

Mary Love Tulloch, Waverley herbalist and wise woman

One of Waverley's earliest healers was a Scottish woman known to locals as 'Scotch Mary' whose real name was Mary Love Tulloch. Mary was born in 1828-1829 and immigrated to Australia at an unknown date. One report of her life claims she was born in the Falkirk council area, probably in Larbert, a small town which lies in the Forth Valley above the River Carron in the central lowlands of Scotland.

Mary first turns up in Waverley records in 1864 when she is living in Bondi Road (then called Waverley Street) at the corner of Flood Street, by 1869 her profession is listed in local directories as a 'herbalist'. In 1880 her address changes to Flood Street and her house on the eastern side of the street is called 'Larbert Cottage'. By this time she is actively dispensing herbal medicines and described as enjoying 'a great reputation as a healer'. She last appears in Waverley records in 1883 and it is after this date that she probably left the area, certainly by 1886 a new resident, Mrs Elizabeth Shawe, is living in 'Larbert Cottage'.

Mary also kept goats and the milk from these provided another one of her remedies, goat's milk. We now know goat's milk has effective anti-allergy and anti-inflammatory properties, with the topical application of goat's milk recommended as a soothing remedy for eczema and other skin conditions. It is also a good dairy alternative for those unable to digest cow's milk.

No doubt Mary's wisdom came from her Scots Celtic heritage with her cures being the type that was typically passed down from mother to daughter in the traditional manner. Scotland is known for its long tradition of recognising the efficacy of herbs even in Western medical treatment.

Every village had a wise woman and healer, the same women who were targeted as 'witches' in earlier centuries by the Inquisition in Western Europe, leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of women seen as a threat to the church and the medical establishment.

At some stage 'Scotch Mary' moved west and when she died on 23 May 1887, aged 58 years, her address was Blacktown Road, Blacktown on a large parcel of land. Maybe Mary needed more room for her herd of goats? She named her Western Sydney home 'Larbert Manes' giving weight to the claim that she came from this town in Scotland as she had named her cottage in Flood Street after this same village.

After her death the *Sydney Morning Herald* advertised the auctioning of nine blocks of land surround the 'late residence of Miss Tulloch ('Scotch Mary)'. Each piece of land was 2.5 acres by 4.5 acres. The papers from her estate are held in the probate packets collection in State Records.

Mary's fame as a healer even spread interstate and shortly after she died in 1887 *The Brisbane Courier* reported that:

'By many people she was regarded as being phenomenally clever. Perhaps this belief was due to the fact that the medicines which she administered to her patients exceeded in nauseousness those of the regular fraternity. Amongst the persons who went to Scotch Mary were several doctors and a number of other professional men...According to her Will proved last week she died worth £600; the greater part of this money the testatrix left to charitable institutions.'

I cannot find any record of Mary marrying and her estate is in her maiden name of Mary Love Tulloch, despite this there is one record of her having a daughter. This report is probably incorrect, as there are certainly no birth records or other evidence to support this, but I hope she did have a daughter, even a secret unregistered illegitimate one, because then her herbal cures would not have died with her.

In one of the greatest compliments that could be made by sports man Australians a race horse was named after her, 'Scotch Mary'. This horse produced a foal, 'Iolaire' which went on to win several races including the 1908 Williamstown Cup at Flemington.

Mary Love Tulloch – was she Waverley's first herbalist?

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