

The Dons

James Ballantine Don

It is thought that James Don arrived at Melbourne on the Clipper ship "James Baines" in June 1856 owned by a James Ballantine,, the man his father worked for in Maybole in Ayrshire Scotland. In later life James Don was known as James Ballantyne Don.

James' father John was a gardener at Castlehill in Maybole, a mansion surrounded by gardens and parkland, which was owned by a James Ballantine.

A page of the 1841 census in Ayr which shows some of the occupants of James Ballantine's household at Castlehill including John and Mary Donn and their son James living in the Castlehill Gardener's house. Missing is their daughter Margaret who would have been four years old.

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Parish of *Ayr*

1 PLACE <small>Here insert Name of Village, Street, Square, Close, Court, &c.</small>	2 HOUSES		NAME and SURNAME, SEX and AGE of each Person who abode in each House on the Night of 6th June 1841		3 OCCUPATION <small>Of what Profession, Trade, Employment, or whether of Independent Means.</small>	4 WHERE BORN <small>If born in Scotland, State the Parish, County, and Session of the Court to which the Birth was registered.</small>
	Uninhabited	Inhabited	NAME and SURNAME	AGE Male Female		
<i>Castlehill</i>		1	<i>James Ballantine</i>	40	<i>Indep</i>	<i>S</i>
			<i>Margaret D^o</i>	33	<i>Ind</i>	<i>S</i>
			<i>Jane D^o</i>	30	<i>Ind</i>	<i>S</i>
			<i>George Lindsay</i>	25	<i>S</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>James Leonard</i>	15	<i>Ind</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Sarah Smith</i>	35	<i>S</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Margaret McCall</i>	30	<i>S</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Mary Hanson</i>	20	<i>S</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Jane Hall</i>	20	<i>S</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Mary Richardson</i>	40	<i>S</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>G^o D^o</i>		1	<i>James Donn</i>	27	<i>Gardner</i>	<i>S</i>
			<i>Mary D^o</i>	22		<i>S</i>
		<i>James D^o</i>	1		<i>B</i>	
		<i>David Hanson</i>	18	<i>App Gardner</i>	<i>A</i>	

The 'n' in Donn was sometimes dropped, Don was commonly used. It is thought James was paying homage to his father's employer in using the name Ballantine. In the records, James didn't use Ballantine as his second name until sometime after 1880. On all of his children's birth registrations he is recorded simply as James. In the inquest after his death in 1898 the names Ballantine and Vallentine were used in the inquest papers.

From the Scottish records we know James was the second of six children. There are questions about the early family. That appeared in the 1841 census at living at Castlehill but in the 1851 census they appear to be missing. Two of the children, John and Mary, may have been living with a great aunt in Ayr and a James Don is described as a 'deserted boy' is living in what appears to be a home for such children in Ayr. If these are James and his siblings it

John and Mary Donn's family

John Donn, b. circa 1815
+Mary Dickie, b. 1812, m. 23 Apr 1839 at Maybole, Ayr, SCO

— Margaret Donn, b. 5 Mar 1837 at Ayr, SCO

— James Ballantine Don, b. 14 Nov 1839 at Maybole, Ayr, SCO, d. 9 Jan 1898 at East Baynton, VIC, AUS

— Mary Donn, b. 17 Dec 1841

— John Donn, b. 14 Apr 1844 at Ayr, SCO

— Catherine Donn, b. 13 Jun 1846 at Ayr, SCO

— William Lyon Donn, b. 20 Mar 1848 at Ayr, SCO

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indicates some calamity has befallen the family between 1848 and 1851. What happened remains a mystery.

It is thought that James Don arrived at Melbourne on the Clipper ship "James Baines" in June 1856. The ship was the namesake of *James Baines*, her owner James Baines of James Baines & Co. of Liverpool. Once described as "the most perfect ship afloat", the James Baines could carry 700 passengers and had a crew of 100. It was launched in 1854 and made four round trips from England to Australia. On April 22 1858 it caught fire when unloading its cargo, the ship and its cargo was destroyed.



James' trip on the James Baines would have been exciting and memorable.

The ship held records for speed and for the longest distance travelled in a Day. On the ship's manifest he is recorded as being 21 but he was only 17. He must have had some means as he had paid for his own passage.

In Australia the first record of James Don was his marriage to Mary Ann Ellis in 1863. The marriage ceremony was held at the Presbyterian Manse, Collins Street Melbourne. On their marriage certificate, James was aged 22 and described as a ploughman from Gisborne. Mary Ann was 23, domestic duties, from Broadmeadows. She was born in Derrylane, County Cavan, Ireland.

Mary Ellis arrived in Melbourne on the immigrant ship Boanerges on July 12 1862 along with 447 other government immigrants. The government brought out the migrants to provide a labour supply for the colony. Mary would have been destined to become a domestic servant, but not for too long as her marriage to James Don was on the 23rd April 1863. It is clear that the single women amongst the government immigrants also provided marriage opportunities for the male population. There were many more males than females in the colony at the time.

Although they married in Melbourne the Dons began married life in or around Taradale. The Dons had nine children and the registrations of their births indicate where they lived. The first three were registered at Taradale (1863-1866), then four children at

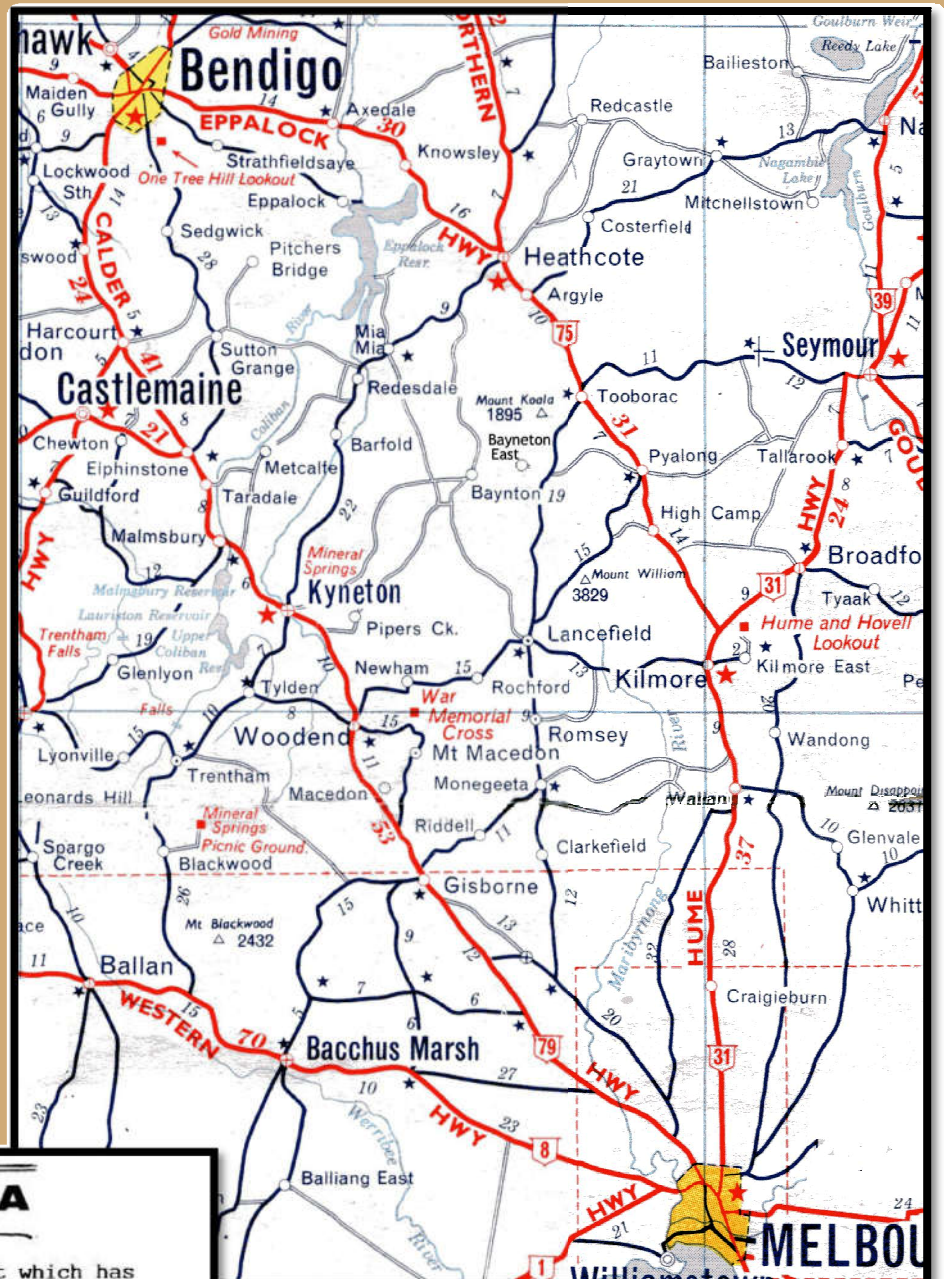


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Kyneton (1868-1874) and finally two at Baynton (1877, 1880). Baynton is approximately 20 km north-east of Kyneton. The Dons now had a property at Baynton East.

The map at right shows the townships mentioned in the Don family story and also the Milsom family story that follows. The distances shown on the map are in miles.

In 1898, when aged 58, James suffered a fatal accident. The accident occurred on January 12th, the height of summer. James was working at harvesting in the Lancefield area and was returning home in the evening. His family were not expecting him to come home that evening. He was thrown from his horse and suffered a fractured skull. His horse returned home in the



MIA MIA

FATAL ACCIDENT—An accident which has since proved fatal happened to Mr James Don, an old resident of East Baynton, on Saturday night. He had been working near Lancefield, and left the place about 8 p.m. to return home. When within about two miles of his own residence, on a lonely piece of road, his horse shied and threw him. He fell on his head, his skull being badly fractured. As his son was not expecting him home, he lay all night in an unconscious condition where he fell. The first intimation his son had that anything was wrong was in the morning, when a neighbour brought the horse home, it having been found on the road with the saddle on. A short search, and the sufferer was found but by the time a vehicle was procured and he was removed home, it was past midday. He lingered on until 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, when he passed away, never having regained consciousness. The funeral took place on Tuesday, the place of interment being the Heathcote cemetery. It was largely attended, showing the respect in which the deceased was held. Mr Don who was 58 years of age, leaves behind him a large family of sons and one daughter, for whom the greatest sympathy is felt in their peculiarly sad bereavement.

KYNETON GUARDIAN THURSDAY
13/1/1898

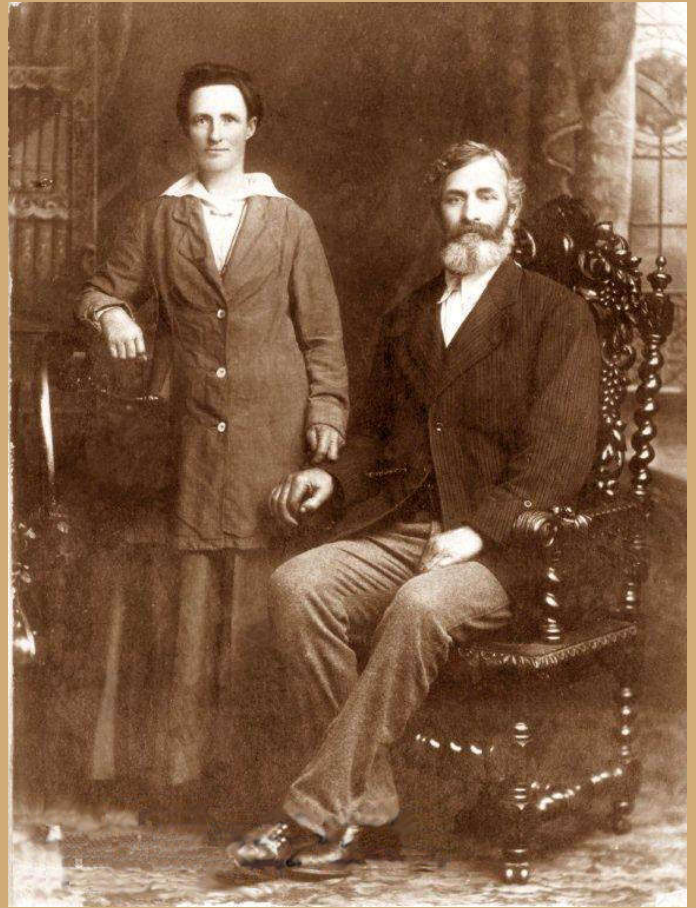
morning and it was then his son Ned began searching for him. He was found unconscious around mid day but was unable to be revived and he died some three hours after being found. The story is told in his obituary from the local paper. James' wife Mary had died about 2^{1/2} years earlier, she was aged 55 years.

George Don (1866-1934)

Our direct ancestor was James and Mary Ann's third child, George Don (1866-1934).

George was to marry Rowena Mary Langdon Edwards at Bendigo in 1890. There is a belief amongst the Edwards family that Rowena came from a family whose connections go back to early Tasmania and before that to Montacute in Somerset, through her grandmother, Mary Lucy Langdon. The line goes back to the 1300s and a man with the grand name of Sir Lizard de Bere. (Shades of 'To the Manor Born'). The line is still to be proven.

George Don and Rowena were to have five children. The first born in Yarrawonga, then all the other's births were registered at Heathcote. Our direct ancestor was the third born, James Gilbert Don.



George and Rowena Don circa 1918



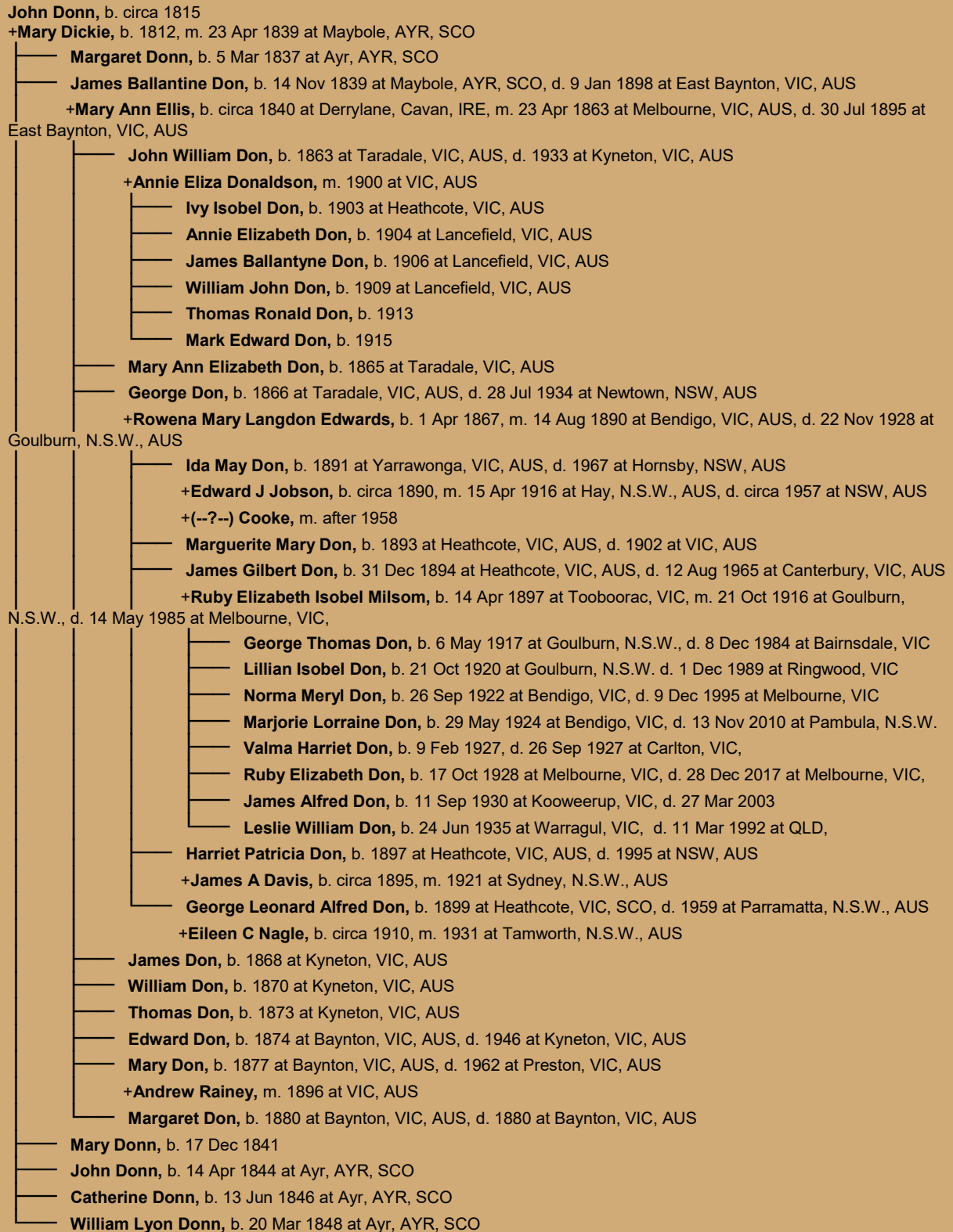
G. Don
Heathcote Urban Fire Brigade
Captain 1904 – 1916

The above photo of George and Rowena is important. Family members immediately recognise that Rowena has a likeness to her son James Gilbert Don and some of his children particularly Norma and Marjorie.

The family moved to Heathcote around 1892. In Heathcote George Don was active in community life. In 1901 a volunteer fire brigade was established in Heathcote and George was one of the original members. A photograph to be found today at the Heathcote Fire Station shows he was Captain of the brigade from 1904 to 1916. George and Rowena moved to Goulburn, N.S.W. around 1916.

Our ancestor, James Gilbert Don (1894-1965) married Ruby Elizabeth Isobel Milsom in Goulburn in 1916, he was 22 she was 19. Ruby was born in Tooborac so it is likely that the couple knew each other back in Victoria. Tooborac is 10 miles from Heathcote.

Descendant Chart of John Donn



Note: This is not a complete chart, I have concentrated on our direct family.