



# Clan Forsyth

SYDNEY BRANCH

## NEWSLETTER

**CLAN FORSYTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – SYDNEY BRANCH**

**PO BOX 396, ROSEVILLE NSW 2069**

**October 2009**

### **Clan Forsyth Show Day**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2009**  
**10am to 2pm**

Located in the garden area left of  
**2/24 Forsyth Street, Willoughby**  
(next to Denise Park's unit)

Come and meet other Forsyths, enjoy a sausage sizzle, tea, coffee.

Also, find out more about your family history.

Free gifts while stocks last.

### **CLAN FORSYTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

Annual Church Service, AGM,  
followed by lunch.

*Mark the day in your 2010 Diary*

Details of times, location etc. to come.

## Australian Clan Commissioner's change of address



Commissioner Jim Forsyth and his wife Judy have moved from their Denistone address.

**Their new address is:**  
**18 Patrick Avenue,**  
**Castle Hill NSW 2154.**  
**New home phone: 02 9634 2749**  
**Email is still: jaforsyth@ozemail.com.au**

## Sydney Branch President, Bill Forsyth, has changed his address too.

**Unit 8, 'Arunga Village'**  
**261 Pacific Highway, Lindfield NSW 2070**  
**Home Phone: 02 9416 9770**  
**Mobile: 0428 234 070**  
**Email: billjforsthy@bigpond.com**



## Martha's Restoration

Martha Rosewall, wife of Thomas Warner Forsyth, had her portrait painted in 1882 after her death. Their son James and his wife Margaret came to Australia and started a tannery business in Willoughby. James's nephew also emigrated to Australia

Perhaps the artist was not the most skilled, but the painting of Martha is still of great interest to Forsyth family members who are related to her.

Denise Park volunteered to restore the painting, which had a dull lacquer coating and a few damaged sections. Denise has done a wonderful restoration job.



## NEW MEMBERS

**The Clan Forsyth Sydney Branch welcomes these new members:**

Paul and Allison Forsyth of Bolton Point, NSW 2283. Paul is the son of members, John and Kay Forsyth.

Linda and Stephen Tipping of Marrar near Wagga Wagga.

# MEMORIES OF A VICTORIAN CHILDHOOD

Contributed by Denise Park (nee Forsyth). Member of the Clan Committee



My great, great Aunt Alice Forsyth Walker was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1880 at 17 George St North, (City of Sydney). I believe above the family leather shop. Alice was the 5<sup>th</sup> child of Robert and Stephana nee gates.

The leather business was prospering and the family relocated to a newly built property in High Street Willoughby, which had a wattle and daub shack that had previously belonged to James Forsyth, Roberts father. The foundations of which are still discernable on the right of the house called Tyneside.

I was born in 1944 at a small nursing home in Victoria Street Chatswood. These were war years, following on from the great depression, a very different time! My father died as a result of the war, leaving my mother destitute with a 4 year old - me. I remember the night I went to stay with Auntie Alice, she tucked me into her big double bed with her, as my uncle Arnold Walker was at the hospital with my mother awaiting my fathers death. In the morning I was told my mother and I would be staying.

Auntie Alice and Uncle Arnold were childless and were both in their late 60s, so it must have been a challenge raising a small child. My mother became a companion, helper to my Aunt, and I was raised as their own.

As a child my aunt told me tales of her youth and taught me all the Victorian achievements and hobbies. It was as well that I was a thoughtful creative child who absorbed and mastered all except singing! Come to think of it my piano playing was debateable. Aunt would sit at the piano and I would stand by her side while she played 'Come into the garden Maud' I thought I could make the high notes by standing on my toes. I liked standing on my toes and thought I would like to learn ballet this was deemed inappropriate for a young lady. It was a rich and interesting childhood, in retrospect controlled, but undemonstrably loving.

I was told stories about their childhood growing up in Willoughby, and from my uncle St. Albans on the Hawkesbury River. There were many stories and reminiscences, a few of which I am starting to collate.

Auntie Alice shared a bedroom with her sister Minnie May and during the diphtheria outbreak, which ravaged Sydney, and also them, put the house into quarantine. Signs were erected outside and tan bark laid on the dirt track of High Street to muffle the carts and sulky wheels. Uncle Tom's house was further along and the tannery traffic must have used this track. Sheets soaked in carbolic were placed over the doors to the girl's bedroom.

There was a wonderful system, which many will remember, called recuperation following indispositions. Invalid food, rest and fresh air gradually returning the ailing back to full health. James contributed by taking the girls on a sea voyage to Hobart on a clipper ship. They were terribly seasick and took a longer time to recover.

The girls were educated at the Argyle School at Surry Hills a suburb upmarket in those times. This was run by Miss Fidler and was unusual in that it gave a very good education in the classics and mathematics, Auntie Alice could still speak Greek, Latin and French at 90. Auntie Minnie was similarly accomplished and later on was taught to fly by Charles Kingsford Smith, sat for many years on the board of Royal North Shore Hospital and was awarded the MBE for founding the Big Sister Movement.

Robert was unaware of the first class education his daughters were receiving and was horrified to find that Alice had been accepted into the School of Medicine at Sydney University. This was quickly vetoed in favour of her staying at home and helping her mother. Miss Fidler went on to found the school called Ravenswood Methodist Ladies College later, the year after I left, Ravenswood School for Girls! The boarders in the early years used to have their Sunday lunch following church at Auntie Alice's house 9 Edward Street Gordon.

Minnie and Alice were weekly boarders, owing to their living so far out in the country at Willoughby. They would be taken by a groom to the ferry and then would take a cab to their school at Surry Hills, one day however the cab driver heard Argyle School and deposited them at Argyle cut. This was famous for the razor gangs and sleazy dives, and even in those days kidnapping for vice and sale. The girls were terrified but managed to make their way to a police station. After this incident they had a groom to escort them from door to door.

To be continued.

## Coming Events

### Combined Scottish Societies of NSW Highland Gathering

Castle Hill Showground on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009. Enjoy Scottish dancing, pipe bands, games, memorabilia, food and fun. Entry fee applies.

### Celebrate St Andrews Day, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

**10.00am:** Kirkin 'o of the Tartan at St Stephens Uniting Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney

**11.45am:** Muster of all the Clans & Scottish Associations in Martin Place, Sydney

**12.00:** March of the bands and clans to Hyde Park in Sydney.

It's all FREE!

## MEMBER'S NEWS

From Christopher Stewart Forsyth

**Photo 1:** A highly ornate musical baton made of wood with a silver harp on top and an inscription as follows: "IOGT Lodge Dawn of Freedom No 104 presented to Bro. Rob Forsyth, Musical Director, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1882." Chris' father, also named Robert, passed away in 1994. The family connection appears to go back to Robert Forsyth, born 1848, a grandson of Thomas and Martha Forsyth (see article on Martha's portrait) and son of James and Margaret Todd.

**Photo 2:** Three generations of Forsyths, left to right: Campbell (dad), Christopher (grandfather), Cormac Stewart Forsyth (born 28.7.08) and Jenny (mum).



## 111 YEARS OLD & IMPROVING WITH AGE



**Real Estate Sales, Property Management,  
Commercial Sales & Leasing, Valuations, Finance**

**WILLOUGHBY 9419 7411  
NORTHBRIDGE 9958 2877  
BAYVIEW 9979 9995  
[www.rtforsyth.com.au](http://www.rtforsyth.com.au)**

