

Charmed Circles From the Past

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ABSTRACT: This paper comprises several aspects of a significant and reflective musing over the Australian Standing Stones—a special commemoration—as erected some years ago in northern New South Wales. The place of standing stones in the Scottish-Celtic mind is indicated, followed by a musing over the seesaw life in New South of Major A.C. Innes, in all its seasons, this giving profound insights into the Scottish psyche and its contribution to heritage in this country.

Coming to Such a Place as our Australian Standing Stones

At the official ceremony marking the inauguration of the Australian Standing Stones at Glen Innes on 1st February 1992, His Excellency, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair pondered,

I wonder as I see these New England granite stones, whether people visiting the site in two to three thousand years time will understand their origins—or whether the same mystery will surround them as it does with Stonehenge or the Ring of Brodgar.

No doubt the reactions of future spectators there will be varied. Some will be as unimpressed and sceptical as Dr Johnson was when he contemplated the so-called Druids' Ring near Inverness in 1773. Boswell records his response,

About three miles beyond Inverness we saw, just by the road, a very complete specimen of what is called a Druid's Temple. There was a double circle, one of very large, the other of smaller stones. Dr Johnson justly observed, that, to go and see one druidical temple is only to see that it is nothing, for there is neither art nor power in it: and seeing one is quite enough.¹

Others will be moved by curiosity and wonder, as the pre-Christian Irish nobles were on beholding the great wooden ring placed by Cú Chulainn around the standing stone at Ard Cuillen,

¹ Anne Ross, *Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts* (London, Batsford, 1970), p. 142.

This is a ring. What is its meaning for us? What is its secret message?
And how many put it here? Was it one man or many? (C. O'Rahilly,
150)²

And there will be some of Celtic heritage in whom the stone circle will spark an immediate atavistic reaction.

Circle Symbolism from the Earliest Times

From early times the ring or circle has been an important symbol for the Celt. In daily life its convenient shape was adopted for a myriad of purposes including such important constructions as the primitive wheel-house with its circular central hearth, and the protective Pictish *broch*: or ring-fort.³ The circle formed wheels for both the sophisticated chariot and the lowly farm cart, and dictated the shape of the spherical *stachle* stones which supported rotund cornstacks. It was echoed in the form of the vitally important *quearn* which ground the household meal, and by the wooden staved milk-cogs and the daily baked oatcakes and *bannocks*.

Embodying a sense of safety and security and warmth and community associated with the *broch* and wheel-house, the circle became a powerful image of refuge and protection, moving easily from pre-to post-Christian times. It was not difficult, therefore, for the Celts to attribute a benign nature to the primitive stone circles scattered widely throughout their hills and glens. Saint Columba did nothing to oppose this, in fact he did much to encourage such an attitude,

Saint Columba never attempted to destroy the sacred places of paganism nor the firm belief in the virtues of certain harmless practices he found: instead he blessed them and gave them a Christian symbolism... This is clearly illustrated in Strath on the Isle of Skye which appears to have been a great religious centre since prehistoric times, where at least five old churches stand each in, beside or near a stone circle.⁴

It appears then, that there was widespread acceptance of the religious significance of these ancient monuments among the early Celts. Built as calendars in the Stone Age, their later use as such by the Druids sustained the belief of this significance. Indeed, the term 'going to the stones' as a reference to attending church persisted, particularly in Argyll, until the nineteenth century.

² *Ibid.*, p. 129. Ross is quoting from the ancient Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, her authority for which is C. O'Rahilly, (Dublin, Institute for Advanced Studies).

³ *The Problem of the Picts*, ed. by F.T. Wainwright (Perth, Scotland: The Melven Press, 1980). See Chapter 3 by R.W. Feachem, pp. 66-86 on the circular construction of *brochs* and ring-forts.

⁴ Otta F. Swire, *Skye: The Island and its Legends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 217-218.

In the Western Isles, charms and customs connected to the circle linger still, embracing such rites as making the *deasil*—that is, moving sunwise around the newborn infant to protect it until time of baptism—to the recitation of charms such as the following one, the *caim* or circle which the Hebrideans drew about them in times of danger or need,

In the name of Three, in the Name of Their might
I will draw the ring that doth instant bring
Safety from foes' affright

In the Name of the Three I shall rout all my fears
I shall stand all unscathed from the cast of their spears
So I shall know no overthrow

The sacred Three my fortress be
My fortress be, encircling me
Come and be round my hearth, my home.

Other Northern European Circles, Notably Those of Rings and Torques

The emergence of the circular shape as an image of power and protection manifested itself in a love of finger rings, ankle rings, metal girdles and elaborate torques, the owner of particularly fine examples of such objects being known as a 'ring- lord'. Powerful rings were often buried with their owners to ensure a safe journey to the Otherworld. Rings could be used as currency; a fine ring could be a gift of honour or a trophy to be won, but in both Celtic and Norse mythology the innate potency of the ring itself is emphasised, and this ranges from benifence to malevolence. For sheer opulence and bounty, nothing exceeds Draupnir, the amazing ring of Odin, which produced, of itself, eight gold rings every ninth day. But some rings, like that which Sigurd won after killing the dragon Fafnir, brought their owners nothing but trouble. In Celtic design, both the ring and spiral became important motifs, ranging from very early Bronze Age cup marks and rings to the post Christian incorporation of the circle into Celtic and Pictish crosses, such as the wheeled Pictish cross and the eight century Celtic cross, both at Aberlemno, Angus, and the beautiful Celtic cross at Iona.

While the spoked wheel, being somewhat of a sophisticated rarity, was regarded with wonderment and awe,⁵ the Celts had no such reservations about the basic circle. To them it represented the life-giving vigour of the sun, and the peace and rest of the full moon. The circle gave spiritual comfort, for having no end, it is a symbol of everlasting life. It enables the seer or deep-minded to slip from this world to the

⁵ Taranis, known as 'the Thunderer', was sometimes regarded as Celtic Jupiter, at other times as the Celtic version of Mars. The spoked wheel was one of his symbols.

other and return, and it enables those who have passed to the otherworld to return, albeit briefly, in order to give comfort, advice or warning.

Among the many future visitors to the ring at Glen Innes there will be both the unimpressed and the impressionable. But it is to be hoped that, among those who view the Array in time to come, there will be Celts aware of their cultural heritage, who will see beyond the tartan tourist trappings, and experience a sense of the enduring power and symbolism of the circle. These will be those in whom the sight will evoke an awareness that the philosophy and religious faith which sustain them today was discovered in far off times by their ancestors. In the words of Aodh de Blácam, ‘the Gael found a way of life long ago, and a religious faith, that satisfied him then and forever...’⁶

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And What of the Innes in the Australian Place Name?

Publicity surrounding the Array, which is designed to promote Glen Innes as a Celtic Centre and a tourist attraction, pays scant attention to Major Archibald Clunes Innes for whom the town is named. Yet his Scottish principles of the obligations of kinship, his forthrightness, honesty and fortitude, his kindness and hospitality mark him as the ideal of those very aspects of Celtic tradition which the Stones are declared to represent. And to further the analogy, his home, Lake Innes House at Port Macquarie, was renowned for its warmth and congeniality, and the hub of a wide social circle—a magic ring embracing predominantly Scottish kith and kin, but welcoming to everyone.

In 1823, three years after his arrival in the Colony on the *Eliza* as a young officer in charge of convicts, Archibald found himself, at age twenty-three, as Commandant of the convict settlement at Port Macquarie. This appointment led to his later contact with the New England region and to his taking up of the property which he called Furracabad. Adam Mossman duly took up Furracabad Station around 1840, changing its name to Glen Innes as a compliment to its previous owner.⁷ The chief source of information about his home life is the charmingly written Journal of his niece Annabella, daughter of his brother George.⁸ In order to trace other aspects of his life it is necessary

⁶ Aodh de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, published in 1929, quoted by Les Murray in *The Paperbark Tree* (Manchester, Great Britain: Carcanet, 1992), p. 38.

⁷ Furracabad, site of a battle in India, was a favoured name with Archibald. It was also the name of a property of his at Seaham near the Hunter, where Furracabad Road still runs.

⁸ Annabella Boswell, *Annabella Boswell's Journal* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981). Introduction by Morton Herman.



to peruse Government gazettes, old newspapers and family histories, and to interview very old residents. The valuable contribution made by Frank O'Grady in an article for the *Journal of the Royal Historical Society* augments information on the various properties Archibald is known to have bought, leased, sold or lost.

Archibald Clunes Innes

Innes as Commandant

Available records indicate that the young Commandant fulfilled his role at the penal settlement competently. He was just and fair to the convicts, he got on well with the natives, earning their respect and co-operation; he built a church, commenced a waterworks, established the foundations of a sugar-mill at Rollands Plains and supervised a successful cotton harvest. It is difficult, therefore, to pinpoint the reason for his peremptory recall by Governor Darling, the latter dubbed by Manning Clarke a 'cold hard man who frightened people'. However, commencing on 9 April 1827, requests by Archibald for legitimate items of need for the settlement were questioned, and on 23 April the Colonial Secretary, Alexander MacLeay, wrote to him as follows,

It being the pleasure of His Excellency that you should return to Headquarters by the Government brig *Amity* now proceeding to Port Macquarie I am directed to request that you will deliver to Lieutenant Owen, who has been appointed to succeed you, all instructions,

Documents and Public Papers of every kind with which you have been furnished at any time, reporting the date of your so doing.⁹

Before handing over to his successor, Archibald, always forthright, took the time to reply, justifying in writing his application for those items he had requested for the settlement, and defending his actions while in charge there.

Frank O'Grady has drawn attention to an interesting fact which may lie behind the reason for this recall. The newspaper of 25 April 1827 reports the appointment of Lieutenant Owen as Commandant at Port Macquarie, and it also reports that 'his predecessor Captain Innes will receive the appointment of Brigade Major on the departure of the 3rd regiment of Buffs for India'. And O'Grady poses the possibility that 'the move was engineered to enhance Innes's social status because of his interest in the Colonial Secretary's daughter.'¹⁰ It is not clear when Archibald first met Margaret MacLeay, but her father was born in Ross-shire and had a brother who lived in Caithness, the home since ancient time of the Innes family.¹¹

As matters turned out, the proposed military departure did not take place and neither the Regiment nor the newly-promoted Major sailed for India at the appointed time. Archibald became so gravely ill after his arrival in Sydney that his regimental surgeon, Dr Ivory, was obliged to perform an operation on him, after which his life was despaired. However, he was nursed back to health by Lorne Innes (née Campbell) his sister-in-law, and he never forgot her kindness and devotion. After the untimely death of his brother George, Archibald welcomed the bereaved Lorne and her two little girls into his home at Port Macquarie, as Annabella related,

During our long stay under his hospitable roof, his kindness never flagged. He placed my mother at his left hand at table saying, 'Whoever may come to this house, remember this is always to be your place', and so it always was.¹²

⁹ Frank O'Grady, *Archibald Clunes Innes*, Article by Frank O'Grady copied from *Journal Royal Historical Society*, 53.3 (3 September 1967). Libraries Aust. I.D. 7969519. p. 195.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹¹ In the thirteenth century the Innes family, afterwards so well known in Caithness and Sutherland, were, in the person of Berewold the Fleming, given their lands in Moray. From James Gray, M.A. Oxon., *Scotland and Caithness in Saga Times, or the Jarls and the Freskyns* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1922) p. 82.

¹² Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Then Innes Moves to Port Macquarie

Now medically unfit for the Army, Archibald was appointed Police Magistrate and Supervisor of Police at Parramatta on 16 June 1828, and, on 15 October the following year, he married Margaret MacLeay, the third daughter of the Colonial Secretary, at St James Church, Sydney. During his time at Port Macquarie he appears to have become captivated by the area, and now, as a retired Army officer, he was eligible to take up a grant of land, and in this way he acquired 2,650 acres at Lake Burrawan. As her marriage portion, Margaret received 1250 acres at nearby Crotty's Plains which she called 'Tillbuster'. Archibald named his property 'Lake Innes' and began straightaway to build his home, Lake Innes House, which became the hub of hospitality for his widespread circle of kith and kin for the next twenty years.

There was a wide double verandah to the front of the house, which faced the Lake and the setting sun. A verandah extended along the whole of the south side. The drawing room was a large square room at the corner, 20 ft by 24 ft, with two French windows to the west, and two to the south, opening onto the verandah. It was upholstered in yellow satin damask. Between the windows to the west stood a cabinet and tall handsome fireplace, above which was another mirror ... In the library were some family pictures, none of them very large or remarkable; a pretty picture of my grandmother Innes in water colours, my uncle and three of his brothers in oils, and some others. There were three large bookshelves from the floor to the ceiling filled with many choice books.¹³

The house was both comfortable and commodious, containing twenty-two apartments 'all well and suitably furnished'. In addition to this the Major built a 'bachelors' hall' consisting of a sitting room and three bedrooms for the accommodation of casual visitors. This 'hall' has been regarded as a symbol of ostentation by some critics, but most stations and homesteads made similar provision for unexpected arrivals, known variously as the 'men's quarters', or 'boys' rooms'. However, it is true that the Major's provision for his unexpected guests was more lavish than usual, and this, and his kindly habit of providing a horse for any new arrival in the township of Port Macquarie, were greatly appreciated.

A Man of Style and Achievement

In the Colony this was a time for enterprise, when dreams could be realised, kingdoms could be won and dynasties could be founded. In spite of his brush with death, the Major was both enterprising and energetic. He contracted with the Government to supply wheat and corn

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56. The oil painting of the Major is held in The Land of the Beardies Archives in Glen Innes.

for the District of Port Macquarie. He purchased allotments in the town and extended his grazing properties. He purchased allotments in the town and extended his grazing properties. He also envisaged a time when the wool from New England would be brought by road to the Port on its way to Sydney. Due to his hard work and perseverance, this was actually accomplished, although the route was later abandoned.

On 10 March 1842 two drays arrived at Port Macquarie with sixteen bales of Innes' wool from Kentucky and this was immediately shipped on board the *Maitland* for Sydney, the journey from Kentucky to Port Macquarie having been performed in eleven days.¹⁴

Maximal Holdings

At the pinnacle of his success the Major's real estate is said to have encompassed the following properties-according to a list compiled by Frank O'Grady from the Department of the Registrar General,

- 1, 640 acres on the Wilson called Wallabie Hill
- 1,280 acres on the Wilson called Filbuster
- 1, 653 acres on the Wilson called Cogo
- 1,100 acres on the north bank of the Hastings called Caulfinbry
- 195 acres on the south bank of the Wilson called Apple Tree Flat
- 1, 093 acres at Piper's Creek called Piper's Creek Farms
- 640 acres near the head of the Hastings called Frazer's Farms
- 50 acres adj. the village reserve on the Hastings called Hardy's Plains
- 640 acres adjoining Lake Innes called Thrumster¹⁵
- 930 acres on the Dawson called Brimbine
- 1, 916 acres on the south bank of the Hastings called Wallibree
- 704 acres adjoining Wallibree called Bighorne
- 1, 079 acres adjoining Bighorne
- 200 acres at the head of the Wilson called Prospect
- 2, 469 acres at Ten Mile Creek called Ten Mile Creek
- 1, 280 acres at the River Forbes
- 1, 200 acres at Lake Innes called Hastings Park
- 2, 560 acres at Lake Innes called Lake Innes

¹⁴ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

¹⁵ Annabella relates, 'One day we rode to Thrumster, which is rather a pretty place. It belongs to my uncle, and is called after his father's place in Caithness.' p. 86.

- 4, 640 acres on the Hastings called Yarrows
- 1, 280 on the Hastings called Clunes Leigh
- 953 acres at the junction of the Forbes and the Hastings
- 2, 560 acres on the Ellenborough River called Bourdner

At the same time he possessed a great deal of commercial property in the town centres of Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Armidale.

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The Gathering of the Innes Clan

It was the natural inclination of Scots arriving in Australia in those early days to seek out their compatriots and congregate together, and this tendency is markedly observable in accounts of Lake Innes House, home from home to a bewildering assortment of relations and friends. Indeed the extent of the hospitality afforded by the Major's welcoming establishment came close to rivalling that afforded by Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, of whom it was reported,

He keeps open house, receives as many as he has room for, and sees their apartments occupied, as soon as they vacate them, by another troop of the same description.¹⁶

When Lorne and her young daughters arrived there, the family at Lake Innes consisted of the Major, his wife Margaret (née MacLeay), 'not pretty, but accomplished, and very nice about morals',¹⁷ their daughters Dido eleven, Gordina eight, and four years old son Gustavus. The recent marriage of the Major's sister Barbara to George MacLeay (brother of Margaret), and so her subsequent residence at Brownlow Hill, Camden, had left a gap which her brother did not like. He loved to have family about him and was overjoyed to welcome the newcomers, declaring that with his two nieces and two daughters he now had 'four girls'. Annabella describes her aunt as a wonderful housekeeper and organiser, explaining how she taught the five children herself most competently for four years. As strict disciplinarian, she allowed no nonsense or idle moments, but nevertheless made their lessons interesting and enjoyable. Their formal education lasted until midday, Lorne taking over in the afternoons for riding, swimming and a variety of recreational activities.

The staff, much reduced from former times, still consisted of a butler, and two footmen, Bruce the piper (who assisted with other duties when needed), two Spaniards attached to the stables who also waited on the table when needed, looking very smart in their livery. There was Helen, a

¹⁶ J.G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1836), p. 31.

¹⁷ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

nice Highland maid, who had been the children's nurse—who subsequently married Bruce the piper—and two housemaids and a laundress. When Lorne and her daughters joined the family they brought with them their own loved and trusted Highland maid, Christina Ross, who had emigrated to Australia on the same ship as Helen. These maids and Bruce the piper, after the custom of Scottish households, were closer to the family than is usual for servants, and occupied privileged positions. Thus Bruce made a wee sporran for small Gustavus to wear with his kilt; Christina went to the beach at dawn to look for Lorne's lost ring .. (and found it!); Helen organised a Hallowe'en party and games for the family, and, when the bad times came, it was the then married and pregnant Christina who came back freely to give encouragement, help and gifts.

Gaelic Speakers and Potential New Englanders

Shiploads of visitors arrived at Port Macquarie, and streams of guests were welcomed and entertained at Lake Innes, which, while not an exclusively Scottish centre was certainly predominantly so. Lorne, and many visitors, could speak perfect Gaelic, and Scottish songs and dances were enjoyed. Of the Major's brothers, George had died, and Dr James Innes had returned to Scotland, so he was pleased to welcome a relation, William Taylor, to Port Macquarie and to install him and his wife at nearby 'Thrumster', the property he had named in honour of the Innes family home, 'Thrumster House', a mansion in Wick, although they lived in England before coming to Australia. ¹⁰ Margaret's sister, Fanny MacLeay, a floral artist of note, visited her grandparents there in 1817. Fanny, who married the Assistant Colonial Secretary, Thomas Harrington, when she was forty-three had been enchanted with Annabella when she was a small child and wanted to adopt her. Kennetha MacLeay—red-haired Aunt Kenny—was a popular visitor, and Christina MacLeay furthered the family's pastoral interests by marrying William Dumaresq, thereby acquiring by grant two portions at St Aubins (Kingdon Ponds).

Lorne's family—the Campbells—was a very large one, four sons and four daughters having emigrated with their parents in 1821 and settled at Bungaribee, near Blacktown, NSW. Of these, five flit in and out of the scene at Lake Innes, sometimes in person, often in letters, for the amount of correspondence written was prodigious, and the network was wide. The eldest sister, Mrs MacLeod lived with her husband at Mary Vale near Liverpool, NSW; Aunt Isabella, Mrs Grant Ogilvie, lived at Wollombi and to visit her a riverboat trip to Morpeth was required, followed by a long drive through the bush, where Aunt Isabella had once been accosted by a bushranger; Aunt Annabella, the youngest, married Arthur Ranken and lived at St Clair near Singleton. Uncle Moore

Campbell married Miss de Lisle and lived at White Rock, Bathurst, and Uncle Dalmahoy Campbell, who, with the Major was co-guardian of Lorne's two daughters, married Miss Goodsir and had holdings at Dubbo and Bathurst.

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Family Hospitality

At Lake Innes House an open invitation appears to have been extended, according to the Scottish rules of consanguinity, as far as the sixteenth generation. But in addition to these, a bewildering array of friends and travellers were made to feel at home beneath the Major's hospitable roof. Particularly welcome was a trio of young horse-dealers, James, Patrick and Hugh Mackay who lived about twenty miles inland on the way to New England. Natives of Sutherland, they called their place 'The Big House' after their old Scottish home. They are described by Annabella as 'our most favourite and frequent visitors' and were often inhabitants of Bachelors' Hall. Hugh helped Annabella clean the French windows in the drawing room with whiting, and he measured all the young people with his newly-made horse-measuring stand; James was so kind to them on their way to Sydney; when the girls and Lorne were alone, Patrick came to see they were safe; Hugh dined on the unsuccessful squab pie made by Annabella, insisting that he enjoyed it; Hugh kept his new horses, Musselman, Colonel and Gustavas, in uncle's stables, and rode seventy miles from the Macleay in pouring rain to make sure Lorne and the girls were safe.

The widowed Mrs MacLeod lived with her children, Norman, Hector, Harold, Hugh, Magnus and Marion, in a two-storey house adjoining the hotel in Port Macquarie, and there was constant interaction between her household and the one at Lake Innes. Annabella tells of spending a week there, staying on after church on Sunday. Uncle had lent Cupid (a horse) to the boys and Hugh MacLeod took her riding to Tacking Point and out to Thrumster; Marion went every day to read to the invalid Mrs Ackroyd; Mrs MacLeod was adept at handwork and they sewed every evening. Of course, there were reciprocal visits. Mrs MacLeod, Marion and Hector arrived at Lake Innes at four o'clock to dine and stayed all night. Mr Alec MacLeod, Mr Gray and Captain Hunter arrived in time for dinner. A party of sixteen dined, and afterwards they danced, first on the lawn, as was their custom, and then in the pink room.

In August 1844 Mrs MacLeod's daughter Marion married Mordaunt MacLean, son of the well-loved local identity Captain MacLean, and her brother, Norman MacLeod, married Annabella's old schoolfriend, Agnes Paterson. This provided an opportunity for a splendid Scottish country wedding. Smart equipages overflowing with billows of white ruffles, black beaver hats and white gloves were driven expertly by the Major

and his friends. The double wedding party, flanked by six beflounced and befrilled bridesmaids and their attendants, including little Alec Paterson and Gustavus in full Highland dress, the invited guests and the rest of the local population, (not omitting children and servants) crowded into St Thomas's, the church which the Major had brought to completion in 1826. Naturally, an event so splendid had to be enjoyed in retrospect. It is not surprising therefore, that eight days later, Mrs MacLeod, with a party of eight, arrived at Lake Innes House to spend the day, and talk about the wedding, and dine. Others arrived later and the party grew to sixteen with seven youngsters eating in the schoolroom. The evening concluded, as did all evenings when guests were present, with music and dancing.

Two major social events occurred while Annabella was at Lake Innes, the first being the arrival of her Aunt Margaret's father, Alexander MacLeay, late Colonial Secretary, who, at age eighty, was seeking election as the member for Port Macquarie in the new Legislative Assembly. His visit in June 1843 was an occasion of much pleasure and great excitement for the whole family. The Major went to Sydney to be his escort, while the womenfolk decorated the house in pink, which was the old gentleman's colour. Margaret provided pink sashes for the four girls, and set them to making pink rosettes for the election day, while Lorne gathered pink roses from the garden for the house and tables.

The table presented a splendid appearance, being laid for eighteen persons. The epergne was quite beautiful, and when placed in the centre of the table the flowers were as high as the lamp ... There were two silver wine coolers with light wines, and branch candlesticks with wax candles, and four silver side dishes: we had two soups and a variety of dishes. Bruce and the butler waited, and we had four footmen in livery. I felt quite dazzled, as I had never been at so splendid an entertainment before.¹⁸

Each morning the household was awakened by the strains of the bagpipes as Bruce paraded outside in full Highland gear playing *pibrochs* for the visitor. After dinner each evening, he again appeared in full dress to accompany the dancing, and on one occasion he entertained the company by dancing Gillie Callum over the poker and tongs in place of swords. Mr MacLeay enjoyed everything, and taught them an old country dance called 'The Country Bumpkin'. He was successful in the election and subsequently became the first Speaker of the Legislative Council.

¹⁸ Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

The Party Going to New England

The next event of social import took place when the Major was required to act as host for the new Governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, and to accompany his party on a tour of Beardie Plains, the Peel River and New England. The Major was obliged to go to Sydney to meet the Governor in order to accompany him north, and a report of the times records their arrival in Newcastle on board the *Rose* on 2 February 1847. Accompanied by the Hon. M. Riddell, the Private Secretary, an Aide de Camp and Major Innes the Governor proceeded to Morpeth the following day by the *Tamar*. Fifty local dignitaries and his own relatives and Major Innes rode with him to West Maitland. A heavy fall of rain occurred midway between Morpeth and East Maitland, and the Governor's horse, upset by an opening umbrella, shied and backed heavily into Major Innes's horse causing it to throw him to the ground.¹⁹

Up at Lake Innes, the family had rallied. Aunt Barbara MacLeay and her brother-in-law William MacLeay arrived to help with the preparations; walls were freshly painted; new curtains were made; furnishings were refurbished and fresh flowers were arranged in time to welcome the Vice-Regal guests. The party comprised Sir Charles Fitzroy, 'immensely tall and stout', Lady Mary, of similar stature, their son Mr George Fitzroy, who acted as his father's secretary, Colonel Mundy, Adjutant General and the Principal Medical Officer Dr Dawson and his wife, and they arrived with the Major by steamer on 3 March.

According to Colonel Mundy's description of the visit, the party was entertained by a week of festivities during which no effort was spared in their comfort and entertainment. The Lake was illuminated and specially constructed gondolas conveyed the guests to dainty fairy bowers and carpeted terraces along the shore. There were dances and other entertainments, and each evening they were played into dinner by Bruce in Highland dress. In the daytime they rode on superb horses along the beach.

On 10 March the Governor and his retinue, escorted by the Major, departed for New England and were absent for ten days, during which time the ladies entertained Lady Mary. She proved a most agreeable guest, settling into the end of the verandah with her needlework and enjoying pleasant carriage rides. Her wedding anniversary was celebrated with a stylish, well-planned picnic at the beach.

When the party returned from New England, the visit culminated with a last festivity—a large supper dance on 19 March—for which the girls retrimmed their dresses and added stiff petticoats to them. The dining room carpet was lifted for dancing, and large chairs placed at the top of

¹⁹ Elizabeth Guilford, 'The Governor Comes to Town', *Journal of Hunter Valley History*, 2.2 (1988), pp. 101-102.

the room for Sir Charles and Lady Mary. Supper was laid in the verandah which had been enclosed for the occasion by canvas blinds. Annabella concluded her diary entry of the event with the words, ‘We hope they have enjoyed their visit half as much as we have. They have individually and collectively left a good impression here.’

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The Daunting Visitations of 1840

The year 1840 was one of horror and despair in New South Wales and it heralded a long period of drought and depression that toppled many a settler. Few were solid enough to ride it out, and those who had climbed the highest fell the hardest. Archibald Boyd, the ‘most agreeable visitor’ and a ‘great conversationalist’, paid a farewell visit to Lake Innes ‘before leaving the Colony’. Annabella does not mention, and perhaps did not know, that both he and his brother Ben were ruined. Hannibal Macarthur was declared insolvent and fled to Queensland, while at his Georgian home at Aberglasslyn, Maitland, the likeable Anglo-Swiss high-flier, George Hobler, was dispossessed of all his property. Stephen Coxon, who owned vast estates on the Upper Hunter and stations on the northern rivers, suddenly found he was worth nothing and shot himself dead. And many others suffered,

William Dumaresq of St Aubins and Tilbuster and his sister-in-law, the Widow Dumaresq of St Helier’s and Saumarez, between them lost the whole of their investment of £4,610 in shares in the Bank of Australia. Rev. G.H. Rusden of Maitland lost every penny of his £3, 250 invested, and his son Frank lost £780 in the same way. The widow and sons of Sir Francis Forbes not only lost Skellator on the Hunter and their stations in New England, but were stripped of all else they possessed.²⁰

Defiant Achievements

How was it then, that in the midst of this widespread economic ruin, the Major was able to entertain a Governor so lavishly? It was his energy and enterprise—rather than the fact that he had amassed a great deal of property—that kept him solvent so long. Frank O’Grady summarises his situation very correctly when he says, ‘His personal drive and the confidence his relatives had in him kept him afloat while others crashed around him.’²¹ His capacity for hard work and his ability to adapt enabled him to diversify, and when one enterprise failed he had the courage and foresight to try another. So, buoyed by the loyal support of his wide

²⁰ W. Allan Wood, ‘The Contribution of the Hunter Valley to the Development of New England’, *Armidale and District Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, 18, (1975), p. 13.

²¹ O’Grady, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

circle of friends and relations, he was able to stave off disaster until the end of 1847, when Annabella wrote,

The year closed rather sadly: we spent a very quiet Christmas, and had no house party... On New Year's Day the usual guests rode out to dinner. The kindly welcome was unchanged, but we all felt that "bad times" meant something we had never before realized—in as far as they had brought cares and anxieties to our elders—and other troubles might follow.²²

With his grazing empire gone, the Major now concentrated on the vineyards which he had established in 1844, and they supported him and his family in a reduced manner until 1851. In later years, the small Gustavus, who became a minister, had the vineyards destroyed on temperance principles.

Innes as a Gold Commissioner

In 1852, at the age of fifty-two, unemployed and poor, the Major neither fled the country nor shot himself. With Scottish fortitude, he looked for employment and was happy to accept the position of assistant gold commissioner at Hanging Rock, near Nundle. His living conditions were primitive; he had to live in a tent in a harsh region, where the temperature ranges from 130 degrees to zero. Demands from E.W. Rudder, in charge of the goldfields of the Australian Agricultural Company that the Major should personally police the goldfields of the pastoral company and charge miners with trespass soon led to a falling out. He made a sensible suggestion, which was adopted, resulting in the issue of dual licenses for miners working river-bed claims—one by the Peel River Company and one by the Crown. However, annoyed by his care and concern for the miners, Rudder and John Henry Durbin, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Liverpool Plains, continued to harass him, and in January 1853 the Major wrote the following letter to Durbin, which, as O'Grady says 'was not the kind of letter a man who wanted to keep his job would write to a superior officer',

I scorn the insinuation that I have made an improper use of a private conversation. I could remind you that I reside in a tent, where, at this season of the year, the thermometer ranges at 120 and 130 degrees, that I do not possess either the accommodation of a house or office or the assistance of a clerk and that I am therefore constrained to limit my correspondence to what is absolutely unavoidable and necessary for the Commissioner of Crown Lands.²³

²² Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

²³ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

The Major's behaviour during his early days as Commandant at Port Macquarie evidenced his benevolent nature, for he was always ready to help the underprivileged, or the convict who had earned his release. This compassion was totally lacking in most officials of the time, and particularly in the English born. A just attitude was what the Major adopted to the miners, and the following tributes show how much it was appreciated,

To the firm and impartial manners in which your official duties as Commissioner and Police Magistrate have been administered we owe the peace and security we have enjoyed as well as that immunity from outrage and crime so fearfully prevalent in other mining districts. In losing you we feel we lost a friend to whose counsel and experience we have been accustomed to look for guidance and direction. (Address of Farewell from the Miners 17 January 1854.)

and

While Major Innes has been zealous and active in performing his duties as an officer under the Government since he became a resident among us he has ever been anxious to promote the prosperity of the industrious miner; his conduct to us all has been courteous and kind in the extreme and is justly characterised as a conduct becoming a British officer and a high-minded gentleman. (A. Kyle, at Nuggety Gully on the Peel River Diggings. 17 January 1853)²⁴

and William Telfer, a plain man from the diggings at Hanging Rock pays homage to the Major in plain-spoken language,

He was a fine old gentleman, well liked by the diggers. The licence for gold was 30 shillings per month and the police came around every month collecting the licence fees. There used to be some fun. You would see them making off in all directions. A lot of them had not made that much in a month so they could not pay. Planting in old shafts out of the road of the police were any that told the Major they had not the money—he would give them a month's grace. 'Perhaps you will have it next time', he would say. Very few of them broke their word. They generally paid up... There were very few men like Mr Innes. When he left the next Commissioner was Charles McArthur King, brother of P.G. King of Goonoo Goonoo. There was a great difference in the two men. The old Major was a bluff, hearty old gentleman and was well liked by all classes of men. Mr King was a very strict man over the diggers and they did not like him.²⁵

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

A Leader to the End

The Major's final posting was as Police Magistrate at Newcastle, a position to which he was appointed towards the end of 1853. Here, his accommodation, although Spartan, was superior to a tent, as he was able to occupy the disused military hospital. It was a far cry from his beloved Lake Innes House, but with Scottish stoicism he was wont to say 'I am no worse off than so and so, and look at the pleasure I have had and have given to others while he has had neither.'²⁶ He died at Newcastle on 29 August 1857 and was buried in the grounds of Christ Church Cathedral. It seems however, that he was later reinterred with his wife Margaret (who died within the same year) at Port Macquarie.

And What of the Man, For All His Titles and Trials?

No personal or public accolade marked the Major's death, but his niece's memoirs provide an intimate view of the quality of his character and his influence on his household. The reader is struck not only by his kindness and care for his family and friends, but by his remarkable energy and fortitude in the projects that he accomplished, the countless trips he made up and down the coast, and the countless weary miles he covered on horseback. And even when he must have been sorely worried, he had time to make decisions for 'his girls'. When Lady Mary invited them to Sydney to 'come out', it was uncle who said they had better go; and when he found that bustles were the latest fashion, he said he would order some for them.

Frank O'Grady evidently grew close to the Major while researching his life, and it seems fitting that his sensitive tribute be recorded here,

Archibald Clunes Innes was a failure according to the standards of his day—a failure in that he was unable to sustain to the last the magnificence that for a few years had centred around him. His death evoked no panegyric. His family records, even his lavish furnishings were destroyed or dispersed. His once majestic home is now a pile of decaying bricks buried beneath the lantana he brought to this country for his gardens. Where his grapes, his orchards and his vegetable gardens thrived in ironbark, stringy scrub and Mysore thorn flourish in abundant profusion... Yet official records, tradition, and the written reminiscences of those who knew him, when exposed to the light of the present day, reveal much of the character and achievements of this splendid specimen of Scottish-Australian manhood. They tell of his initiative and moral courage exercised in the service of his adopted country in which he had unbounded faith. They portray his pioneering work in the fields of grazing and agriculture, in commerce and transport, in the administration of justice... Archibald Innes, throughout his short

²⁶ Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

life in Australia strictly followed the Golden Rule, and always seemed to be guided by the motto of Innes of Caithness; 'While I live I aspire to the highest'.²⁷

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Again, the Man Behind the Glen Innes Stones

Lake Innes House is now dust, but it is hoped that those viewing the Circle of Stones at Glen Innes will be made more aware of Major Archibald Innes, for whom the town is named, and of his personal efforts to develop the region. A knowledge of the part he played in our early history will evoke, particularly in those of Celtic heritage, emotive images of past times, when the Major's charmed circle, family and social, radiated warmth and hospitality, of family and friendship and fun; of mornings when laughter echoed from Bachelor's Hall; of evenings when fleet feet danced on the lawns and the strain of Bruce's pipes floated across the lake.

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²⁷ O'Grady, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.