greenshields Leadbetter b 1833 d 1907, daughter of John Leadbetter and Ann Hutton, in 1857

**Immigration:** Sailed from Greenock on the Clyde on the barque *Ariadne* on 4 April 1839 arriving Sydney on 29 September 1839

**Children:**

- |                      |        |        |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| 1. Archibald John    | b 1859 | d 1912 |
| 2. Stewart Gladstone | b 1862 | d 1940 |
| 3. Niel Walter       | b 1864 | d 1908 |

**Place of Residence:** *Mount Noorat*, Victoria

**Death & Burial:** died at home, *Mount Noorat*, 15 May 1880 aged 75 years - buried at Terang Cemetery

**Obituary:**

The *Warrnambool Standard*, 20 May 1880

**THE HON. NEIL BLACK**

I regret to have to chronicle that another of the early pioneers of this colony has passed away. The Hon. Neil Black expired at his residence, Mount Noorat, on Saturday night, at ten minutes to twelve o'clock. Mr Black had been ailing for some months past, but his indomitable spirit bore him up under his affliction, and it was only last fortnight that he was confined to his bed. Dr Pettigrew has been in attendance upon him twice a day for the past week, and all that medical skill could do to relieve suffering, and to secure recovery, had been done, but on Friday morning the doctor announced to the afflicted family, that he entertained no hope of a favourable termination to the illness of the deceased gentleman, who passed the remainder of his life in a comatose state. In the early part of last week, those about him noticed a circumstance that has been invariably found a harbinger of approaching death. He began to talk to those about him in the language of his childhood - Gaelic - the language in which his earliest thoughts had found expression, and which is entwined round the heart-strings of every true Highlander.....

**Life:** Niel was the youngest son of Archibald and Janet Black. His father, Archibald, died as a result of a fall from a horse in 1808. Niel spent the early part of his life gaining a thorough knowledge of farming on a stock farm rented from the Duke of Argyll's Estate. He learned from his elder brother. In 1839 he went into partnership with William Stewart, Esq, of Glenormiston, Peeblesshire; Thomas Stewart Gladstone of Liverpool; Alexander Struthers Finlay of Toward Castle, Argyllshire. The object of the partnership was to invest money in pastoral ventures in Australia and Niel was commissioned to proceed there as managing partner.

Niel bought the 43,520 acre property, *Strathdownie*, near Terang and renamed it *Glenormiston*, in 1840. In 1844 he bought many other Western District properties and held them for various periods in the following decades.

In the early 1850's Niel again visited Scotland, he remained there for about five years and his nephew and partner Archibald Black managed the property in his absence. He married Grace Greenshields Leadbetter in 1857, in Scotland.

Niel started with sheep for wool, but finding sheep were not well suited to the area, he then obtained cattle. His stud herd was noted as one of the biggest suppliers of prime Shorthorn bullocks. He returned to sheep using English Lincoln cross variety which were better suited to the damp conditions. The partnership was dissolved about the end of 1868, the distribution of the lands amongst the partners being by lot. The northern section of Glenormiston fell to A S Finlay, the southern section to Niel Black, which he named *Mount Noorat*, and *The Sisters* to T S Gladstone, which Niel Black purchased three years later. Niel was disappointed at losing the section with the homestead he had built. He built a new homestead at *Mount Noorat*.

In 1847 Niel and seven other staunch Presbyterians decided to obtain a clergyman for the district. He became treasurer and secretary of the committee. A slab built manse was prepared, a clergyman selected and services were conducted at different homesteads according to a set roster. After Niel's death, his widow and his sons paid to have a church built in his memory in the township of Noorat. Niel was elected a member for the Western Province to the Legislative Council in 1859, was re-elected in 1862 and held seat until his death.