

The care of Kitty with the Gollans

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These notes were compiled by Don Gordon who is a great-grandson of Kitty's brother. These notes should be read in conjunction with 'A Tale of Two Women' which is item 001 in the Stories on the left of the home page. Please send any corrections or suggestions via 'Contact us' on the website.

Why and when did Catherine 'Kitty' Gordon go to the care of Catherine and Donald Gollan?

At some stage Kitty went to live with Catherine and Donald Gollan in Strathalbyn. Catherine was Jessie's sister so she was Kitty's maternal aunt. Donald was a prominent figure with many significant business interests in the district. Donald and Catherine had migrated in 1839, in the first years of the colony of South Australia and Donald pioneered the economic and social life the new town of Strathalbyn. They visited back to Scotland in xxxxxx. It is not known when and why Kitty joined their household. The move to the Gollans may have occurred when Kitty was an infant, or a young child, or even towards her teenage years. See appendix D for consideration of why and when this occurred.

- If, as an infant: This could have been soon after her family settled near Strathalbyn. Her brothers were about 4 years and 3 years old and she was six months old. It might have been before Jessie had had any other children. Catherine did not have any children herself - we know this because in Donald's obituary there is a full list of mourners but no reference to any children (ref : Southern Argus, 1st March 1888, p3). Because Catherine was childless, there might have been an arrangement (either explicit or implied) that she would eventually care for one of Jessie's children - there is an indication of this because Catherine visited Jessie about a year before Kitty was conceived and curiously, Jessie gave Kitty the middle name of Gollin (that spelling) which linked her to the Gollans at that early stage. Maybe there was some obligation towards the Gollans because Donald had assisted the Gordons to migrate and settle into the new colony. None-the-less it is a mystery why Jessie would 'give' her first daughter to her sister, rather than, for example, a second or third son.
- If, as a young child: There is an indication that she came into the Gollan's care 'a few years' after she migrated (ref : Kitty's obituary in The Barrier Miner, 18th May 1914, p 8). Kitty *"had gone as a child to live with Donald Gollan and his wife..... with them she led a much more sophisticated life than in the home of Alexander the deacon."* (ref : Gremmell??? P94). Maybe there were some circumstances that affected Jessie's ability to care for Kitty – perhaps a health issue.
- If, as a 13 year old: There is an indication that Kitty didn't come into the care of Catherine and Donald until around 12 or 14 years old (ref : Gremmill??) It is unusual for an eldest daughter to live away from home, especially when she is getting to an age where she would be able to contribute a significant role in the running of the household and the care of the younger children (there were four younger siblings), and particularly as they had recently lost their mother (when Kitty was 12 years old). After her mother's death, Ann Campbell joined the household as a housekeeper, and later married Kitty's father, so Ann was possibly managing the household quite well. Maybe there were some difficulties between Kitty and her new stepmother. Maybe, the absence of her mother, her father thought that pubescent Kitty needed the guidance of her aunt. Or maybe it was something practical which provided better access to opportunities in Strathalbyn rather than Belvidere - such as Miss Senner's School. Maybe aunt Catherine needed an extra hand. Or maybe Kitty was strong willed and forged her own way. It wasn't because of a family feud as she probably continued to have a lot of contact with her own family as her two 'fathers' (Alexander and Donald) were on good terms for an extended period - with business dealings (joint land ownership) and travels (they went to Bordertown together in 18xx).

But all this is just speculative.

It might have been an informal arrangement rather than an official adoption (we have not sighted any documents) but she became known as Kitty GOLLAN rather than Kitty GORDON.

Whatever the circumstances for this arrangement, it all seemed to have worked out well for Kitty in the long run. It was said that the Gollans were 'well-to-do' (ref : Wakefield p 104) and that "with them she led a more sophisticated

life than in the home of Alexander the Deacon” (ref : Gemmell p 94). For example, she attended Miss Senner’s school, which might have provided a quality of education not readily available to some other children. And maybe she was introduced to a social world which, at just 18 years, enabled her to ‘marry well’ to the local doctor, Billy Blue. And this in turn introduced her to high society firstly when Billy became the mayor of Strathalbyn and eventually, with her marriage to Sir Samuel Way, to become a public figure held in esteem in the best of circles in Adelaide.

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