

Alexander MacLean (1827-1875)

(MacLean of Coll 1861-1875)

Alexander MacLean, eldest son of Hugh MacLean, 16th MacLean of Coll, and Jane Robertson, was born on 27 November 1827, location unknown. His father Hugh, heavily in debt, sold his entire estate on 15 May 1856 to John Lorne Stewart, who then became the 1st Stewart Laid of Coll. However Hugh's sons, first Alexander and then John Hector Norman, although no longer lairds, continued to be known as MacLean of Coll.

Alexander and his younger brother William Hector emigrated to Natal, South Africa, in 1849, settled at Umhali, and traded with neighbouring Zululand. Alexander never married. He died of dysentery at Umhali, aged 47, on 11 July 1875 and was buried in the St Pauls Church Cemetery, Natal, which had later become incorporated into the Church of England Section of the West Street Cemetery. An old map of this section of the cemetery shows Alexander MacLean (recorded as "Alex Macbean" on the map) buried in Section 8, Plot 24.

Alexander's sister Juliet had also emigrated to South Africa. Her husband, Ashe Windham of Greytown, near Pietermaritzburg, was executor of Alexander's estate. He contracted for a tombstone to be prepared and erected over Alexander's grave, but no tombstone exists today and the grave is unmarked.

The little information that exists about Alexander MacLean's life is summarized in two obituaries.

1. An anonymous correspondent wrote:

A paragraph in the Natal Colonist gives intelligence of the death of Alex. Maclean, Esq, of Coll, on 11th July [1875], at the early age of 47.... the subject of this short memoir emigrated to Port Natal in 1849. On two or three occasions he revisited England, and thirteen months ago spent a short time in his native district of the Highlands. Though so long absent and so young when he left, he yet retained the most lively recollections of his old acquaintances and associates, who can never forget the pleasure it seemed to afford him to meet them again, nor the eager grasp of his hand and the sparkle of his eye, lighted up by sincere affection, when they chanced to meet. To those who knew Mr Maclean from boyhood as some of us did, when the slim gentle youth headed our many deer-hunting parties on his father's estates, accompanied by his younger brother — now also no more — and our boating expeditions in quest of wild fowl, &c — to such, certainly, his outward appearance was much changed - a tropical climate had ripened that youth into manhood of the most prepossessing appearance. That splendid figure, manly form, straight as a pine, a man among a thousand struck us with admiration, and still more so when we found the same gentle, mild, unassuming, affectionate disposition that distinguished his youth

2. The obituary in the *Natal Colonist* read:

The deceased gentleman was one of our oldest colonists, and the predecessor of Mr T Reynolds in the proprietorship of Oaklands, Umhlali. He was the eldest member of a very old Highland family, a considerable traveller, having visited South America and British Columbia. He was also one of the earliest visitors to the Diamond Fields, but he invariably returned to Natal after these more or less protracted absences. One of the gentlest yet bravest of men, Mr Maclean was thoroughly esteemed by all who knew him. He was not only a considerable traveller, but was an enthusiastic hunter and sportsman, and his commanding and powerful frame gave no token of so early an end. He was not married, and his only near relative in Natal is Mrs AF Windham, who was near him when he died; The funeral took place on Monday morning in the burial ground of the Church of England, and was attended by many of the friends of the deceased, whose loss will be most sincerely deplored by them. Archdeacon Lloyd read the offices of the church.

- Nicholas Maclean Bristol, *From Clan to Regiment*, p. 565

For further information: <http://ichthyscybernetics.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/in-search-of-forgotten-grave-alexander.html>

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