

ROYAL MARINES DEATH

ALEXANDER MACLEAN

Private PO/X116565

No. 43 R.M. Commando, Royal Marines,

Killed in action on 2nd April 1945 aged 28

Alexander's parents, Alexander and Dolina (née Mackenzie), both came from Ullapool, but they were married on 15th August 1912 at the Station Hotel, Muir of Ord, Urray

Alexander (senior) had been employed as a shepherd in Chile prior to his marriage and the couple sailed to South America soon afterwards. As can be seen below, both Alexander (junior), and his older sister Annie were born overseas, in the Territory of Santa Cruz, Argentine. His father had progressed to the position of manager of a sheep farm, and the family's residence whilst they were away from Scotland was Hotel Victoria, Punta Arenas, Chile.

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237

Certified Extract from the Returns of **BIRTHS** made to the Registrar-General for England from the undermentioned *British Consulate* for the year ended *31st December 1924*.

BIRTH within the District of the British *Vice Consul* at *Punta Arenas, Chile*.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	
No.	When and Where Born.	Name.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Consular Officer.
266	<i>Seventeenth February 1917. Estancia, La Primavera, Territory of Santa Cruz, Argentine</i>	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>Boy.</i>	<i>Alexander MacLean.</i>	<i>Dolina MacLean, formerly MacKenzie.</i>	<i>Manager of Sheep Farm, born Lochbroom, Ross-shire, N.B. Eighth April 1880.</i>	<i>Alexander MacLean, Father, Hotel Victoria, Punta Arenas, Chile.</i>	<i>Tenth November 1924, by special Permission of Secretary of State, F.O. Circular N^o. 15, (1847/1847) 375 of 25/9/24.</i>	<i>T. B. Willman, British Vice-Consul.</i>
267	<i>Twenty sixth June 1913. Rio Gallegos, Territory of Santa Cruz, Argentine.</i>	<i>Annie</i>	<i>Girl.</i>	<i>Alexander MacLean.</i>	<i>Dolina MacLean, formerly MacKenzie.</i>	<i>Manager of Sheep Farm, born Lochbroom, Ross-shire, N.B. Eighth April 1880.</i>	<i>Alexander MacLean, Father, Hotel Victoria, Punta Arenas, Chile.</i>	<i>Tenth November 1924, by special Permission of Secretary of State, F.O. Circular N^o. 15, (1847/1847) 375 of 25/9/24.</i>	<i>T. B. Willman, British Vice-Consul.</i>

Certified to be a true Extract from the Consular Returns of Births.

M. J. Dick

In 1924 the family set sail for the UK and travelled 1st class on board the ship *Romanstar* from the River Plate, and disembarked at Liverpool on 15th July. There were now five children: Annie 11, Alexander 9, Kenina 5, Murdo 3 and Maggie 1. Their proposed address was Seaside House, Point Street, Ullapool.

Father and mother returned to Chile on board the *Oropesa* on 9th October that year. They left their three eldest children, Annie, Alexander and Kenina behind in Scotland. Who looked after them? Possibly their grandparents?

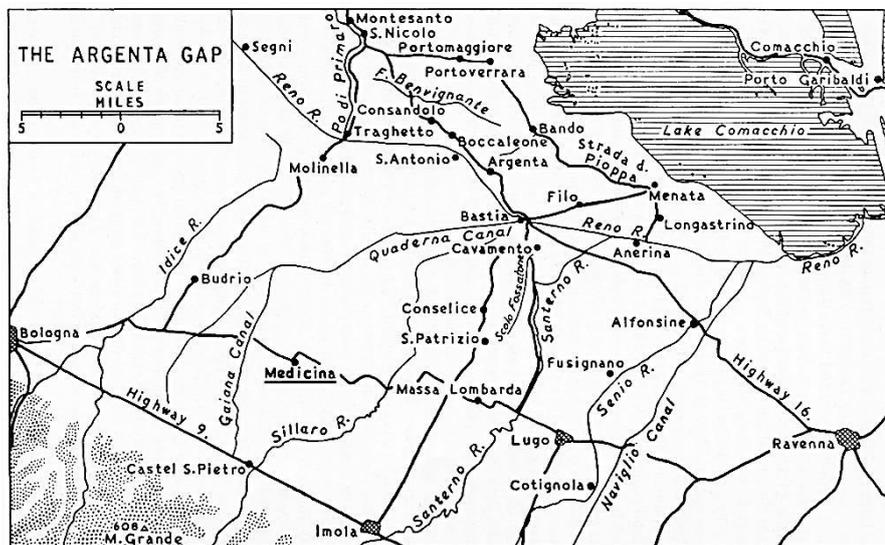
Father died on 31st December 1932 and is buried in Punta Arenas Municipal Cemetery, Chile.

**The inscription reads
In
Loving Memory
Of
Our beloved Husband and Father
ALEXANDER MACLEAN
Age 52 Died 31 December 1932
Though out of Sight to memory dear
Inserted by his sorrowing widow and family**

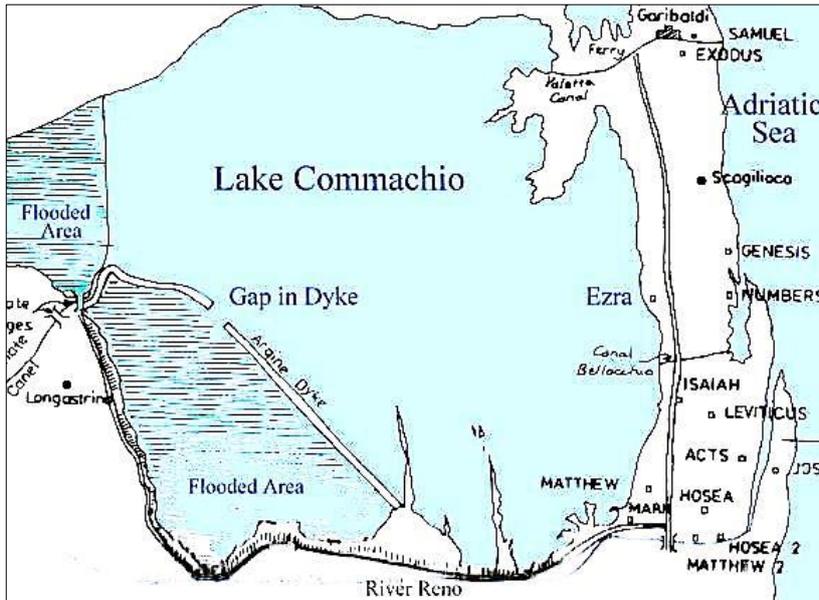


At some stage Dolina and her young family returned to the Ullapool area. In 1935 and 1940 the home address was “La Primavera”, West Terrace.

In WW2 son **Alexander** enlisted into the 43rd Commandos, the Royal Marines. He was serving in Italy at the time of his death. This was the first major action in 1945 to push the German Army back to and across the River Po and out of Italy. The breakthrough on the Eighth Army front was to be made



through the Argenta Gap, crossing the Senio River. On 1st April 1945 the whole of the brigade was engaged in the operation which comprised No. 2 Commando, No. 9 Commando and No. 40 under the command of Brigadier Ronnie Rod. The Comacchio lagoon is a vast area of shallow brackish water separated from the Adriatic Sea to the east by a narrow strip of land. The Germans had approximately 1,200 men entrenched there. The Commandos were to clear the narrow strip of land, securing the flank of the Eighth Army.



No. 43 Commando (RM) was to attack up a tongue of land to the extreme east, which forms the south bank of the Reno estuary, and when secured, cross the mouth of the Reno and turn back south west and clear the Reno's north bank. The operation started on the evening of 1st April with engagement to begin shortly after midnight. The lagoon crossing took far longer than planned due to the exceptionally low water level and muddy lagoon

bottom, which was as deep as chest high. The Commandos eventually reached the Spit at first light, over 4 hours behind schedule. Exhausted and covered in glutinous slime they pressed home their attacks. Nos. 2, 40 and 43 Commandos all made their objectives relatively as expected although the Germans succeeded in blowing-up one bridge before it was captured by No.2 Commando. That evening No. 9 and No. 43 Commandos moved up to the bridges on the Bellocchio Canal, held by No.2 Commando. This was known as **Operation Roast** and Alexander was killed in action along with 5 of his comrades from No. 43 RM Commandos.

Alexander is buried in Ravenna War Cemetery in **Plot I, Row A, Grave 26**

A family grave stands in Morefield Cemetery, Ullapool, on which Alexander (junior) is commemorated.

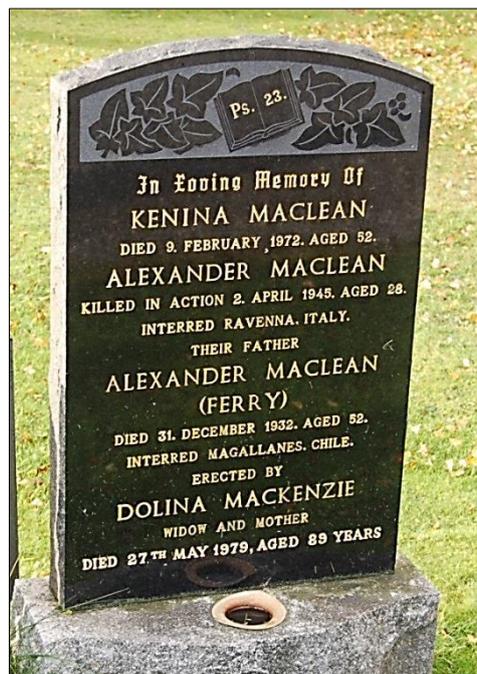


Photo: Bill Fraser