Family Networks and the Australian Pastoral Industry: A Case Study of the Port Phillip District and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century

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This article highlights the important function of family and kinship networks in the pastoral industry of the Port Phillip District and Victoria, Australia, during the nineteenth century. Using the core case study of the extended Cameron family—or the Cameron “clan” from the Scottish Highlands—in the Western District of Victoria, it demonstrates how family networks assisted in the accumulation and consolidation of large pastoral properties and enterprises and thus aided the agricultural entrepreneurialism of migrants who saw greater commercial opportunities throughout the Empire than at home.

*It may be observed that a large proportion of the colonists of Port Phillip are Scotch—a people not slow to discern and take advantage of the natural capabilities of a country.*
Eliza Cook

In 1855, after traveling through Victoria for two years, English author William Howitt reflected in his diaries on the amount of energy expended

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by Scots on commercial endeavors in the colonies. “We give the Scotch much unbounded credit for enterprise and the quality which their own word ‘canny’ so well expresses,” wrote Howitt, “that we are not surprised to find a host of Scotchmen on whatever shore we may step, where money is to be made. Neither the snows of Canada nor the heats of India present any obstacles to them.” With the migration of thousands of individuals over the nineteenth century, Scotland made an important contribution to the peopling of Australia. In conjunction with the export of its people, Scotland’s imperial connections extended into the new colonies with increased investment and commercial activity. Scottish commerce in colonial Australia occurred at various levels—from large investment companies to the extensive mercantile class—and formed both the vital commercial arm of Scotland’s imperial endeavors and had a significant impact on colonial Australia’s pastoral and agricultural industries in the nineteenth century.¹

Family and kinship networks were important to Scottish immigrants within the early Australian pastoral industry, and the Cameron family, specifically, drew on such networks to succeed as pastoralists in the Port Phillip District and Victoria. Scottish Highlanders in particular utilized family networks to support their agricultural and pastoral entrepreneurialism in the colonies, but kinship and family networks also functioned effectively within the colonial pastoral industry more generally.

Networks of sentiment provided, in Eric Richards’s words, “mutual support and spiritual comfort in an alien world.” J. H. Kerr, a Western District squatter from Edinburgh, recalled in 1872 that the “colonists were few in those days and the tie of nationhood was almost equivalent to that of kinship.” While the romantic image of the lone, male squatter battling the harsh Australian outback is a familiar one, the reality is that personal networks were a central part of the colonial experience. These networks often rested upon national and family sentiments. In 1984 Richard Broome argued that the Scots “quickly became invisible” in colonial Victoria and asserted that Margaret Kiddle’s epic history of the Western District did not place emphasis on Scottishness “because it seemed to have so little influence on the settlers’ lives.” Migrant networks, both informal and formal, have since come to the attention of scholars who have explored their unique influence and role in the lives of Scottish émigrés. A focus on genealogies, origins, and kin has been recognized as a feature of various kinds of Australasian networks, especially among “clannish” Highlanders in the early decades of settlement. These networks illuminate how at
least some of the experience of these migrants was grounded in their being Scottish and consequently demonstrates how their sense of identity had a significant influence in their commercial endeavors.²

In addition to connections between migrants, which were established within countries of settlement as well as across the broader Empire, a perhaps more important feature of the settlement experience of many Scots was the maintenance of extended families for personal and commercial security. Indeed, the use of family relations as commercial networks was common among Scottish migrants more broadly. The role of family networks among Scottish migrants in the Western District has received attention in a handful of specific scholarly case studies, however, and not in relation to their proliferation in the region’s pastoral industry.³

In Scotland a prevailing strand of thought in the nineteenth century was that the Empire provided plentiful opportunities for Scots from many backgrounds; historians at the time claimed Scots at home looked upon the achievements of migrant Scots with great pride, and they saw emigration as a testament to the innovative and dynamic qualities of the Scottish people. The commercial middle class of Scotland considered the Empire as a place of vast opportunity where it could exercise its entrepreneurial dynamism and enterprise. Central to the Scottish imperial mission was the presence of Scottish business in the colonies and in the commercial apparatus of the Empire.⁴

Australia offered Scots a regional platform for extending their commercial interests into other parts of the southern hemisphere and the Empire. Scots were disproportionately represented in the lucrative commercial empire of the East India Company (EIC). Indeed, novelist Walter Scott wrote that “India . . . is the corn chest for Scotland where we poor gentry must send our younger sons as we send our black cattle to the south.” Furthermore, Scottish merchants played a large role in the consolidation of Australian trading connections with India. Robert Campbell was a Scottish-born merchant who had a great impact in opening free trade to and from Australia in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century. At the age of twenty-seven, Campbell traveled from Greenock to India in 1798 to join his older brother, John, who was a partner in the Calcutta merchant house of Campbell Clarke & Co., which had been established in 1790. The firm was one of the earliest to engage in commerce with Australia. Between August 1798 and February 1800, he established a regular trade between India and New South Wales, and by 1804 Campbell & Co. had fifty-thousand-pounds worth of goods in its Sydney warehouses. In 1805 he initi-
ated a colonial sealing industry, traveling to England with a cargo of oil and fur skins for the British market and thus violating the monopoly rights of the EIC to control trade from Australia.\textsuperscript{5}

Campbell’s merchant enterprise was grounded in a trading network that extended from Calcutta to Sydney to Glasgow. The Campbell & Co. merchant house in Calcutta always recruited its agents and workers from familial relations at home in Scotland. Campbell and his family exhibited “a distinct preference for their own race. . . . Their partners, if not actually members of the family, were Scots, and so were the captains of the ships they employed or hired, their up country and overseas agents were of the same race, and inevitably, so were their creditors.” Campbell played a leading role in opening up the Australian colonies to free trade and undermining the monopolies of both military officers and the EIC. He also exemplified the ways in which Scots infiltrated imperial networks in a distinctly self-conscious fashion. He was among other Scottish traders from India, including William Douglas Campbell, Charles Hook, and William Walker, who were largely responsible for breaking the monopolies on foreign trade from Australia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scots, then, were arguably instrumental in promoting and enacting colonial free trade in Australia and the British Empire.\textsuperscript{6}

While merchants such as Robert Campbell built their enterprises, investors in Scotland began to take an interest in the new colonies, and thus both formal and informal networks began to form between Australia and Scotland. In 1822 a group of merchants from Edinburgh and Leith came together to form the first public company in Great Britain to operate in the Australian colonies. Throughout the 1820s until its termination in 1831, the Australian Company of Edinburgh and Leith exported a variety of products, including oatmeal, butter, salt, barreled herrings, whiskey, ale, wine, livestock, timber, cotton, and woolen textiles. The Scottish Australian Investment Company, formed in Aberdeen in 1840 in response to a need in Scotland for investment opportunities and news of a booming sheep and wool industry in the colonies, was far more successful. Upon formation, the company defined its purpose as the “acquiring of land, either by purchase or otherwise, and of other property, real and personal, for resale, or letting out for agricultural or grazing operations . . . and also, the granting of loans or advances on the mortgage of real property.” In the first half of the 1840s, the company made substantial investments in the Australian pastoral industry, purchasing and advancing loans for both land
and livestock. From the later 1840s it also invested heavily in mining and shipping. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Scottish Australian Investment Company was one of the chief businesses in the colonies.⁷

Other important Scottish pastoral companies in Australia in the nineteenth century were George Russell’s Clyde Company and the partnership of Niel Black, William Steuart, and Thomas Gladstone in Niel Black & Company. While Scottish investment companies played an integral role in financing the burgeoning Australian wool and sheep industry, smaller-scale networks of family and commerce were the foundation of much Scottish enterprise in Australia. Take for instance Andrew McIlwraith from Ayrshire who, between 1875 and 1913, became an important promoter of Australian pastoral, mining, and shipping enterprises by utilizing his connections in Scotland and linking them with borrowers and investment opportunities in Australia. By the nineteenth century Scottish business was firmly embedded within its imperial diaspora. For Scots at home and abroad, business networking between investors and borrowers was crucial to success.⁸

By the end of the century, Scotland’s involvement in colonial economic development was widely recognized. In 1884 Blackwood’s Magazine observed, “three fourths of the foreign and colonial Investment Companies are of Scottish origin. If not actually located in Scotland, they have been hatched by Scotchmen and work on Scottish models.” Scottish foreign investment was therefore a key component of all British imperial commercial activity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, undermining the view that “informal empire” was a London-centered affair. In some cases, capital from Scotland was a critical element of economic development abroad and, by the 1880s, at least one-third of Australian pastoral, mortgage, and investment securities were taken up in Scotland. Before the 1893 Australian financial crisis, Scotland was the dominant source of private British loans to Australia.⁹

By 1840 the British settlement of the Port Phillip District of the colony of New South Wales had commenced. Lord Glenelg expected Scottish commerce to play a leading role, claiming in 1835 that, “the settlement at Port Phillip will probably be reinforced by a large number of Emigrants, and a considerable introduction of Capital from Scotland.” Scottish interest in Australian land, however, was slow to develop at first. Aside from convicts, by 1820 the few Scots in Australia were mostly colonial administrators, officers, and soldiers. The first application to migrate to Australia from Scotland was only made in 1814. Out of three hundred eighty land grants of over one hundred
acres given between 1812 and 1821, only thirty-four were granted to Scots. Overall, of those who received large land grants in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land before 1820, around one-sixth were Scots, and Scots held around one-tenth of the smaller grants.10

Other older and more established imperial colonies were far more attractive than Australia before the 1820s. The small numbers were due in part to the distance of the Australian colonies from Scotland, exclusive land policies that did not encourage free migrants (without substantial independent means) to settle, and Australia’s poor reputation in Scotland. By 1828 in Van Diemen’s Land, there were one hundred ninety settlers from Scotland, and a small number had significant holdings. Scottish emigration to Australia increased from the 1820s onward, and by 1833 a disproportionate 24 percent of 2,232 land grant applicants were Scottish. In some years, the Scottish element of migrant and land grant applicants was substantial—in 1820 about 33.3 percent of applicants were from Scotland, and in 1824, 40.3 percent were Scottish. Most early Scottish settlers were from the Lowlands, with the Lothians, Fife, and Angus being prominent in the regional origins of migrants. They were a mixed cohort of artisans, skilled farm laborers, displaced tenant farmers, merchants, half-pay officers, landowners, and the younger sons of Scottish gentry.11

The influx of Lowland Scottish migrants to the Australian colonies from the 1820s onward had much to do with economic and social conditions at home. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Scotland had gained prominence as one of the world’s leading industrial nations. The economic revolution bestowed benefits on manufacturing and agricultural industries alike, and Lowland capitalist farmers gained immensely. The scarcity of rentable farms in Scotland and an impetus to find positions for their younger sons motivated wealthy agriculturalists to seek investment and land opportunities abroad. The availability of substantial land grants in Australia after 1810 and the government’s provision of cheap convict labor to the larger landholders was attractive to opportunistic Lowland Scots.12

From the 1830s the nature and numbers of Scottish free migrants to Australia evolved as colonial employers looked to assisted immigration for their growing labor needs. While few of the female migrants from workhouses and reformatories between 1831 and 1836 were Scottish, around 18.2 percent of the fifty thousand people who came to New South Wales under private bounty and government immigration programs from 1837 to 1842 came from Scotland. Approximately one-quarter of unassisted migrants in the 1830s and
1840s were Scots, or around seven thousand of the total number. Between 1832 and 1850, an estimated 15 percent of the 110,000 assisted migrants were Scottish. Apart from the unassisted migrants, who were much like the arrivals from the 1820s—merchants, landowners, officials, and artisans with their own means—Scottish migrants in Australia were drawn from a more working-class background than previously. Maidservants, urban and rural laborers, and shepherds were the most common occupational groups.¹³

While settlement patterns were varied and diverse, and Scots spread across all the colonies, many of the newly arrived Scottish workers came to work with Scottish landholders. In areas where Scots accounted for a large proportion of squatters, the number of laborers and shepherds who followed was disproportionately high. Scottish pastoral leaseholders between 1839 and 1848 were particularly numerous in Moreton Bay (where over half were Scots), Port Phillip (over 40 percent Scottish), and New England and Darling Downs, where around a third of pastoralists were Scottish. Broome has claimed that, by 1848, around two-thirds of those who held squatting licenses in the larger Port Phillip District were Scots, and in its Western District region, two-thirds of the squatters were from Scotland. Much of this activity was founded upon migrant networks that operated within the much broader context of the British Empire. Some formal commercial networks that had an impact in Australia’s pastoral industries have already been mentioned: the Australian Company of Edinburgh and Leith, the Scottish Australian Investment Company of Aberdeen, and the Clyde Company of Glasgow.¹⁴

It was individuals, however, who held most pastoral leases. Although some companies owned property, their involvement in the industry was focused mostly on advancing loans for land and livestock. Many individual Scots in Port Phillip had pastoral holdings of considerable size and grazing capacity. One of the earliest settlers in the region was John Aitken, who arrived from Scotland in March 1836. By 1849 he held a number of pastoral runs around Western Port, including Piccaninny Creek, Tandara, Myer’s Creek, and Bullock Creek, with an aggregate area of 201,840 acres with a grazing capacity of fourteen thousand head of sheep. Alexander Thomson was born in Aberdeen and arrived in Port Phillip in 1836 and owned 150,000 acres of land at the Avon and Molly Creek station in the Wimmera. In the southwest of the district, Scottish-born squatters included Donald Kennedy at Croxton, Angus Cameron at Violet Creek, Alexander Lang at Lyne, William Skene at Plains, William Learmonth at Knebsworth, John McKay at Blackfellow’s Creek, Alexander
Donaldson at Purdeet, J. Riley at Kenilworth South, Donald McKinnon at Kangaroo, W. Thomson at Park Hill, and the Reverend McKay at Cape Wrath.\textsuperscript{15}

The Cameron family and its various extensions that settled in the region in the early 1840s exemplified a combination of informal commercial and familial networks among Scottish pastoralists in the Western District during the nineteenth century. Such was the pervasiveness of the Cameron clan in this region, and the Port Phillip District more generally, that in 1847 the Presbyterian agitator Reverend John Dunmore Lang wrote, after meeting a “Scotch Highland overseer,” that he “was a Cameron—a clan which, I afterwards found, is likely to become as numerous in Phillipsland as ever it has been in the Highlands of Scotland.” The Cameron family of the Western District of Victoria were just one example of an informal network that operated at a local level to provide security and benefits to migrants, but also—in its migratory and commercial impacts—necessarily worked within an imperial framework.\textsuperscript{16}

The discovery of Australia Felix in the late 1830s had encouraged emigration to Victoria’s Western District: “Perhaps the finest and most fertile region of Australia is that part of the Port Phillip District lying west of the town of Geelong and the bay of Port Phillip,” wrote diarist Eliza Cook in 1849. “Only a very small proportion of this district is occupied; but settlers are flocking into it from England and Scotland.” The Western District’s pastoral industry would become a significant component of the Australian economy and therefore also an important part of the financial and commercial apparatus of the Empire.\textsuperscript{17}

One of the first Scottish squatters to settle in the Western District was a Highlander, Donald “Morgiana” Cameron. Cameron was born in 1815 at Inverness and came to Australia on the \textit{SS Boyne}, which landed at Sydney on January 2, 1839. He and assistant Donald McKinnon began the long drive overland to Port Phillip with a flock of sheep, where he founded the Mount Sturgeon Plains station—which runs to the east of present-day Hamilton—in 1840. Cameron was, like many Highlanders, a Catholic, and after lamenting that, “too many of the Roman Catholic portion of this clan have already found their way to the colony,” Lang described him as “a patriarch of this class,” one of many Cameron “patrarchs” who controlled vast swathes of pastoral land in Australia Felix by the 1850s.\textsuperscript{18}

When it arrived in 1839, the \textit{SS Boyne} carried over one hundred other Camerons from Inverness. The passengers were men, women, and families,
most of whom were shepherds, farm servants, plowmen, farm laborers, and house servants from the Highlands. A retrospective in Mount Gambier’s *Border Watch* from 1938 suggests that the *Boyne* left Cromarty on September 1, 1838 “with a band of Highlanders from Lochaber, Inverness-shire, [and] most of them . . . were just married.” Upon arrival in Australia, a number of the Camerons sought to purchase sheep, and “when the flock was added to and large enough they were overlanded to Port Phillip.” One of the clan to arrive on the *Boyne*, Duncan Cameron, established the Glenroy station northwest of Melbourne in 1840 and held it until 1846, while Alexander Cameron became the “King of Penola” in South Australia. Another Donald Cameron, a close relative of both Duncan and “Morgiana” who also arrived on the *Boyne*, established a hotel at Portland in 1838 and later bought the Oakbank station on 2,500 acres near Mt. Eckersley in Portland Bay.19

By 1849 Donald Cameron’s Mount Sturgeon Plains pastoral property was approximately twenty-eight thousand acres in size and had estimated grazing capabilities for fifteen thousand head of sheep. By the 1860s, in just one subdivision of the original Mount Sturgeon property, approximately thirty thousand sheep and three hundred cattle were tended by between one and two hundred workers (permanent and seasonal), including various overseers, boundary riders, shepherds, bullock drivers, stockriders, hut cooks, carriers, laborers, thistle cutters, fencers, shearers, kangaroo and rabbit trappers, a stonemason, a plowman, and a saddler. Pastoral properties were highly significant in the economic life of colonial Victoria and the Western District. The Camerons were at the vanguard of European expansion in Australia Felix and constituted one small element of a vast imperial network involving the transfer of capital and labor from Great Britain throughout the Empire and, in the case of Australia, the movement of primary produce back from the imperial periphery to its center.20

Shortly after claiming his run at Mount Sturgeon Plains, Donald established connections with John and Alex Cameron, who had migrated with their father, Ewen, from Inverness. Ewen, the brother-in-law of Alexander “King of Penola” Cameron, took up the 128,000-acre Sutledge station northwest of Casterton, which later passed on to two more of the Cameron family. The brothers John and Alex established the Morgiana station in 1842 and soon after became involved in joint ventures with Donald at Mount Sturgeon. Donald and the brothers swapped and shared leases on numerous occasions; eventually Alex held Mount Sturgeon Plains while Donald took over Morgiana,
property of 8,640 acres and six hundred head of cattle, and he became known as “Morgiana Cameron.” The moniker was likely to have been a necessity, for yet another Donald Cameron, in partnership with one Angus Cameron, shared the lease for the 9,600-acre Violet Creek run from around 1843. Angus held further pastoral properties in partnership with Donald including runs at Ar-randoovong and a large, ten-thousand-acre property called Narrawong. Between 1842 and 1844 the Cameron name was associated with at least seventeen stations stretching from north of Sydney to the Port Phillip District border with South Australia, where most were concentrated. By 1849 they held closer to twenty-four pastoral properties on some of southeast Australia’s richest grazing land.

In addition to the immediate Cameron families in the Western District were two cousins, the brothers Donald Kennedy and Duncan Cameron Kennedy. They too were born in Inverness, immigrated to New South Wales in 1834, and moved on to the Port Phillip District in 1840. With seven thousand head of sheep, Donald established the Croxton run in 1843 on 14,727 acres of land running adjacent to the southwest boundary of Mount Sturgeon Plains. He and his brother, Duncan, also held substantial pastoral properties at Linlithgow Plains and Hyde Park, near present-day Cavendish. The aggregate size of these two properties alone was 74,746 acres, with estimated grazing capacities of 3,200 cattle and twenty-four thousand sheep. After Duncan was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1854 he spent very little time at his properties and eventually sold Croxton to the Edinburgh-educated John A. Macpherson, who was the son of a Scottish squatter from New South Wales.

Family networks and loyalties played an important role in the consolidation of the Camerons in the Port Phillip District pastoral industry. These networks also had an impact on the social mobility of migrants. Before becoming the “King of Penola,” in 1844 twenty-three-year-old Alexander Cameron could only establish himself in the southwest of South Australia with the help of a £9,500 loan from two of his uncles who had settled in Van Diemen’s Land in the late 1830s. In 1843 Morgiana Cameron gave one of his young nephews one thousand sheep on credit at twenty-four shillings per head, “to commence with on his own account.” The younger Donald paid off his entire debt to Morgiana Cameron by 1846, and in those three years increased his flock to seven thousand head of sheep with a value of £4,000; in the following year he would make a profit of an estimated £1,200. Similarly, cousins Ewen and Ann Cameron married in Inverness and were the nephew and niece of Alexander.
Cameron at Penola (and thus also cousins to John and Alex at the Morgiana station). After arrival on the Boyne in 1838, Ewen and Ann spent three years in Sydney with an uncle and then relocated south to work with Duncan Cameron at his Glenroy property in 1843. In 1846 Ewen and Ann began grazing sheep at Donald “Morgiana” Cameron’s Mount Sturgeon Plains property, but soon moved on to purchase their own property near the border with South Australia at Wattle Range. John Dunmore Lang recalled another family from the Highlands who were able to “go out on their own” after working as shepherds and servants: “at the end of five years, when they wished to go upon their own hands . . . they had £290 in money to commence with, the whole of which they had saved during the period of their service.” Opportunities for social and economic advancement were numerous for these migrants, who drew benefits from networks that extended not only across the Western District, but also across the colonies, and throughout the Empire from Australia to Scotland.23

Familial and kinship ties also helped to ensure that pastoral properties in the Western District stayed within the Cameron family. When Donald Cameron of Violet Creek died in 1856, he passed his holdings (the Violet Creek, Narrawong, and Arrandoovong properties) on to his wife, Christina, and two other men—both named Donald Cameron. After her husband’s death, Christina married Archibald Cameron, a son of Morgiana, and with their sons they tended the properties until the 1860s.24

When six million acres of Victorian land were sold under the Land Acts of 1860, 1862, and 1865 with the aim of creating single-family farms of between eighty and six hundred forty acres, the Camerons worked together to ensure their properties remained as they were. Indeed, many squatting runs remained intact; the loose phrasing of the acts enabled existing squatters and those with enough capital to purchase any number of blocks —and usually these blocks were those that made up the original property. At the first land sales in 1860, Alexander Cameron purchased most of the land that made up the Mount Sturgeon Plains station. In 1862 Cameron allotments that overlapped Morgiana, Violet Creek, Narrawong, and Mount Sturgeon properties were all re-purchased by the former licensees; Camerons also bought up more land around Bochara, Yulecart, and Wannon. From 1862 Christina Cameron, who owned the Violet Creek, Narrawong, and Arrandoovong properties, widely used “dummy” buyers to purchase 148 allotments of land or 15,161 acres of the 16,420 acres the family previously held. By 1865 Christina and her two sons
held 16,441 acres of freehold property, but such was the cost of purchasing blocks under the Land Acts that they were eventually forced to sell their stock and lease their property.25

The Cameron network was not limited to the buying and sharing of land and livestock (and, of course, selling primary produce back to Great Britain); it also extended to assisting other migrants from the Highlands of Scotland. When the Highland and Island Emigration Society (HIES) began transporting Highlanders from the north of Scotland, after the famines and Clearances had left them destitute and impoverished, many landed on the coast near the Western District area. Between 1852 and 1854, some 1,421 Highlanders arrived at Portland Bay. The landing of these migrants coincided with the departure of large amounts of the Western District’s laboring force, whom were seeking fortune on the goldfields. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that the “destitution prevailing in the Highlands . . . and the demand for labour in the pastoral districts of Australia” pointed toward the emigration of Highlanders “as a means of remedying two great and dangerous evils.”26

To take one example, the SS Utopia arrived in Portland on January 25, 1854, carrying three hundred ninety assisted migrants, of whom the HIES sponsored one hundred two. Western District pastoralists went to Portland seeking laborers for their properties; the name and address of the employer, the agreed wage, and the term of employment were entered in the passenger list. Angus Cameron of Violet Creek took on Allan and Mary Cameron from Argyll and their nine-year-old son, Ewen. Allan was contracted at sixty-five pounds for twelve months. Their other children—Susan, Mary, and Catherine—were aged between eighteen and twenty-five and were contracted as domestic servants to other property owners. Alexander Cameron, a twenty-two-year-old agricultural laborer from Inverness, was also contracted at Violet Creek at sixty pounds for twelve months.27

The Cameron clan of the Western District eventually extended its pastoral interests across the Tasman to New Zealand. Donald Angus Cameron, born at Fort William, Scotland, in 1835, was the nephew of the Alex Cameron who had established the Morgiana station in 1842 with his brother John. He immigrated to Australia in 1854 and then New Zealand in 1859. On a return trip to Australia in 1863, Donald Angus married the stepdaughter of Morgiana Cameron, Margaret MacDonald. Together they lived on and operated the Glenfalloch station near Nokomai in New Zealand, and the Cameron family grew; Margaret and Donald had twelve sons and daughters.28
Like his father-in-law, Donald Angus was said to have been “a staunch Highlander, and spoke his native tongue fluently, and anything pertaining to the land of his birth was of keen interest to him.” Indeed, Morgiana Cameron, the patriarch of the family in the Western District, was instrumental in ensuring that Scottish Gaelic survived in the region for many decades. Allan McVean, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, traveled from Portland Bay to the Hamilton area in 1853 and, in a report of his journey, he wrote that “the voice of a Gaelic preacher sounded for the first time over this vast extent, and many could number a dozen years since they heard the gospel sound in a language they could understand.” One visitor to the region recalled in 1885 that “at the stations all around Hamilton for a long time there were a large number of quiet, sedate, sober, God-fearing Skye shepherds, who understood no English.” In his diaries, pastoralist Donald Morison remembers that the first Catholic, “Anglican” (most likely Episcopalian), and Presbyterian preachers in the Hamilton area were all Highlanders, and all could speak Gaelic; the Presbyterian minister made sure to preach in both languages “so as to get the country people.” Among these God-fearing Skye shepherds and “country people” were numerous Cameron families. When they journeyed to Australia in the Boyne in the late 1830s, large areas of the Scottish Highlands, including Inverness, were still exclusively Gaelic speaking, and Gaelic was often the preferred language of worship in those areas that were bilingual.29

In 1856 a meeting was held at the Victoria Hotel in Hamilton and was attended by a number of Hamilton’s prominent Scottish squatters—William Skene, Alexander Learmonth, and Thomas McKellar, amongst others. They decided to build a Free Church church in Hamilton. Morgiana Cameron attended the meeting to ensure that any minister requested to settle in Hamilton could preach to the congregation in both Gaelic and English, because, he said, “a very large proportion (if not the majority) of the Presbyterians in and around the Township of Hamilton are Gaelic speaking and prefer to have the ordinances administered to them in their native tongue.” By 1868 there were still around one hundred Highlanders in the region that spoke Gaelic and preferred it as the language of worship. When English replaced Gaelic at the Free Church in the 1860s, a new Free Kirk was established and “a large congregation of Highlanders . . . came great distances to hear the powerful messages in their mother tongue.” Thus, the Cameron legacy consisted in more than their pastoral endeavors and extensive family network; they, and others from the Highlands, brought their unique linguistic identities with them to the Aus-
tralian colonies. Their diasporic connections to home extended beyond com-
cmercial pursuits to incorporate important manifestation of their cultural and
religious identities.\textsuperscript{30}

To summarize their experience, by the mid-1840s many of the one hundred
members of the Cameron clan, after landing in Sydney in 1839 on the \textit{SS Boyne},
had made the extensive journey overland to Port Phillip and established
pastoral enterprises over a four-hundred-kilometer expanse of land between
Melbourne and Adelaide. In at least two instances, migrants from this family
group had been the first white settlers in two of southwest Australia’s early
pastoral centers. Donald Cameron at Mount Sturgeon Plains was one of the
first settlers in the region of present-day Hamilton, while Alexander Cameron
established what would become the township of Penola near the border of Vic-
toria and South Australia. These were men from families that may have, in
the best of circumstances, held in Inverness perhaps one hundred acres be-
tween them. Their experience in Australia was quite different.

In the middle of the nineteenth century at least seventeen Cameron men—
more than half of whom were related by birth or marriage—owned around
twenty-four pastoral runs in Western Port, Wimmera, and Portland Bay, as
well as on the South Australian border, with a total estimated acreage of
662,299 acres (the equivalent of about a quarter of their native Inverness-
shire). The Port Phillip properties alone in 1849 had a potential grazing ca-
pacity of 117,900 head of sheep and 6,892 head of cattle. This veritable
pastoral dynasty was made possible by the establishment and maintenance
over a number of decades of an extensive family network.\textsuperscript{31}

A clan is a contentious organizational and analytical category, and perhaps
not entirely useful if applied too liberally, the aggregate size of all “Cameron”
properties in Australia and New Zealand in the mid-nineteenth century could
well have been larger than Scotland itself. However, many of those in Western
Victoria had traveled to Australia together, were related by birth or marriage,
were often in partnership with each other, and drew upon their family network
to establish and consolidate substantial pastoral holdings in the region. The
emphasis on kin, genealogy, and origins was evidently as important here as
in other networks among Scottish migrants in the Australian colonies. Not
only was the Cameron clan influential in the early development of the south-
east Australian pastoral industry, but their dealings in the middle of the nine-
teenth century also illustrated the importance of overlapping familial and
commercial networks in the colonies. While large-scale trade and investment
between Australia and Scotland were integral to the development of the colonial pastoral industry, the Camerons illustrate how migrants established and maintained close family and commercial networks and pursued capital and wealth on a much smaller scale.

NOTES


14. Ibid., 649; Richard Broome, The Victorians Arriving (New South Wales: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1984), 23. The claim that around two-thirds of those who held squatting licenses in the larger Port Phillip District were Scots, and in its Western District region two-thirds of the squatters were from Scotland is unattributed, but is likely drawn from Kiddle, Men of Yesterday, 14, 517.

15. 1836 Census of the Port Phillip District, microfilm IN 65, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (hereafter SLV); New South Wales and Port Phillip General Post Office Directory for 1839 (Sydney: James Maclehose, 1839); The Squatters’ Directory: Containing a List Of All the Occupants of Crown Lands in the Intermediate and Unsettled Districts of Port Phillip (Melbourne: Edward Wilson, 1849), 3. Adapted from Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson, Victorian Squatters (Melbourne: Red Rooster, 1983); Don Garden, Hamilton:


20. *Squatters’ Directory*, 6; Armitage family, Station Records, 1858–1948, MS 7829, SLV.


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inburg, Scotland (hereafter NAS); “Highland Emigration,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 27, 1852, 2.


