

PARANOID IN GLASGOW

My great-great-grandfather John Ross McNaughton was born in Edinburgh in 1814 and moved to Kirkintilloch near Glasgow around 1828. In 1837 he married Agnes Stirling and they had a daughter, Jane. In May 1838 all three migrated to Australia, arriving in Port Jackson in September. John could not get work there but did get a job in Port Philip. They left Port Jackson on December 17th and arrived in Port Philip on January 3rd, 1839. John and Agnes had eleven children by 1860, the last ten all born in the vicinity of Melbourne.

On 4th and 5th of February 1874 John obtained references in Melbourne prior to a return visit to Scotland. David Wilke M.D, who had been the medical attendant for John and his family for the past 34 years, said “He has not enjoyed very good health of late years & being anxious to educate his son for the medical profession in Scotland he has made up his mind to return at all events for a few years.” Thos. McPherson, Late Mayor of Melbourne, said, “Mr. McNaughton leaves here by the Great Britain Steamer, along with his youngest son, to visit England, where he has been ordered by his medical adviser. He will carry with him the good wishes of all that have had the pleasure of knowing him; and trust that his health will soon be restored again and be brought back to spend the last of his days in the land of his adoption.”

SEPTEMBER 1874

On September 23rd, 1874, John wrote “My dear daughter” from Govan, a suburb of Glasgow, where he was staying with her aunt and cousin. He reported that his wife “is in the enjoyment of good health” and the aunt and cousin were in “fair health.” He does not comment on his own health. He also said “Your Brother John has informed me of the very sad and awful death of your sister Christian at Sandhurst it has Caused us great Greif ... We are also very sorry about the death of your Brother Johns Baby.” John’s baby John died on February 14th, just after the Great Britain sailed; John Sr. did not write to his daughter about it until seven months later.

Figure 1. The Glasgow Bridge, designed by Thomas Telford, opened in 1836 and was succeeded by the present crossing in the 1890s.



John says in this letter “I am very glad to learn from your Brothers letter that you are still in the service of the Count. I hope that you will try to give satisfaction and that you will try to save as much of your wages as you can & always be in the one place.” John had two daughters besides Christina (often called Christian, the same as John’s mother)—Jane and Agnes. Was he writing to Jane or Agnes?

Jane married John Thomas on December 24th, 1869 and would have been 36 in 1874. They had a son William born in Sebastopol, near Ballarat, in 1870 and a daughter Agnes born 1874 in Sebastian, near Bendigo; gold was discovered in both these areas in the 1850s. Jane was John’s first-born and made the journey from Scotland with her parents, so John may have felt very close to her. Christina was John’s second-born child. It seems that John received a letter from his third-born, John, before September 23rd, but responded to his daughter, most likely Jane, on September 23rd, and did not reply to his son until November 18th.

There could not have been too many Counts in Australia in 1874 but there was at least one famous one—Count Pawel Edmund Strzelecki, a Polish nobleman, explorer and geologist. He arrived in Sydney on April 25th, 1839, surveyed Gippsland, and in that year was the first person to discover gold in Victoria (Governor Gipps persuaded the Count to keep it secret for fear of the effects on the colony; the discovery was not generally announced until 1851). Strzelecki climbed and named Mt. Kosciuszko and reached Melbourne on May 28th, 1840, just one year after John McNaughton and his family. He died on October 6th, 1873, but it is possible John’s daughter worked for him before he died and John did not know he had died. John’s seventh-born child, Agnes, would have been 24 in 1874 and died on February 5th, 1875; we don’t have much information on her.

NOVEMBER 1874

On November 18th John wrote “Dear Son, I am sorry to inform you that since I wrote you last I have Been very unwell I am very much troubled with Rheumatism all over my Joints I am suffering very much from the Cold weather we had frost and snow on Wednesday last week we Expect an early winter Dr Freer has ordered me to take Turkish Baths. I have had 6 of them and some Chemical Baths and hot salt water spray Baths at Dr. Patersons Hydrapthy Baths Rothsay wher I was for 12 Days at the Rate of 10/-

Per Day I am also suffering very much on account of the news of your Last letter Giving me the account of the death of your son and the very awfull and Sudden Death of your sister Christian.”

Figure 2. The British Linen Bank Buildings on Ingram Street were erected in the early 1840s.

The Letter continues

“I may inform you that I have been followed from Place to Place by four of Secret or Detective Police Since I landed in Scotland on account of some Charge or Complaint that Mother made against me in Melbourne which has been another source of Great Grief and vexation to me on account of you and all my failmy I feel very Depressed on that account The Police are the Melbourne Police.” Then follows an elaborate description of various measures to get the complaint withdrawn, complete with names and addresses of individuals and organizations involved in the paperwork in Glasgow and Melbourne. The information about the complaint seems quite possible, but the claim about the four police seems very strange.



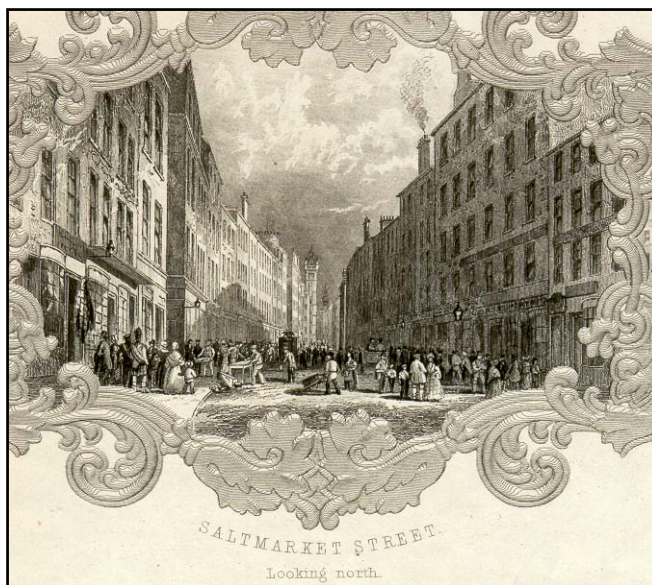
John adds: “I have requested Mr. Brown your father in Law to help you to cary out what I have requested you to get Done Before the mail Leves Melbourne. if you or Mr. Brown Loses any time you Pay yourselves out of my Cash.” The letter concludes, “Your mother and Colin is well so is your aunt and Cousin. Colin is geting well on with his Lesson at the high School Edinburgh and is in Good health.” On November 18th 1874 John also wrote to his son John’s father-in-law, Robert Alex Brown, a grocer in West Melbourne, repeating much of the information in the letter he wrote to his son, and adds: “I have applied to Dr. Freer next door to where I live and he has advised me to use the Turkish Bath.”

On 24th November, John realized he could get another letter into the same mail with updated information and wrote: “Dear Son.” He continues to give details about the complaints made about him by his wife and getting them withdrawn in Melbourne, all of which sounds quite reasonable and possible.

About his health he says: “I should have sent this by the september mail and I would have Done so But I was unwell I am sorry to say still unwell I am over 60 years of age and feel myself Declining.” And later: “I am still at the Bridge of Allan and will be for 2 weeks there is A fine hydropathy Establishment here Dr. Freer the Dr. that attends me ordered me to Come her on account of them and the well sheltered Position of the Bridge of Allan. It is considered the Best sheltered Place in Scotland from the Cold & Snow storms and Cold East winds we have had showery and frosty weather this last week. Their is A great many invalids her from all Parts of Scotland.”

Figure 3. Saltmarket Street looking north.

About being followed he says: “I am sorry to inform you that I am still followed from Place to Place by the same 4 Detective Police and treated in the most cruel manner While I was writing this letter I have been interupted Disturbed and tortured with Electricity to such an extent that I had to stop writing 3 times the language that they utter is of the most Blackguard kind said to me from the Room above mine. A Disgrace to the Respectable and usfull Body of men they are conected with will you Please set about Getting them Removed as I am suffering very much from their harsh and cruel treatment Perhaps A telegram from the Government to the agent General Mr. Michil will get them Removed.”



I have copies of three other letters, sent to me by Donald Osborne McNaughton, my first cousin once removed. These three letters were copied from Police Archives in the Melbourne Public Library, by Don’s older brother, John Henry McNaughton.

POLICE INTERVENTION

Police Chambers, Govan 22nd May 1875, Glasgow N 13

To the Chief of Police, Melbourne, Australia

Dear Sir

A gentleman from Melbourne named John McNaughton has been residing here for more than a year sent hither by his medical adviser for the purpose of regaining his health and partly for the education of his son. Mr. McNaughton has been under my care for all sorts of supposed bodily complaints for several months he has all along laboured under the delusion that three or four members of the Victorian police who have followed him to this country and are staying in the room above his bedroom from which through a hole in the roof (imaginary) they constantly pour a stream of electricity which he says burns him severely and otherwise causes him great suffering. They also he affirms use very abusive language which he invariably notes down every night. The enclosed is a specimen of what he writes, it is original, I have a great number of these. Captn. Young, our Suptd. of Police here has a quantity of them also.

A note from you to Captn. Young saying that the imaginary police who have followed him to this country have been withdrawn and that they are on their way to Melbourne would, I have no doubt pacify him and in fact cure him. Your early reply will greatly oblige

Yours truly, Fredk. A. Freer, Police Surgeon

Victoria Police (57), Detective Report, Police Department Melbourne, Detective Office 5 August 1875

Subject: Enquiry re "John McNaughton" see attached correspondence

Detective Christie reports that he has been unable to discover McNaughton's identity, or obtain any information respecting him. The enquiries were made at the Kew and Yarrabend Lunatic Asylums also amongst the Police, and some of the leading Doctors.

J. M. Christie 2230

Fredk. A. Freer Esq.

9th August 1875

Dear Sir

Your letter respecting Mr. John McNaughton reached me by last mail. In compliance with the request made I have written an official letter to Captn. Young to inform him that the Victoria Police have been withdrawn and have returned to the Colony.

I hope this innocent (fraud?) will have the desired effect.

I am, Yours truly, Fredk. C. Standish

It is frustrating to have these strange references about my great-great-grandfather, John Ross McNaughton, and not be able to explain them. In many ways he led a heroic life, sailing half way round the world with his wife and daughter in 1838 to start a new life and found a dynasty in Melbourne. He was widely known and respected, and helped build a Presbyterian Church in West Melbourne. He was made a Justice of the Peace. What is the meaning of his concerns about being followed to Scotland in 1874? In my attempts to understand this, I came to study the case of Daniel McNaughtan.

DANIEL MCNAUGHTAN

Daniel McNaughtan was born in Glasgow in 1814. On January 20th, 1843, in London, he shot Edward Drummond, private secretary to Sir Robert Peel, the prime minister. He was acquitted on the ground of insanity after his father mounted an impressive defense to demonstrate that he was suffering from a delusion that he was being persecuted by the Tories, Sir Robert Peel's party, through a variety of its agents [1]. Daniel made the following statement before a magistrate:

Figure 4. Construction of the houses on Woodside Crescent started in 1831.

"The Tories in my native city [Glasgow] have compelled me to do this. They follow and persecute me wherever I go, and have entirely destroyed my peace of mind. They followed me to France, into Scotland, and all over England; in fact, they follow me wherever I go. I can get no rest for them night or day. I cannot sleep at night in consequence of the course they pursue towards



me. I believe they have driven me into a consumption. I am sure I shall never be the man I formerly was. I used to have good health and strength, but I have not now. They have accused me of crimes of which I am not guilty; they do everything in their power to harass and persecute me; in fact, they wish to murder me. It can be proved by evidence; that's all I have to say."

At Daniel's trial, several witnesses testified that Daniel had spoken to them about being persecuted and spied upon in similar fashion. In addition, the commissioner of police, the Lord Provost at Glasgow, testified that Daniel had called on him eighteen months previous and complained that he was being followed and persecuted by Tories and Catholic priests.

After reading West and Walk [1] I was struck by some parallels between Daniel McNaughtan and my great-great-grandfather John Ross McNaughton. They were both born in 1814 in Scotland—Daniel in Glasgow, John in Edinburgh. They were both from the same clan and hence may have shared some genetic similarities. Daniel became obsessed with the idea that he was being followed and persecuted in Glasgow between 1839 and 1843. Three letters have survived that were written by John McNaughton from Glasgow in November 1874 about being followed and persecuted by police detectives from Melbourne. Both men seemed to have lived rational lives except for these singular incidents. I wondered if they both suffered a similar type of delusion.

Then I read Richard Moran. In 1981 Moran published the first work [2] to analyze the case of Daniel McNaughtan in detail and he came to an entirely different conclusion. He decided that Daniel McNaughtan WAS being persecuted by the Tories and their agents—including Catholic priests—and was not mad. Queen Victoria also concluded McNaughtan was not mad. I published a story about this in 2007 [3]. So what about John Ross McNaughton? Was he suffering from a delusion in 1874?

MORAN AND WOLFE

I discussed the letters of John Ross McNaughton with Richard Moran, who said in an email on September 5th, 2007: "I looked over the letters again and it is impossible to tell if your great-great-grandfather was mentally ill or not. It depends on whether or not his allegations proved right or not. In any event, he moved the McNaughtons to Australia where they seemed to have thrived." Was John being followed for some unknown reason? Richard Moran thought this unlikely, unless he was wealthy or politically involved, and neither was true as far as we know.

On Thursday October 4th, 2007, I discussed the letters with Dr. Scott T. Wolfe, a clinical psychologist who founded the Associated Center for Therapy in Columbia, Maryland. Dr. Wolfe sees patients who are suffering from delusions, including soldiers returning from the war in Iraq. He said that what was called "paranoid delusions" in the nineteenth century is now called paranoid schizophrenia. This tends to develop in men between the ages of 18 and 23 and stay with them all their lives. If John had a relatively productive life, as he did, this would argue against him being afflicted with paranoid schizophrenia. Dr. Wolfe asked whether John used alcohol or drugs, but this seems unlikely, since he was a devout churchman, frequently spoke of his religion in his surviving letters, helped build the Presbyterian Church in West Melbourne and was lauded in an obituary by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. John traveled back to Scotland in 1874 partly to treat illness, which included rheumatism. Dr. Wolfe asked about his treatments and said that cocaine was rubbed on the skin at this time; I know heroin was also used. But the only treatments John mentioned in letters were chemical baths and spas. He consulted with Dr. Freer, a police surgeon who lived next door to his hosts in Govan, a suburb of Glasgow, and treated John for various physical ills.

Dr. Wolfe did find another category of paranoia [4]: "297.1 Delusional Disorder. Nonbizarre delusions i.e., involving situations that occur in real life, such as being followed, poisoned, infected, loved at a distance, or deceived by spouse or lover, or having a disease of at least one month's duration. Criterion A for Schizophrenia has never been met. Tactile and olfactory hallucinations may be present if they are related to the delusional theme. Apart from the impact of the delusion(s) or its ramifications, functioning is not markedly impaired and behavior is not obviously odd or bizarre. If mood episodes have occurred concurrently with delusions, their total duration has been brief relative to the duration of the delusional periods. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition."

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

On January 21st, 1876, five months after the last of these letters, John McNaughton, aged 62, his wife Agnes, and son Colin, aged 15, departed steerage on the "Durham" from London, due in Melbourne on March 17th. They had been away from Australia for almost two years. Colin was supposed to have been educated for the medical profession in Edinburgh, but he died two years later, at age 18, and is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. John died seven years after that, on July 18th, 1885, at 148 Lonsdale Street. A testimonial [5] was laid on his coffin and in August 1885 appeared in "The Monthly Messenger," published by the Presbyterian Church. It was signed by D.M., moderator of the West Melbourne Presbyterian Church, presumably D. MacDonald, D.D., who also wrote a reference for John McNaughton from The Manse, Emerald, Melbourne, on January 29th, 1874 (Emerald Hill

changed its name to South Melbourne in 1883). It was a glowing tribute to my great-great-grandfather and indicates that John McNaughton did not behave in life like a man who was subject to irrational behavior. The incident in Glasgow appears to be isolated.

It's hard to know at this distance in time what was bothering John Ross McNaughton in Glasgow in 1874 and 1875. It may have been a passing delusional disorder. As I was writing this, I was invited to a preview of a movie called "Lars and the Real Girl." Lars is a chronically shy young man who buys a life-size doll called Bianca and develops a relationship with her. His brother and sister-in-law take him to a doctor who is also a psychologist and gradually all those around Lars in this small Canadian town start to treat Bianca to be as real as Lars believes her to be. This allows Lars to work through his relationship and eventually to let go. Interestingly enough, as a result of the Daniel McNaughtan trial in 1843, the House of Lords developed the McNaughtan Rules of Madness, designed to help judges and juries weigh an insanity defense. The Rules say that a person is punishable if he knew at the time of the crime he was acting contrary to the law of the land. But, *if he was laboring under an insane delusion he must be considered in the same situation as if the facts of the delusion were real.* This is exactly how the people of the town treated Lars, and the result, in the movie at least, was a loving resolution. The police in Glasgow and Melbourne treated John McNaughton the same way.

When John McNaughton migrated to Australia from Scotland with his young family, he survived a voyage of more than five months on which sixty people died of typhus. He worked on a property in the country, carted goods to the goldfields, raised a family of eleven children, and suffered the heartbreak of outliving five of them. During the last years of his life he had various physical ailments, including rheumatism. We still don't know why he felt he was being persecuted in Glasgow. Perhaps Richard Moran has the best resolution: "He moved the McNaughtons to Australia where they seemed to have thrived."

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REFERENCES

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2. "Knowing Right from Wrong: The Insanity Defense of Daniel McNaughtan," Richard Moran, The Free Press, New York, 1981.
3. "Daniel McNaughton: Champion of Democracy," The Red Banner Newsletter, Clan Macnachten Association Worldwide, September 15, 2007, pp.10-12.
4. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association, Fourth Edition, Quick Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria.
5. McNaughton, Ken, "West Melbourne Presbyterian," Port Phillip Pioneers Group Newsletter, 30-6, 151, December 2007.

THE LETTERS

My first cousin once removed, Donald Osborne McNaughton, wrote to me on December 12th, 1964, from Mt. Lawley in Western Australia. Don's grandfather, John McNaughton, son of John Ross McNaughton, died on August 3rd, 1934. Don wrote: "Much was destroyed after my grandfather's death & disposal of his house. It was from papers ready to be destroyed by non-interested people that I found the reference enclosed." Don would have been 21 at the time of this rescue. On January 1st, 1965, Don sent photocopies of the letters John McNaughton wrote from Glasgow in 1874 and 1875. Don wrote "I looked up some copies of letters etc., I made at the time I salvaged the reference I sent to you with my last letter. These letters were written out by me 30 years ago. The errors of spelling, grammar & incidence of capitals were in the originals, but crossings out [deleted here] are mine."

ART CREDITS

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