

A brief history of J.M. Macdonald
up until his departure from
"Ben - Ean" to Raglan Station
by Ian T. McDonald.

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John was born the third child of George and Susanna Mc Donald on the 1st of July 1863, in the old "Glenmore homestead.

His early education was received at home, though by 1874 at the age of 11 he was attending Mr Frazers school in Maitland, where he remained for some two years.

The following appears in his old writing box "100 lines for not eating bread pudd". Auchie House School. March 18 th 1876.

John would have barely left school when at the age of 16 he lost his father from Rheumatic Fever on 30th of August 1879.

This left John and his elder brother William with responsibility at an early age. William was 18 and the two younger sisters Lydia and Susanna 14 and 12 respectively. Elizabeth the eldest child had died in 1877.

Besides the "Glenmore" property to run the two brothers and their mother had the Mungundi Run plus a share in the administration of the Pitt-Town Phoenix Park Farms.

7 years after the death of his Father the following entries appear in John's Ledger.

Dr. The "Ben-Ean Vineyard Capital a/c

1885

Dec,	Bridge and Mathews Clearing	£51/-/-
"	2,000 Stakes,	8/-/-
"	A.Boughton Clearing.	1/-/-
"	Fencing Stuff.	7/-/-
"	Wages.	/8/-
"	Repairing Plough.	1/2/6
"	Fencing 98 roods.	3/12/-
"	Blick sinking well.	5/5/-
Jul	Vine planting.	6/-/-
"	Harrowing Staking.	5/-/-
Dec	D. Chick labour.	1/10/-
"	Plough.	5/10/-
"	Harrow.	1/5/-
"	Stakers and Rails.	4/-/-/
"	Iron and Nails.	5/-/-
Dec 31st	Geo, Boughton wages.	57/12/-
		<u>£192/4/6</u>

From this, the first work was started on Dec, 1885 and the first vines planted on "Ben-Ean" in July 1886 upon land which was then part of the Flat at "Glenmore" and in the estate of his father.

"Ben-Ean" remained this way for some four years when on the 16th of June 1890, the following was agreed upon.

"For the estate of George Fredrick McDonald late of "Glenmore" Rothbury grazier deceased.

We the undersigned do hereby consent to Susanna Smith McDonald the administrator of the estate of the above named deceased selling 98 acres portion 86 and 100 acres portion 104 situated at Pokolbin and transferring the same to John Murray Macdonald absolutely for what consideration money she shall deem sufficient.

As witness our hands this day of June 16th 1890.

Signed. W.J.McDonald. L.G.McDonald. S.S.McDonald.

In pursuance of the above authority I have sold the above mentioned lands to the said John Murray Macdonald for the sum of Six Hundred Pounds (£600), and agree to convey the same to him when required.

As witness my hand this day June 16th 1890. S.S.McDonald.

On 28th of October 1891 John married Harriet Mary Benvie daughter of the Rev, James Benvie of West Maitland. John was 28 and Harriot (Hettie) 27 years. Their new home at "Ben-Ean" was decorated with that iron lace of the late Victorian era.

"Ben-Ean" was starting to begin its fall swing of production by now. In 1892 T.S.Petherbridge bought 1,535 gallons of wine at 1/9d per gallon.

H.J.Linderman made his first purchase in 1894 when he bought 6,089 gallons of wine at 1/4d per gallon including 217 gallons of Madeira at 2/- per gallon.

It is interesting to note that he sold to H.J.and C.F.Linderman and from 1906 Linderman Ltd, over 1/2 million gallons. of wine between July 1894 and Dec, 1910 a period of 16 years.

The average price for wine for these years was:-

1894	1/4d - 2/- per gallon.	
1895	1/- - 1/2	"
1896	1/-	"
1898	1/5	"
1899 - 1903	1/2	"
1904 - 1910	1/-	"

The peak production appears to be between 1900 → 1901 when he sold Lindermans alone 58,615 gallons of wine. Other purchasers of wine and spirit were J.Lynch & Co, C.Mansfield, James Angus & Sons, Gosche' Hale & Co, and Penfold & Co,

Not all this wine was produced from grapes grown on "Ben-Ean", he bought grapes at so much a ton from distant growers who could not process an over supply or did not have adequate facilities.

John's brother William sold him the following grapes in March 1899. 30 tons 11 cwt, Hermitage at 100/- a ton.

41 tons 7 cwt, White Grapes at 80/- a ton.

In 1900 the Maitland Mercury published an article by G.C.Craig of Sydney entitled "Pokolbin and Thereabouts", of which I quote portions.

"Mr J.Macdonald of "Ben-Ean" , went in for viticulture and the wine industry in a large scale not only growing his own grapes but also processing those of other growers in the district. His cellars are a hive of industry in vintage time, carrying two shifts throughout the nights.

The area of "Ben-Ean is some 200 acres, about 40 of which will be cleared next year. (1901)

There is a good garden Tennis court and Orchard around the house . The mansion is large and commodious and well furnished. The horses and cattle are good, the owner being the son of a squatter, and brought up to know a fine roadster, a good durham or hereford since childhood in the bush. The orchard possesses some splendid fruit. Tasmanian varieties".

John went for a 2 week tour of the wine growing districts of Victoria and South Australia in 1901, with Mr C.F.Linderman. They visited all important vine yards and cellars of these states and sampled their wines.

The construction of a distillery was began at "Ben-Ean" in June 1907, and completed before Feb, 1908 when the first 378 gallons of spirit were sold.

After receiving a good offer for the property, he drew up a contract to sell "Ben-Ean" to Mr C.F.Linderman on Dec, 15th 1909. A deposit of £154 was made and Mr Linderman agreed to pay 1/2 the working expenses. Though the delivery date was not to be for some 2 years.

On the 18th of Feb, 1910 John entered into the purchase of a Central Queensland property "Raglan Station" as a partnership with Mr Fredrick Tyrrell of "Ashmans" as working partner.

The sale of "Ben-Ean" to C.F.Linderman was completed by Jan, 1912 and he and his wife moved to Raglan where he bought out Mr Tyrrell. John's sister Lydia recorded the departure on the 10th of Jan, "John came to tea and to say good by, he goes to Sydney to-morrow and from there to his new property in Queensland "Raglan Station"."

Thus in his 49 year John Murray Macdonald moved from the production of wine to that of beef cattle.