



# Clan Forsyth

SYDNEY BRANCH

## NEWSLETTER

**CLAN FORSYTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – SYDNEY BRANCH**  
**PO BOX 396, ROSEVILLE NSW 2069** **March 2012 #1**

### **Notice of Annual General Meeting and Lunch**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

### **Chiquita Café**

Next to the car park, Oakville Street,  
off Penshurst Street, Willoughby

From 12.30pm

Chiquita Café Phone: 9958 0833.

*The AGM will be held during lunch.*

## **2012 EVENTS**

*(please write in your diary)*

**April 6-10:** Highland Games at McLean NSW

**April 15:** Clan Forsyth AGM and Lunch at Chiquita Café *(see above notice)*

**April 21:** Society of Genealogist Lecture – Scottish Immigration to Australia

**April 21:** 'Brigadoon' at Bundanoon Highland Games

**May 3:** Glenn Innes (NSW) Celtic Festival

**May 12:** On-Line Genealogist for Clan Members *(see separate notice in this Newsletter)*

**June 1:** Bonnie Wingham Scottish Week

**June 22:** Scottish Week, NSW

**June 24:** Battle of Bannockburn commemoration

**July 1:** National Tartan Day, Australia and New Zealand

**July 7:** Aberdeen (NSW) Highland Games

**July 16:** Clan Committee Meeting

**September 8-16:** History Week, NSW

**November 4:** Clan Forsyth Day from 2-5pm, upstairs in the Forsyth Room, Willoughby Uniting Church, Clanwilliam Street, Willoughby. All welcome!

**2014:** Second Homecoming Event being planned for Scotland.

# Summer Holidays Remembered

By Denise Park (Clan Committee Member)

Once a year after Christmas, we would shut up the house and relocate to our "house" at Newport. As this was considered a long trek the Thermos and cake tin were packed to sustain us in the trip from Gordon to the northern beaches via Mona Vale Road, past the many market gardens of St. Ives and bush flanking the narrow winding road which we would descend down to the first glimpses of the ocean.

The holiday house had wide wrap-around verandas where my mother and I slept under our mosquito nets after liberally dousing ourselves in Citronella. The plentiful flying bugs and frogs kept up a steady drone all night, serenading us to sleep.

The convenience was the traditional back yard 'dunny' emptied each week by cheery singlet-wearing men from whom it was wise to stay downwind.

To reach this bush citadel at night one had to carry a torch and a stout stick because of the snakes which frequented the long grass and adjoining blackberries. Having braved the journey the next challenge were the spiders who, growing fat with the constantly available bugs, wove wondrous festoons of sticky webs to decorate the interior. Next was the careful vigilance for the red back spiders which we swatted with the squares of cut up newspapers which were also used as toilet paper. Amazingly we were never bitten.

There is an odd quirk of nature that the Australian holiday season coincides with the wettest and most humid months, so for most part of the duration we were confined to the house. At night frequent electrical black outs meant we had kerosene lamps, by the light of which we would entertain ourselves with parlor games and crafts.

In the brief respites from the rain we would sally forth to the beach. Clad in our hand knitted swimmers, hideously uncomfortable wet or dry, mostly threadbare towels, with the Thermos and the aptly named sandwiches, we were ready to depart. The family armed themselves with the deck chairs, umbrella, blanket, tyre inner tube, and bucket and spade for me, along with sundry baskets, books and a Kodak Box Brownie camera for a few hours on the sand.

I would have zinc cream applied to my face and mutton bird oil to all exposed flesh and my head was encased in a perishing rubber bathing cap - Denise was ready for the beach! Aunt would sit in a deck chair under the umbrella dispensing refreshments and admonishing me not to go in the water until one hour after eating. Uncle would do his calisthenics before entering the water up to his waist where he would jump up and down then surface to also sit in his deck chair with the newspaper over his face to have a little nap. I paddled and built sand castles and forts with the other children who happened along.

On returning to the house the towels were draped around the veranda, sand permeated everything and wet costumes were hung to dry.

Usually red and sore I would be put in the bath, the wood heater lit and the spiders in the pipes flushed out. After my ablutions the sand in the bottom of the bath would have to be sluiced down the plug hole. This was not difficult as the bath was plumbed to empty under the floor.

In retrospect I think holidays were a break and made us grateful to return home to our comforts!!!!  
Others memories from members would be welcome - email me on [denisepark@optusnet.com.au](mailto:denisepark@optusnet.com.au)

## **"Online Genealogy for Clan Members" event.**

To be conducted by the Clan Genealogist, Judith Forsyth,  
and the Clan Treasurer, Tim Crossley (a keen genealogist).

**Saturday, 12th May 2012.**

Limited to 5 places, so bookings are essential. Bring Your Own LAPTOP!

**For details and bookings call Tim: 0419 215 295**

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The Ropemaker/Dymock Forsyth family tree is available on the Clan Website:

**<http://clanforysyaustralia.org/>**

If members have additional information or photos to add to the tree, please contact the Clan Website Manager, Tim Crossley, at: **[crossleysatrye@hotmail.com](mailto:crossleysatrye@hotmail.com)** or call Tim on **0419 215 295**.

## MY STORY by Keith Forsyth

For 89 -year-old Keith Forsyth, a life that has been a mixed bag of adversity, desperation, disappointment, anticipation and joy has left him with a remarkable tale to tell.

His tale is not always pretty, but it is one Keith tells with a good-humoured glint in his eye that marks him out as being an extraordinary man. Keith was born in Evans Street in Inverell and lost his mother at a very young age, he was only three years old when his mother died and his father sent him off to live with his grandmother in the property call "Glenorchy" at Bukkalla.

"I was not quite eight when I started going to school, and I went all right," Keith said.

"My main trouble was that my father wasn't 'education minded'. I used to walk half a mile to school of a morning and the half a mile home of an afternoon."

"The teacher I had when I first started wasn't very good, but he was replaced shortly after I arrived and the next teacher was a really good one, and I went as far as the Intermediate (School Certificate) where I got four out of five passes," Keith said.

After completing his education, Keith started his first job, which was on the land.

"I took a job that turned out to be a droving job, we were driving sheep from Collarenebri to Mogg Swamp," Keith said. "It was 1937 and in those days if you saw two cars driving along the road it was a busy day!"

"Well, things went all right there for a while, but I lost that job because I stuck up for the rights of another bloke who was working with me at the time who was being underpaid," Keith said. While representing the rights of another was a noble thing to do, the result was less satisfying. "We were both sacked and turned off the property, and that wasn't all that pleasant because we had a 60 mile walk to get into Moree," Keith said with a smile. "Neither of us had any food. "But we were lucky, we only walked 15 or 20 miles before got a lift with a mail vehicle - and they only ran once or twice a week in those days," Keith said.

With his return to Bukkulla, Keith's next job took him back to family.

"I worked for my uncle who had about 3000 acres and no children, and I got on very well with him and then I enlisted in the Army in 1939," Keith said.

Taken prisoner by the Japanese at Singapore at the age of 19, Keith was interned at the famous Changi prisoner of war camp where he suffered from Typhus before being moved to Blakang Mati where he remained for three years until the end of hostilities in 1945.

We had one of the lowest death rates but one of the highest work rates," Keith said.

"I was still recovering from Typhus when I got there and we worked for hours and hours without a break and the food we got was barely enough to sustain us.

The camp was the thing that probably saved us though because it was originally built for native troops who had never used it, the huts were up off the ground and we had proper latrines, so we didn't have as much dysentery as they had in other places."

But the camp was not disease free and Keith did suffer from Malaria for a long time afterwards, just as the brutality of his experience stayed with him for years.

"I slept next to Pat Rolff from Warialda on one side (he settled in Tamworth after the war) and Lloyd Darlington who was also from Warialda and Bob Smith slept on the veranda about 10 yards away for those three years." Keith said.

"There was a chap in the camp who worked as a radio engineer for British General Electric and he managed to set up a radio and was receiving news of the BBC, we heard about the A bomb and VP from that.

But just because we knew didn't mean much changed until the Japanese surrendered, which our guard definitely didn't want to do."

The Japanese surrendered on August 15, 1945, but it was not until one tense week later, on August 22, that Keith left Blakang Mati, and as Keith looked at Singapore for the last time he told a mate, Doug Fraser, that would never eat rice again; and he didn't for 20 years.

Keith returned to his uncle's farm at Bukkulla, but there were years of coming to grips with his wartime experiences as they manifested themselves in various forms - today we would call it Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

"It was a good 15 years after the war before I could settle into a proper routine and there was one time I didn't think I would live to be 50." Keith said. "I suffered with Malaria for years afterwards. In the early 1950s they came out with a 'one dose' cure for malaria, it was a six months course and I had to take five 'doses' of the course." Keith said.

Working hard to make his uncle's farm one of the most improved in the district, Keith's luck began to change when he met the young school teacher Heather McBean in 1956. "I remember we used to talk about the dark circles Keith always had beneath his eyes," Heather said.

By 1959 they were an item and were married in 1961 when they set up house on Abington Station near Bundarra. "I got the job of the overseer there and it was four good years." Keith said. "My daughters were born while we were there and we managed to put aside enough to buy a 200 acre dairy farm. There was no livestock on it so we converted it to sheep and put in a very good crop of wheat that year too, which really helped."

With his daughters, Ellen and Ann, now working away from the district, Keith and Heather enjoy that quite exceptional 'something' offered by this area to those able to reflect upon very extraordinary lives - the quiet life.

*Thank you to the person who describes Heather as her favourite Kindergarten teacher and who passed this item to Elizabeth Forsyth for our newsletter. Keith is a descendant of John & Maria Forsyth. Great story Keith!*

**Judy Forsyth.**

## **OBITUARY IN THE TIMES EXTRA - INVERELL (undated)**

### **JOE WAS AN INSPIRATION TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

Born Vincent Leo Forsyth on July 22 1916, Joe was the fourth of 17 children born to David and Hannah Forsyth. He grew up on the family property "St Albions" at Ashford before enlisting in the army. He was in the 2/18<sup>th</sup> Battalion and spent more than three years as a prisoner of war in Changi Prison. When the war ended he returned home where he met the love of his life Muriel Doust.

They had two children Pamela (Coxon) and Peter and had 10 years of wonderful married life sadly Muriel passed away at 38 years of Asthma. After moving to town they bought the family home in Granville Street where he lived until he was 89 years before going into McLean Retirement Village.

For the last five years of his life Joe was known for his beautiful gardens especially Roses, Dahlias and Camellias. He supplied the family and neighbours with lovely home grown fruit and vegetables. Joe was a loving brother to his brothers and sisters and help looked after the younger ones as his mother died at 52 years. He went on to raise his children whom he was totally devoted to. He adored his eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, supporting them livingly and financially in whatever they chose to do and went without himself to make sure they were taken care of. He was very proud of their achievements.

His grandson Murray was his "champ". He supported his cycling career with great pride and got great pleasure out of being able to travel with Murray all over the country. It was a bog blow to Joe when Murray died four years ago, but again he supported the family and soldiered on. His family summed him up by saying he was the most courageous, generous, unselfish man you would ever meet. Joe was an inspiration to all who knew him. He will live on in his family that loved him dearly. Joe is survived by his daughter Pamela (Coxon) and husband John, son Peter and wife Julie, and grandchildren Kylie, Lisa, Carla, Kimberley, Travis, Jolene, Ben and great grandchildren Liam, Ryan, Alexis, Oliver, Isabella, Asher and Indie.

*Vincent Leo Forsyth was a descendant of John & Maria Forsyth. The "Ryerson" index tells us that Leo's Funeral Notice appeared in Inverell Times on 3.5.2011 and an Obituary appeared in that same newspaper on 29.7.2011. Judy Forsyth.*

## **Hello everybody,**

I went down to Gore Hill cemetery this morning and cleaned up Thomas Todd/Anne's grave, Martha Rosewall Clarke's next door and TT junior's just along the aisle. I did not look at the others, like JB Forsyth, as I had forgotten to take down the map showing where they all are. The majority of the cemetery is more overgrown than I can remember, with the number of graves which have been tended or cleared in the minority.

**Regards, David Forsyth** (a past President of the Sydney Clan)

*(Thank you David for your efforts. Let's hope other members can also help out)*

A Scotsman wanted to impress his girlfriend, so he took her for a ride in a taxi. The trouble was, she was so beautiful he could hardly keep his eyes on the meter.

A Scot called Forsyth immigrated to Australia. Upon entry he was being interviewed by the immigration officer. When the officer asked the question, "Do you have a criminal record?" Mr Forsyth replied, "Well no . . . I didn't realise you still needed one to get in!"

Email articles to the Editor, Chris Lee, on: [cwlee@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cwlee@optusnet.com.au)



