

Robinson McNally (Roy) Malseed Family History Document 16 April 1965

In 1965, Robinson McNally (Roy) Malseed wrote the following account of his family history. It has been transcribed from a typewritten copy provided by Ian McLeod of Tasmania. Ian was given a copy by his niece, Miriam Grosvenor nee McLeod of Cygnet, Tasmania, who had received it from Roy's daughter, Nancy, who typed a copy of the handwritten original. The document is transcribed here as accurately as possible. Small comments or corrections are inserted in brackets. Longer comments are added as footnotes. Several minor typing and punctuation corrections were directly made.

The source of comments is indicated by initials in parentheses:

(RM) = Robert Malseed of Albuquerque

(IM) = Ian McLeod of Tasmania

Roy refers to "Letterkenny" as "Letter Kenny" and to "Rathmullan" as "Rathmullin" and in this document he also refers to the old Malseed farm at "Aughavennon". The official Ordnance Survey maps from the 1830s until the present spell this townland "Aghavannan". It is also spelled this way on the property records from 1858 to at least the mid 1900s. However, some records use the spelling given by Roy, and also "Aughavennan" and "Aughavannen" are commonly used. (RM)

Good Friday
April 16, 1965.
162 Alma Road,
EAST ST. KILDA.

There were six of us born at Pine Grove Myamyn in Victoria of Australian born parents when Victoria was a colony and the United Kingdom was referred to by our parents, and grandparents especially nostalgically [sic] as HOME. They told us little about their home, a matter I regret so much that I am jotting down for my children and grandchildren a few notes on the history of their family fore fathers.

We were all born at "Pine Grove" without benefit of doctor or trained nurse. When the time for help was needed Dad would rush off for a "rabbiter" as the untrained midwife of these days was sometimes facetiously called. I think it was in the frantic gallop for help prior to the birth of brother Wallace, though it could have been me, that Dad capsized the buggy. However, six of us were born and reared which was a credit to our parents in those uncertain times.

Our Mother was born Isabella Cowan at Crawford Station on April 1, 1864 and married Dad, December 19, 1883 at the early age of 19 years.

Dad, Thomas Malseed, was born at South Portland on October 5, 1860.

They set up their home in a four roomed wooden cottage at Pine Grove and my sister Caroline (Carrie) Cowan Malseed was born November 29, 1884. Then followed his Mother's pride and joy, my brother James Cowan Malseed born October 1, 1886. May (Sarah May) a very bright little girl came on the ninth of the ninth 1888 :- 9/9/88.

So there were three children by the time Mother was 24 years old. Times were hard; there was little money coming in for farm produce, and so there was little joy when it was learned that I was to become the fourth member of the family on October 23, 1890. Mother then 26 years old, had been ill. Besides the house work she helped on the farm. She had dental trouble and Dad had taken her to Hamilton to have some teeth extracted. In those times, dentists were unskilled and used no pain killing drug - and apparently little antiseptic. As a result erysipelas developed in my mother's face and she was driven nearly frantic with pain. I was a few weeks old and probably added to her suffering by my baby cries. The tale goes that she picked me up and hurled me at my father, saying, "Here, take your brat or I'll do something desperate to him". Dad took me down to Aunt Sarah (Mother's elder sister) put the horses in the buggy ¹ and drove Mother through the night the thirty mile trip to the doctor in Hamilton. Doctor said it was well he did so, otherwise Mother would have been dead or insane with the pain by morning. She

¹ Australian truncation of "put the horses in the shafts of the buggy" (IM).

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was put into hospital, and remained there for three weeks leaving her three weeks old baby to be fed on cow's milk by a sister who had no child of her own, and by Mr. Grimshaw the school teacher boarder who was very kind to me. Was it little wonder I was never my mother's favourite child? It speaks highly though of my parents' health that I lived through it all.

Four years passed - four years to the day and my brother John Wallace was born. Our nearest school was Spring Creek about two miles east of home, and I was packed off that day for my first day at school with Mr. Grimshaw. When the four of us returned that afternoon I well remember our being met at the Black Stump - at the junction of Bob's place (Bob and Sarah Malseed) and ours and being given the riddle - "Guess what happened while you were away today?" I had no guess but thought, "That's it" - When my eight year old brother Jim said - "Old Rosie (the cow) has had a calf". We were all astounded to learn we had a new baby brother. Mother was well and happy with her little Brown Eyes as she called John Wallace born 23/10/94.

Nearly nine years passed before my sister Isabelle Alexandra was born on March 4, 1903. I think we had the new four big front rooms and the "lobby" or vestibule added to Pine Grove by that time and Mother at 39 years wished to have a child to be a comfort and companion to her in her advancing years.

My maternal grandfather James Cowan was born at Newtown, Siven? [probably Sefin (IM)] Ireland on May 3, 1834 and was married on April 13, 1855 to Eliza McNally² of The Grange C/o Armagh, Ireland who was born June 3, 1835. I got little information from them directly, but, I believe they, like my Malseed grandparents, left Ireland after The Great Hunger, as the dreadful potato famine of 1845/49 was known. They would be aged 10 and 11 years when it began, and must have suffered acutely. They came out to Portland about the year 1854, I think Mother said.³ They got work and keep then, probably arriving penniless at Crawford Station out on the Hotspur Road from Condah.

There was born to them Anne Jane 20/8/1856. She married William Dunn and died 20/7/79 leaving a son William Dunn whose offspring are still living.

Next born at Crawford Station was Sarah 30/1/59. She married dad's brother Robert, but they had no children owing to a horse - riding accident where she was thrown and dragged with her foot still in the stirrup. They adopted Myrtle Cole, 3rd child⁴ of Sarah's sister Elizabeth, wife of Reverend George Cole and later a marriage was "arranged" between her and Stewart Malseed.

Third child was the said Elizabeth, born 30/6/61 and married 6/4/86. My Mother, Isabella was born at Crawford April 1, 1864. She married my Father on December 19, 1883 of whom more will be told later. The only son, John, was born at Crawford 9/9/66 and died of typhoid fever 5.4.76.

After the birth of John, grandfather Cowan selected a property which he named "Pleasant Banks" at Condah, As far as I can learn, selectors could select 640 acres and pay the Government 2/- (two shillings) a year interest free for 20 (twenty) years. After holding the land for 6 (six) years, you could sell your equity. Thus grandfather bought out his neighbour of the property adjacent, still referred to as McKinnons.

At Pleasant Banks were born, Mary, on 2/6/69 - she died of Water on the Brain (probably encephalitis) 6/12/71 - and Emma on 1/5/74. [1/6/74 (IM)] She married David Cannon and left a family of girls and boys.

Grandfather and Grandmother Cowan must have served on Crawford Station for about twelve years on a pittance but despite rearing a young family, they saved to make a deposit on Pleasant Banks where, they worked day and night clearing the land, planting crops, breeding sheep and milking cows. I remember how my grandmother would "set" the hot milk for cream, churn the cream and trudge nearly 3 miles to Myamyn to sell her butter for 6 pence per lb. Grandfather prospered financially and bought neighbouring properties such as the Tin House, Willings and Crouch's. It was in the Tin House paddock that he had a fight with an old man kangaroo. It was under a tree. The

² Though he was named Robinson McNally, Roy's grandmother's name on her Marriage Certificate was given as McAnally. It seems the two surnames, like Malseed and Molseed, were interchangeable (IM).

³ It was 1855, on the "Cairngorm" (IM).

⁴ Myrtle McAnally Cole was the 4th child. The third, Emily Stewart Evans Cole, died in infancy (IM).

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waddy⁵ he raised to strike was impeded by a branch. The kangaroo closed on him, ripping through his new moleskin trousers leaving a gash he kept till death. His dog tackled the kangaroo from the rear and grandpa was able to free himself.

On one occasion, Grandmother was alarmed when three native, naked, aborigines stood on the hillock just outside the home grandpa had built.

I think it was from the Cowans we inherited our ambition. They became independent, respected settlers, but Grandfather became paralysed with what we called Shaking Palsy and really what was then the incurable Parkinson's Disease and spent the last few years of his life a patient in bed - first nursed by Uncle Bob Malseed and finally by my father in the front bow window room of Pine Grove. Grandmother Cowan died at The Myamyn house of Uncle Bob Malseed.

My Grandfather, the Pioneer MALSEED's John Malseed, arrived in Portland, Victoria in the year 1849 with his wife Elizabeth (nee Wallace). He had lived on a farm at Aughevennon near the village of Rathmullan. Like the Cowans he could read and write. They came out to this country by sailing ship - I think it was the Ladybird, and the other Malseeds came on the Mayflower, later. I'm wrong :- Grandfather was 26 years old when he arrived in 1849 on the MAYFLOWER.⁶

My grandfather Malseed was followed to Australia by others of his family and his cousins :-

Robert Malseed (cousin I think) [Robert was John's brother (RM)] married Barbara - became parents of "Little Tom" [Thomas William Malseed (IM)]. Harry [Henry Stewart Malseed (RM)] - father of the nurse Ruby and the Methodist clergyman, [Herbert William Robert Malseed (RM)] who dying of T.B. left 3 sons, Bryan, Clive and ? [Leslie (RM)].

Stewart Malseed (cousin again) [another brother (IM)] married Margaret Allison. Father of "Portland" Bob, Jane and Lil [Elizabeth Mary Malseed (RM)] (who first married a Trenear and after his death, Roberts.)

James Malseed Senior married his cousin - my grandfather's sister ELIZA Malseed, settled at Mount Richmond and begot Rachel, Fanny, later Mrs. Tom Adamson, Charlotte, Mary, Rebecca, Samuel, Stewart who married my cousin (on the Cowan side); MYRTLE COLE; and Harold [James Harold Crump Malseed (RM)].

James Junior - I'm not sure if he were brother or cousin to Grandfather. [He was a brother. (RM)] He married MARY HEDDITCH and besides children who died of T.B. became the parents of Percy Malseed, who later bought the small station property Ascot Heath, and, Adeline who married Angus McLean, lived at Drik Drik and reared a fine family.

Cousin Jimmy or James. [Cousin Henry (RM)] I suppose came out about 1864⁷ and was an old bachelor whose farm Sam Malseed inherited.

I visited County Donegal in Ireland in 1956 and stayed with Frances (MALSEED) and her husband Ira Mckinney of Oatfield Sweets fame, in Letter Kenny, and visited the old places. Grandfather's home was in ruins with little more than the stone foundations standing, but their stone shed was still standing and in use.

The name MALSEED reputedly comes from the Gaelic MAOL meaning Tonsured or short hair, and the SEED refers to Fairy Folk or Strangers i.e. The short haired or tonsured Strangers or Fairy Folk.⁸ They were Protestant

⁵ A waddy is a heavy wooden club used as a weapon by Australian Aborigines (RM).

⁶ John and Elizabeth Malseed arrived in Australia on 18 Sep 1849 on the *Courier*. They sailed from Melbourne to Portland on the brig *Raven* arriving on 4 Oct 1849. (RM)

⁷ Henry Malseed came out twice, once in 1857 (for a visit?) and again in 1863, to stay (IM).

⁸ It is more likely that the name derives from Flemish rather than Gaelic (IM).

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folk and the tradition was that they came with Cromwell's or William of Orange's Armies and settled on the land.⁹ Two of Grandfather's forebears were buried side by side in the Churchyard of Rathmullin. One's name is spelled MOLSEED the other MALSEED, but as a derivative of MAOL it is understandable. One of the Pioneer Malseeds had his Cabin Trunk labeled MOLSEED but all were known as MALSEED out here.

A John Malseed¹⁰, father of a 5 year old Marshall Malseed¹¹ and a little girl [Marnell (RM)], came out in the mid 1950s as a superintendent on a big American Oil job at Altona. He was surprised to find so many Malseeds here and said he had never met another Malseed except his father¹² who died early, in any state of America in all of which he had lived and worked.

There was three MALSEEDS in the Phone Book in Honolulu when I visited there in 1968.

In Ireland, the Church records had been moved from Rathmullin "for safety" but had unfortunately all been destroyed during the TROUBLES in Dublin.

Grandfather MALSEED and "the clan" worked on the gold mine rushes of Victoria in the early 1850s with a little success. The four of them had gold hidden in their camp when an undesirable attached himself to them. The tale goes that they drew lots for who was to "deal" with him, but forewarned he moved on. They reputedly found him hanging by the neck from a tree in a new area, later. Also, it is said grandfather returned from the diggings with gold on his shoulder under his shirt, which he used to buy his first land. Grandfather Malseed was 26 years old when he landed at Portland in 1849. At the Centenary Meeting at Portland in 1959 [1949 (RM)] he was depicted in a scene welcoming his brothers – I know that James Malseed was his cousin as he married Grandfather's sister Eliza and became the father of 9 or 10 children. [Actually 12 (RM)] Stewart, father of Portland "Bob"; James Junior, Father of Percy; and Robert, Ruby the nurse's father [grandfather (IM)], were probably Grandfather's brothers.

⁹ Malseeds were in Donegal long before Oliver Cromwell took his army to Ireland in 1649, and William of Orange did the same in 1689/1690, e.g. John Molsed, plantation settler in 1614, and Archibald Malseed listed on the Hearth Money Roll of 1665. (RM)

¹⁰ Vyrle Jack Malseed [1912-1994]. (RM)

¹¹ Marshall William Malseed was born 21 May 1945, so he was older than 5. (RM)

¹² John William Malseed [1891-1970]. (RM)