

# NO GOLD IN MELBOURNE

A Scottish Family in Australia



Glenn Martin

**Glenn Martin** has written over fifteen books, as well as having five collections of poetry. He has books that offer new perspectives on ethics and the bigger picture of how to live, and several books that he calls reflections on experience. He has also been exploring his family history for many years, discovering amazing people and events and writing the stories.

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# No Gold in Melbourne

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G.P. Martin Publishing



NO GOLD IN MELBOURNE: A Scottish Family in Australia  
By Glenn Martin

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# 1 Introduction

As they say, you never know what you will find when you go looking for your ancestors. I have found many surprising things, but nothing as brutal as this: my great great grandfather Robert Mackie was killed in a goldmine in Collingwood. And nothing as preposterous. A goldmine in Collingwood?

Yet, if you scratch the surface, the history books reveal it. A website called “ToMelbourne.com.au” has a history of Collingwood, and the article includes this statement, “Collingwood even had a Goldmine. The Collingwood Gold Mining Company was formed in the 1860’s and a shaft was sunk through bluestone to a depth of more than 100 feet not far from the present Town Hall. But the Company collapsed soon.”

It is just a statement; apparently there is nothing more to be said. The Collingwood Historical Society offers a little more. In its publication, *In Those Days: Collingwood Remembered* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1994), it refers to a paper read to the Victorian Historical Society in 1909 by Edward A. Petherick. He was recalling Collingwood of the 1850s and 1860s, and he mentions the gold-mining company. He gives the above facts, and goes on to say the shaft was at the south east corner of Gipps Street and Hoddle Street, opposite the 'Royal George', not far from the present Town Hall, which is on a basaltic bed.

Again, Petherick simply notes the demise of the company: “The company did not prosper and finally lapsed.” The only additional piece of information is a quote from a newspaper of the time, the *Argus*. In its issue of August 13, 1865, it described the scene when a pennyweight of gold was gleaned from the first half bucket of wash dirt brought through the shaft:

Directly gold was found the workmen knocked off and no slight amount of dissipation followed. Crowds collected

and the street was during the afternoon crowded with buggies full of anxious visitors eager to gather hints for a little speculation. It is worth telling that while the secretary of the company was exhibiting the gold to the Honourable Colonial Secretary the precious morsels got spilt on the carpet and were not recovered.

This is amusing for its wry observations of human nature, but it reinforces the reasons for the brevity with which historians have treated the local gold venture: “The company did not prosper and finally lapsed.” Which is to say, they did not find gold. But my great great grandfather was killed by that shaft, and I think it changed the course of my family’s history.

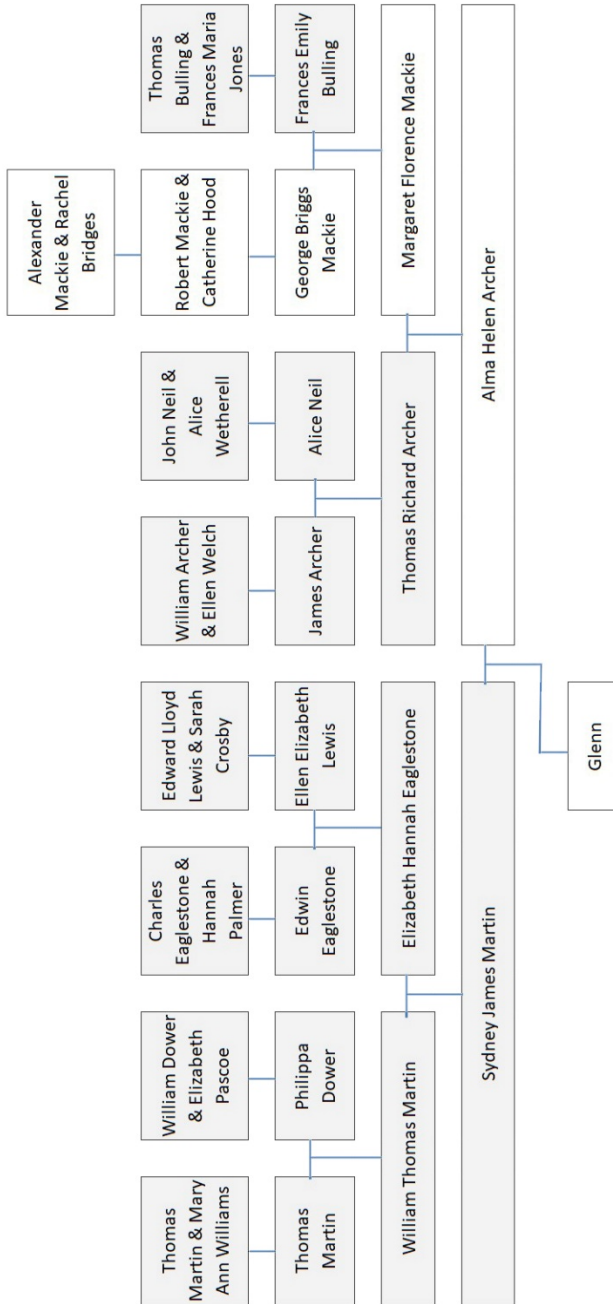


## 2 My family: the context

I have gathered a mass of information about my family, going back five generations and more. I can recite to you that I have one set of parents, two sets of grandparents, four sets of great grandparents, and eight sets of great great grandparents. And I know all their names, when they were born and when they died, when they married and where all of these events occurred. And who all their respective children were.

This story is not about all of that. It is about one of those eight sets of great great grandparents. It follows my mother back to her mother, to her father, and to his father. But it also needs to go back to his parents too, the great great great grandparents. I still get confused, so I have charts to help anchor me. We are going to follow the Mackie strand back in time. It is shown in *Item 1*.

## Item 1: Glenn's ancestors



Robert Mackie is the one that got killed. Alexander and Rachel Mackie, his parents, brought their whole family out to Australia from Scotland, including Robert, who was already grown up; he was the eldest and he was nineteen. He had his twentieth birthday in Melbourne on 21st October 1852; the passengers had alighted from the ship on 4th October. There were five children. The youngest of the children was three.

Alexander Mackie, the father, and his wife Rachel (Bridges), were both forty-five. I thought this was rather late in life to be completely uprooting their family to go the far side of the world. Both the Mackie and the Bridges families had been in Fife for generations. Young people tended to marry locally and stay put.

Where did all my other great great grandparents come from? They all came from somewhere in the British Isles and Ireland. It goes like this – you can see the connections in the chart above:

- Thomas Martin and Mary Ann Williams – both from Cornwall, England
- William Dower and Elizabeth Pascoe – both from Cornwall, England
- Charles Eaglestone and Hannah Palmer – both from Oxfordshire, England
- Edward Lloyd Lewis and Sarah Crosby – Essex, England and Waterford, Ireland respectively
- William Archer and Ellen Welch – Hertfordshire, England and Fife, Scotland respectively
- John Neil and Alice Wetherell – Armagh, Ireland and Offaly, Ireland respectively
- Robert Mackie and Catherine Hood – both from Fife, Scotland
- Thomas Bulling and Frances Maria Jones – Surrey and Hertfordshire, England respectively.

These people are interesting because in each line of ancestors, they were the generation that came to Australia. Thomas Martin and Mary Ann Williams were a young married couple; they had one son, Thomas, who was only one year old when they left Cornwall (my great grandfather). William Dower and Elizabeth Pascoe, who were

also from Cornwall, were married, but they came to Australia with Elizabeth's parents, who brought all of Elizabeth's siblings with them – eight of them.

Charles Eaglestone and Hannah Palmer left Oxfordshire with four children, one of whom was a great grandfather of mine (he was two years old at the time). Edward Lloyd Lewis and Sarah Crosby were a special case: they were both convicts, transported separately – they met in Hobart and married. William Archer was another special case: he was also a convict. Ellen Welch came to the colony separately, alone, on an assisted passage, to be a servant; remarkably, she came from the same area of Scotland as the Mackie family – Fife. She met and married William Archer while he was serving his sentence in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales.

John Neil and Alice Wetherell came from neighbouring counties in Ireland. They were married before they left for Australia, and they had one child, a daughter who unfortunately died at sea on the way to Australia. As noted, Robert Mackie came out to Australia with his parents and siblings, unmarried. How did Catherine Hood, his future wife, get to Australia?

Catherine Hood came to Australia the year after the Mackie family. She came out with her parents, James McDonald Hood and Margaret Bell. They also brought eight other children, ranging from 27 to 13 years. Strangely, or not, they also came from Fife. Did the Mackie and Hood families know each other in Fife?

I don't know. It depends on how you see it. Robert Mackie was born at Earlesferry and Catherine Hood was born at Largo. Five miles apart along the coastal plains of Fife. Either that is a prohibitive distance for rural folk and they never met in Scotland, or it is just a short horse-ride and the two families, and Robert and Catherine, knew each other, or at least knew of each other. (See Item 3.)

Thomas Bulling and Frances Maria Jones, the last of the couples, were married in London before they came to Australia. They are the only couple I have not been able to find in the shipping lists. However, Frances gave birth to a baby girl on 25th April 1855 in Melbourne. Their marriage had taken place in London on 3rd September 1854.

At that time the voyage to Australia took about two and a half months, so the window of possibility for them leaving London is small. I favour the *Essex* as the ship, because it arrived about a week before the birth, and the birth took place only about half a mile away from the docks (yes, I am using old measurements). The baby, unfortunately, died after a few days, a result of jaundice. They had eight more children over the coming years.

This book is not about all of these people. It is just about the Mackie family, a Scottish family in Australia. But this little account shows what they were part of, a great upheaval of people from the old country, a spilling out into the colonies of the British Empire. And while governments, the elite and the powerful had their ambitions on the world stage for the colonies, the Mackie family were being squeezed by the effects of industrialisation in Scotland, and they just wanted a new place where they could start again, for themselves and, more importantly, for their children.

### 3 Knowing the past

It might be asked how I know what I know about the Mackie family. Did my mother know the story about how her great grandfather died? She did not. There were things that she knew about her family, and she was willing to talk about them. I remember things she told us children when we were growing up.

Later on, when I became interested in family history, she told me more things, but the truth of it was that there was much that she didn't know. She knew more about her father's family, the Archers, than anyone else. Well, there were stories that she had been told, some of which I discovered to be false. "There were no convicts in our family." I found that statement to be false, a not inconsequential fact. William Archer, the initial emigrant in the Archer family, had been an involuntary emigrant, transported for the theft of twenty-eight pairs of 'high shoes' (I guess, a finer class of shoes, perhaps made by a cordwainer).

I asked her about the Mackie family. She had one photo of her grandparents, George Briggs Mackie and Frances Emily Mackie in later life, seated on the verandah of their house in Arncliffe (Sydney). George died when mum was three, and Frances died a few years later. Mum didn't seem to remember much about them. Of the previous past, she knew nothing except for the fact that the Mackie family was Scottish.

Mum also knew the Mackie tartan. She had described it to us as kids, and I saw it once at a dance that our parents took us to (a rare event), when I was maybe eight, where there were Scottish people. Some of them may even have been relatives. Now I think this is remarkable. Mum didn't have much to hold onto of Scottish ancestry, but she registered what the relevant tartan was. That was significant to her. And I registered it too.

In recent years, an Irish friend took me to a Scottish Ball in Sydney. It was in honour of Robert Burns' birthday, the poet. It was a seated dinner, and later on there was a haggis ceremony. My friend and I were booked on a table of ten, some of whom were Scottish, most of whom were 'Australian' like me. I was seated next to a man who was wearing a kilt. That was my first observation. My second observation was that the tartan was the Mackie tartan. Yes, I felt that I could recognise it.

After introductions, I asked him about the tartan and I was right: it was indeed the Mackie tartan. His connections with the old country were a little stronger than mine, but he didn't have much further information that was relevant to my family.

Accordingly, my quest for the Mackie family has been via documents and databases rather than through conversations with people. I was going backwards from my parents, so it was a step-by-step journey, confirming each generation, filling in the surrounds and determining movements and circumstances. I had to stop and think at many points. Why, for example, were George and Frances Mackie, whom I just mentioned, both born in Ballarat, Victoria? Mum had never mentioned Ballarat, or even Victoria.

Were there reasons why not much was known about these ancestors? It took me quite a while to get through the camouflage thrown up by mum's "There were no convicts in our family" statement. My clue about that was on a genealogy message board,

where a lady from England (who was a distant relative) said to me, "That William Archer of yours was sent out to Australia as a convict, you know." That set things in motion for me, and I got my confirmation in the records.

I was thinking that it could be similar with the Mackie family. There was something that needed to be hidden or forgotten. What was it? Or was it mere the haplessness of records? Paths fade out all the time in the family history quest. I even found people who had a personal biography in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and there was no record of their death in their state's Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. History is a chancy thing.

All I could do was store that thought and continue with my digging.

## 4 Tracing the line back

My mother was born in Sydney, at Marrickville in 1923. Her parents were Thomas Richard and Margaret Florence Archer. Margaret had been a Mackie. My mother's given name was Alma Helen, although she was known throughout her life simply as Nell.

The name Alma came from a friend of her mother's, but the Helen came from her father's grandmother, the Scottish girl Ellen Welch who married William Archer, and who in later life was called Helen; that is what is on her gravestone at Waverley.

Thomas and Margaret Archer had been married at Arncliffe in 1910, but Margaret had not been born in Sydney. Thomas had been born in Pyrmont, Sydney, in the back street, Paternoster Row, behind the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel in Harris Street. Thomas's grandfather, the ex-convict William Archer, had built the hotel in 1890. But where did Margaret come from?

When did she come to Sydney, and why? The births of her siblings tell us that her parents, George and Frances Mackie, had come to Sydney between 1891 and 1894 with four children (another child had died soon after birth), one of whom was Margaret. George

and Frances had four more children after they arrived in Sydney. They lived at Rockdale for several years and later at Arncliffe. George was a painter by trade.

Why did they come to Sydney? I had no idea. I could only think that the economic depression of the 1890s may have had something to do with it. Were there considered to be better opportunities in Sydney? Perhaps. The depression was at its worst in 1893, and Melbourne was particularly hard hit. Did they have any connections in Sydney? George was about thirty years old, in the prime of his working life, and I was getting the sense that he was a determined fellow.

George Mackie was one of four sons, the children of Robert Mackie and Catherine Hood. I discovered that two of George's brothers were already living in Sydney. Alexander, the eldest, was married in Sydney in 1884, to Anna Stooss, a German girl, and they remained in Sydney.

The next brother, James Hood Mackie, was actually married earlier, in 1882, and also in Sydney. He and Mary Kendrick Murray, who was from New Zealand, were married at French Park House in Elizabeth Street. They lived around Petersham and eventually had thirteen children.

So, yes, George Mackie had some connections in Sydney. James Hood Mackie first studied to become an accountant, then he went to Newcastle and established a rather large furniture store, J. Mackie & Co., which thrived for over sixty years. Alexander Mackie was a 'coach painter'. Perhaps there was some reason why George Mackie became a painter. Perhaps there was some reason why Alexander Mackie became a painter.

Now I am wondering why two of Robert Mackie's sons, before George, left Melbourne. And there was a fourth brother, Robert Mackie. What happened to him? I have only recently been able to confirm this: he went to South Africa and died in Johannesburg in 1898. Many other family trees to which I am connected faithfully record this fact, but none of them provides any explanation why. But in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for 2nd July 1898, the Death Notices list him as follows: "MACKIE, April 30, at Johannesburg, Robert Mackie, late of Rockdale, aged 37 years".



This gives us a date and place of death. It is still no explanation for why he was in South Africa, but it does tell us that he had left Melbourne first, and lived in Sydney before he went to South Africa.

You could say that all of the boys were adventurers. Just like their Scottish forbears, they wanted to go to a new place and prove themselves there. Certainly James Hood Mackie proved himself commercially with his furniture store. That's one perspective. But I need to know more.

George and Frances did settle down in Sydney, and had nine children in all. He was 63 years old when he died, of nephritis. The internet informs me that nephritis is a condition in which the nephrons, the functional units of the kidneys, become inflamed. It can be life-threatening, and can be acute (sudden) or chronic (long-term). I can't tell you which it was; this is a detail which has not been included on the death certificate.

END OF SAMPLE

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