

One of St. Kilda's traditions was that a pirate named McQueen once sheltered in a cove at one end of the island. And perhaps Malcolm McQueen who was born there about the middle of the nineteenth century was one of his descendants. While he was a lad there came to St. Kilda a missionary from the Free Church of Scotland to minister to the spiritual needs of the islanders. (The Free Church was founded in 1843 when some five hundred ministers left the Presbyterian Church because they disapproved of the way in which some ministers were chosen for particular churches.) It seems likely that the minister had also to be doctor and teacher. Young Malcolm McQueen was among his pupils and the Lad's remarkable memory so impressed him that he took him to Glasgow to let the assembly of ministers there hear him repeat the 176 verses of the 119th Psalm.

There was at that time among Scotch people a keen interest in migration to Australia. Reports told of greater opportunities there than in their own land. And out to Australia went young Malcolm McQueen and his mother and brother. On the same ship was a young Scotch woman, Mary McSwain and her brothers. They landed at St. Kilda at a time when the hill above the beach was covered with the tents of other new arrivals.

Malcolm had to find work and accepted the offer of a job at Sheephills, a station south of Warracknabeal (it later gave its name to the present township and district there). At that time few squatters in Victoria used fences; instead they employed shepherds who, with the help of dogs, moved the sheep all day and put them in an enclosure at night. Meanwhile Mary McSwain's brothers had also gone to work in the country and she was alone. Malcolm did not like leaving her. What could he do? Well, he could marry her - if she was willing. She was. And, so it was with a wife as well as his mother that Malcolm set off in a bullock dray to travel the two hundred miles to Sheephills.

Their home was a cottage ten miles from the station homestead. Here Malcolm's son Finlay was born. The grandmother insisted that the family speak only Gaelic, and so the boy knew no English until his father came back to Melbourne when he was nine years old.

(To be continued)