

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN A BEAUTIFUL LADY

Fact stranger than fiction

A wild ride through genealogy greater than a ride on Luna Park's scenic railway

Her birth around 1856 is an enigma, but research eventually led to Maggie St Clair Clow being the child (at least by law) of James Maxwell Clow and Jane Navarina Grey. James being the eldest son of the first moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria, the Rev'd James Clow.

It began with a plea for help from New Zealand. Ann was doing research for a friend and found herself up against that division of waters between Australia and NZ — how to access the State Library of Victoria and the Public Record Office from afar. Your editor stepped in to help.

What Ann had was some information from a Victorian birth certificate that stated Claude St Clair Hamilton was born at Oaklands, Victoria, in 1893 to James Aitken Hamilton and Maggie St Clair Clow. Well, that shouldn't have been too hard to dissect — but it was. At first search nothing further was found until a newspaper article popped up revealing that James A Hamilton — now known as James Aitken St Clair Hamilton, would you believe — was shot during a hunting expedition at Diggers Rest near rural Sunbury and died as a result.

The Argus newspaper article of 28th May 1898 revealed that Hamilton was accompanied by two youths, Hugh and John Dalrymple who lived with him at St. Kilda. All three persons were carrying double-bore shot-guns. Upon preparing to break for lunch, Hugh Dalrymple accidentally dropped his gun on the ground, picked it up, and was preparing to clean it of mud when it discharged, catching James Hamilton on the calf of the left leg and tearing away much of the flesh down to the bone.

In later weeks of searching, the finding that James Hamilton had made a will only a few weeks before the shooting caused our eyebrows to rise, but at the inquest it was asserted by several witnesses that James laid no blame to either of the youths for what was termed an accidental discharge. More eyebrows rose when it was discovered — via the newspaper article — that his wife, who was summoned to the Melbourne Hospital by a telegram, was named Blanche, not Maggie and where, indeed, was the child Claude? This search was becoming very mysterious with numerous thoughts running around our minds, so back to the State Library of Victoria for more evidence.

Now that we had a few clues, things began to hum along. The death of James was noted in the indexes and then previously in 1896 a marriage for him to Blanche Stacy (born Norwood, South Australia) was found. At the inquest a William Henry Stacey (sic) was noted as his father-in-law. So, again, where was Maggie and the child?

Onto the recently upgraded website of the Public Record Office we travelled to view this mysterious will of James Hamilton, who as noted was now shown as James Aitken St Clair Hamilton — such a mouthful, indeed!

The will was clear and concise and in extremely steady and fine copper-plate hand-writing. James had left all his estate to his current wife, Blanche, with a proviso that she be “guardian of my said child Claude St Clair Hamilton,” and then almost in the same breath hinted at children. So, there was another child or children! Things were becoming clearer and a notice in *The Argus* newspaper a few days after his death revealed that James was the son of James Hamilton of Moorabool, Dipton, New Zealand. The New Zealand connection was also found in the original newspaper article where it was stated that he was accountant for the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Accountancy Company. It was also mentioned that he was a Captain in the British Army — a fairly loose term of that period as it could very easily have been either the

Australian or the New Zealand army. Almost everyone in the early days of the colony was labelled British.

But what of Maggie St. Clair with her delightful name? The frustration of not finding her grew dramatically. And what a cheek of James to virtually steal the second part of her personal name and make it his own, or was there something in his background that implied more than met the eye? Fair enough to pass it onto your child Claude, but to actually take it for yourself and put it into legal documents,

well, a mystery. It was then that we discovered a child born to him through Blanche — Vere Horace James St Clair Hamilton, another mouthful. Poor Vere, how he must have copped it from the other kids at school.

To our amazement, further research revealed Maggie St Clair Clow getting herself married earlier in 1879 and divorced in 1888 to John George Wemyss Dalrymple. Oh, such a coincidence with the Dalrymple surname coming into the picture again — what was the bet that Hugh and John Dalrymple were her sons by this previous marriage?



Ladies evening blouses of the 1890s

And there it was, birth registration as follows: 1881 in Victoria, Hew Wemyss Dalrymple, Father: John George Wemyss, Mother: Maggie St Clair Clow. Spot on.

But what was this? A transcription error? The next birth of Hew's (Hugh's) brother in 1883, John Rosslyn Wemyss Dalrymple, showed the mother to be Maggie St Clair Hawke! Well, transcription mistakes happen due to old and faded documents and poor writing, so what's the big deal? But, just in case, back to the records for a look. And there it was, a marriage of Maggie St Clair Clow to John Mathias Hawke in 1872. Then the finding of the birth of a male child James Saint Claire Hawke in 1873 who only lived for 18 days — the very first child of Maggie, who as we discovered later, was only 16 years old at the time of her marriage — oh, what a heartbreak that would have been to have lost her first child when she was so young! And to make things worse her husband, John, died the following year at the age of 26.

So, where would this devastated Maggie St. Clair Hawke go — possibly back to her then as yet unknown to us, parents? She waited five years and then at the age of 21 caught the eye of John George Wemyss Dalrymple, but who would know how many eyes she had caught during those years, how many loves she had experienced, and how many possible marriages she had spurned?

After the birth of John Dalrymple in 1883 another child, Gordon Wemyss Dalrymple came along in 1885 but only survived nine years and died at Carlton in 1906.

But in 1888 Maggie had petitioned the Banco Court in Sydney for a divorce from John George Wemyss Dalrymple on the grounds of adultery. Six months later, after an attempt by John Dalrymple to have it dismissed, a decree nisi was finally made absolute with the Court granting Maggie St Clair custody of the children. Some time afterward she met up with Captain James Aitken Hamilton and though there is no marriage index to be found for the two of them, she is mentioned in official documents as being the mother of his child, Claude St Clair Hamilton, who refers to her in an insertion in *The Argus* newspaper of 1921 as being the “deceased Mrs Maggie St Clair Hamilton (nee Clow).”

Claude, having spent some time as a Lieutenant in the New Zealand army during World War One, was now 28 years of age and was obviously interested in finding living relatives in Victoria. His request notice from New Zealand was placed on Thursday the 5th of May and also on Saturday the 7th of May, but it is doubtful if he received any reply. The division of the Hamilton family



No. 3 The Esplanade — Marli Place — next door to a modern replacement of No. 1. Marli Place, with an apparent number of six luxurious apartments, gives an impression of what No.1 may have looked like in its heyday, minus the grey paint and the front fence.

and the Dalrymples seemed set in concrete. But we still did not know what had happened to Maggie, whose third marriage to James was never discovered, nor any divorce to him prior to his marriage to Blanche.

There were other discoveries to be made during the following weeks, including the insertion in peerage papers of John George Wemyss Dalrymple with some doubtful paragraphs and no mention of Maggie, his first wife. The Wemyss family from whom John was descended was noble indeed, with a castle in Scotland in earlier days. Maggie had moved into very high society.

The original No. 1 The Esplanade Terrace, St. Kilda, no longer exists, but appears to have been a number of gracious apartments of mid-Victorian design. No. 3, next door, remains and is probably of similar construction to what No.1 was. In 1854 *The Argus* newspaper promoted land sales of “the choicest proportions” at The Esplanade with a champagne breakfast for the wealthy. Allotment One was bought by a Captain Lawrence. The Hamiltons and the Dalrymples were living in fashionable quarters with pleasant views over St. Kilda beach and across the bay. In 1857 a Captain Kenney had gained permission to set up a bathing ship opposite The Esplanade and later acquired land where his patrons could accommodate their horses. Standard bathing could be had for three pennies and hot sea baths for one shilling and sixpence. The Esplanade was fitted with gas lighting in 1865 and by the time Maggie St Clair moved in with John Dalrymple a Royal Ladies Baths had been set up. Summer evening strolls along The Esplanade must have been a very pleasant recreation.

The finding of the newspaper insertion of 1921 led to further research as to what may have happened to Maggie St Clair because it gave the date of death for her as the 22nd of March 1895. Well, no wonder then, that James had re-married in 1896 — he had a child to look after. John George Wemyss Dalrymple had also moved on, marrying Daisy Huyslands, the daughter of a naval Lieutenant. But still no death notice or indexation for Maggie St Clair by either or her three surnames could be found, until we came across an internet chat column of the 1990s which listed a death as follows: GALLAGHER Maggie St. Clair, aged 39 years at Murrumbena in 1895. Well, that certainly fitted with the re-marriage of James in 1896, but was this our Maggie St Clair? Her date of death was the same as Claude had listed in *The Argus* notice — 22nd March 1895. Her father was shown on the death index as Ja Maxwell Clow and mother Jane Navarina Grey. Surely, this was our long lost

Maggie. But Gallagher? Divorce papers, indexes, etc. from James Hamilton lost or what? Surely, no one here was committing bigamy? Further research needed.

Meanwhile, Ann was scouring New Zealand and overseas indexes and finding more details that fitted, so we checked into the St Kilda Cemetery looking for James Aitken Hamilton's grave in the Presbyterian section, hoping for some inscriptions on the tombstone, but the stone was gone and the grave in great disrepair. Checking the graves list it appeared that there was no one else in that grave and certainly not Maggie as she died before him. A later search revealed Maggie St Clair Gallagher was finally laid to rest at St Kilda Cemetery in 1895 in the Church of England section at grave 700. The final nail on the coffin, so to speak, was when we discovered that grave 700 was a double grave listed as 700/702. And in that grave lay John Mathias Hawke 1874, Maggie St Clair's first husband; James Maxwell Clow 1884, her legal father, and Jane Navarina Clow, her mother. A late addition in 1935 was Ann Bayly, who turned out to have been the sister of Jane Navarina Grey, or Gray, born Gosport, Hampshire, England in 1842. She died at Mont Albert, Victoria in 1935 at the age of 92. A contact with Mary, a researcher also found on the internet, confirms the relationship. Another researcher, Mardi, was looking for Maggie St Clair Clow on behalf of a person living in New Zealand during 1999, so we were able to communicate information back and forth. Thank goodness for continuing email addresses. They are the last thing one would wish to change when engaged in genealogical research.

But mystery, as ever, still surrounded Maggie St Clair Clow. Who was this lately come Gallagher and how come there were no indexes or other paper trails to tell us why or what? Was he her last husband, common law partner, or did she change her name by deed poll for some obscure reason?

Ann finally put some things to rest by applying for a number of certificates from the Victorian BMD registrar. Maggie, as we know, died registered as Maggie St Clair Gallagher and her death certificate confirms that, so either some official records were well and truly messed up or she did not marry James Aitken Hamilton

with whom she lived and had a child by. Her death certificate also revealed an earlier child by John Dalrymple, Ruby St Clair Dalrymple, who may well have married and have had children. Maggie's marriage certificate to James Gallagher in 1888 reveals him to have been a "gentleman" and other official notes record him as a government officer. The marriage was celebrated by the Reverend John Gordon Mackie at St. George's Presbyterian Church, East St. Kilda.

It is our firm conclusion that Maggie St Clair Clow must have been a very beautiful lady who attracted men as bees around a delectable flower. The middle name, St Clair, which she carried so proudly, is blessed to many descendants who live on today. Where it came from is still a mystery at this time. She must have made her mark, for good or other, upon the favoured society of the day and somewhere, somehow, someone must have a portrait or a photo of her perhaps hidden within a camphored drawer in an oak, teak or blackwood cabinet or chest of drawers.

A biography of her, if it ever was written, would make stunning reading even though her grandfather, the stoic Reverend James Clow, might well turn over in his grave. Ah, Maggie St Clair, the world is the worse off without you. Sleep in peace sweet lady. Your aura of mystery and the scent of you still surrounds and inspires all who have the creative imagination to visualise you as you once were. •



Did Maggie St Clair Clow use Pears? We think so.



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