



Clan Forsyth

SYDNEY BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

CLAN FORSYTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – SYDNEY BRANCH
PO BOX 396, ROSEVILLE NSW 2069 **March 2010 #1**

NOTICE OF THE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PRECEDED BY A CHURCH SERVICE
LUNCH AFTERWARDS!

Sunday 11th April 2010

The Church service starts at **10.30am** at **Scots Church**, corner of Margaret & York Streets in Sydney. Close to buses and Wynyard Station. All are welcome!

The Clan's Annual General Meeting will then be held in a room at Scots Church from about 11.30am. You may wish to come just for the meeting.

Then enjoy a light lunch at **THE MENZIES HOTEL FROM ABOUT 1PM** with other clan members. The hotel is a short stroll across the park from the church. Lunch is in "The Lobby" with main meals at an average price of around \$17. Drinks, entrees and desserts are extra.





MEMORIES OF A VICTORIAN CHILDHOOD - PART 3

A continuing series by Denise Park (nee Forsyth), a Clan Committee Member

How times have changed!

I have previously written of the Monday washing day. Now I'll continue with a little more of the daily living at 9 Edward Street Gordon.

In the morning my uncle Arnold Walker rose early and made a cup of tea and buttered bread thinly sliced and cut into dainty triangles for the ladies, he would then put in an hour in the garden before washing, breakfasting and going to the business in the big Vauxhall with running boards and the box boot. The car would always be dusted first and uncle would wear a dust coat over his suit, driving gloves and a plaid cap, sometimes I was allowed to ride on the running board while he backed out of the garage, prior to closing the big wooden doors.

The ladies would rise and have a wash, bathing was for Sundays or I was told your skin would fall off. Corseted and dressed, breakfast would be served in the breakfast room with tablecloth, serviettes in designated rings. Grace would be said then porridge, main meal such as chook feet and giblets, scrambled eggs, boiled egg and "soldiers" followed by sliced bread, homemade jam and tea brewed in a teapot with knitted tea cosy.

Over breakfast the day's plans would be made and all would contribute to the conversation.

Each day had its routine, however lunch would be served to coincide with the radio programme 'Blue Hills' on the ABC, after this was over I was allowed to talk!

Lunch would consist of leftovers from the night before, fruit from the garden and the standard bread and jam with the teapot. After lunch we all had a lie down, after which the ladies changed into their afternoon clothes which were ex Sunday go to meeting attire, ex- ex Sunday go to meeting were worn in the morning under aprons. They then groomed themselves to receive visitors or went visiting always armed with garden produce fresh eggs, chutney and jams.

On Thursdays a maiden lady we drove to Sunday Church called, she brought embroidered cotton 'Chesty Bond' singlets with rosebuds and daisies that she worked herself- we had dozens.

The Methodist Minister was a regular caller and sundry members of the local church called to 'pay their respects' as was the term used.

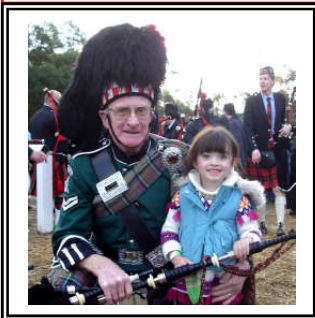
Neighbours as a rule did not call and were always called Mrs and Mr. With good morning, good afternoon the usual greeting and minding your own business expected. If afternoon tea was served on the front veranda and a neighbour passed they would be invited to 'have a cup of tea'.

Afternoon tea was a culinary delight with little sandwiches, Victoria sponge, Dundee cake, Madeira and caraway cake making regular appearances, homemade biscuits, neinish tarts, éclairs, cream horns, butterfly cakes and coconut slices (although these tended to get stuck in dentures and could embarrass the Minister who had loose ones and would have to visit the bathroom to dislodge the clinging coconut).

The drawing room was usually the venue for this social activity and the seating formal. Fine starched napery, fine porcelain trios and silver tea service were always used. Conversation was also formal, no politics or sex although religion was accepted among the church ladies and minister, but never unless you were sure they shared your beliefs as controversial matters were taboo. Health could be discussed providing it was not of a 'delicate nature' by the lifting of an eyebrow or a tilting of the head much could be implied, particularly if I was present 'little pictures have big ears'!

Did you hear about the thoughtful Scotsman who was heading out to the pub? He turned to his wee wife before leaving and said, 'Jeanie, put your hat and coat on lassie.'
She replied, 'Awe lain that's nice. Are you taking me to the pub with you?' 'Nah, just switching the central heating off while I'm oot.'

A visitor to the Isle of Lewis was getting exasperated by day after day of grey cloud and drizzling rain. After two weeks of this he asked a youngster who was passing "Does the weather here ever change?" to which the youngster replied "I don't know. I'm only six years old."



BRIGADOON AT BUNDANOON

Saturday 17th April 2010

The parade starts at 9.30am but get there much earlier for better parking. Pipe bands, highland dancing, caber tossing, other adult and kids' games + many stalls of highland gear and food.

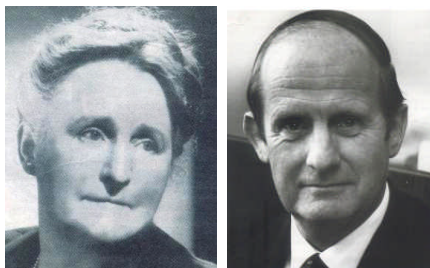
Clan Forsyth will have a tent where you can stop to relax and revive. Bring your family and friends for a wonderful day.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members who have joined the clan: **Margaret Scott of Chatswood and Darren Forsyth of Leichhardt**

CARE ABOUT YOUR CLAN

Share your Forsyth pride with your children and your grandchildren. They are our future. Encourage them to participate and join Clan Forsyth. If every member would spread the word and invite one Forsyth family member to join Clan Forsyth in 2010, we would double our membership. Why not share your newsletter with them today.



ANNIE FORSYTH WYATT and IVOR FORSYTH WYATT

I have been asked, as part of the 60th Anniversary Celebrations of the National Trust, to talk briefly about Annie Forsyth Wyatt and her son, Ivor Forsyth Wyatt. This talk is from my perspective as a grandson of Annie and Ivor's nephew.

I was only about 12 years of age when my grandmother died in 1961, but I have fond memories of her as a kindly, forthright lady. She was caring, loving and spoilt her two grandsons – my brother Roderick and me. At the same time she was strict and didn't stand for any nonsense or cheek.

When I was a child Annie Wyatt lived with her husband, Ivor Bertie Wyatt, in St Ives. My grandfather stalwartly supported all of my grandmother's public endeavours. They established a beautiful home on four acres in Stanley Street. They called their home "Willow Bend" because of the willows trees shadowing a little creek that bubbled through a corner of their property. Originally the property was part of old orchard full of gnarled trees bearing stone fruit and citrus. My grandparents retained many of these trees, so as children we were always eating freshly picked oranges, mandarins, plums and persimmons.

They had purchased the orchard from John Hughes who, in 1861, was first the white child born in the St Ives area. Mr Hughes remained a friend and neighbour of the Wyatts until his death at 90 years in 1954.

My brother and I often visited my grandparents and spent many happy hours playing in their large garden full of flowers, trees and birds. Occasionally we'd arrive after school at a time when my grandmother was chairing a meeting of the Tree Lovers' Civic League. The league was a group of women who fought the habit of early North Shore home owners to chop down all the native trees on their blocks of land before they built. They also tried to stop the practice of dumping building rubbish and excavated soil in local creeks.

Dr Susie O'Reilly was a member of this league, a school friend of my grandmother and one of the first lady doctors in Australia. There was also Mrs Townsend, once a neighbour to Mrs Aneas Gunn who wrote the novel "We of the Never Never." I remember as a child being told that Mrs Townsend's property in central Australia was at one time the largest cattle station in this country, perhaps the world.

The efforts of these women were instrumental in saving many beautiful stands of native trees on the North Shore and helped acquire for the area that envied reputation as one of those "leafy suburbs." When Rod and I arrived from school the women would break from their meeting and make a fuss of us, offering all sorts of delicious cakes and biscuits from beautiful china plates.

As an aside, my grandmother was a marvellous painter of china; decorating plates, bowls and jugs with colourful flower and fruit designs? Our family still has many fine examples of her work. My own mother, Lynette Lee, inherited these artistic talents as a portrait painter. The portraits of Annie and Ivor at the Trust headquarters are my mother's work.

When my grandmother died I was still too young to really appreciate her dedication in trying to save Australia's colonial heritage and natural surroundings. I knew she was a wonderful grandmother and founder of the National Trust but that was about all. Today though, I am often reminded of her legacy to Sydney as I encounter the brass plaques and signs dotted around certain suburbs.

There is one in a bushland reserve overlooking Whale Beach, one in garden dedicated to her and which is located beside Gordon Station and one in Park Avenue, Gordon, outside a house called "Wonga" where the concepts for the National Trust of Australia (NSW) and the Tree Lovers Civic League were born. There is another plaque on a garden seat in the Swain Reserve at Killara plus one at the entrance to Balls Head Reserve in Waverton. Of course there is also this room named in her honour at the National Trust of Australia (NSW) headquarters.

Now I'd like to talk briefly about my uncle, Ivor Forsyth Wyatt, who passed away in August 2004. I was privileged to give a eulogy on behalf of the family at his funeral. I hope I conveyed the picture of a wonderful uncle who cared very much about his family and helped to instill in us the values he'd inherited from his mother about our Australian colonial heritage, natural beauty and the essential need for their conservation.

My early memories of Uncle Ivor were when he lived with his wife Mabel in a house adjacent to my grandparents' home in St Ives. Even as a child I was always aware of the many meetings Uncle Ivor attended. Not knowing quite what a meeting was, it fascinated me that he'd regularly disappear off to a meeting on a weekend or during a week night and return with copious amounts of paperwork. Most of these papers ended up in neat piles on the floors of the lounge and dining room, or on the dining room table itself. They were his filing system. The piles would remain there until they were moved away to another location when Mabel served meals or swept the floor.



In time Ivor and Mabel had a son, Clinton, and later a grandson, Sam. Ivor Wyatt was a family man and Clint and Sam were both "the apples of Ivor's eyes." He encouraged our whole family to be involved with the Trust and we often accompanied him to major National Trust events, including the official openings of Experiment Farm, Everglades, Norman Lindsay's Springwood home and Old Government House.

One of the proudest days of my life was when I watched my Uncle Ivor, as President of the Trust, and the Queen walk together along the path to open Old Government House at Parramatta on 30th April 1970. It was amusing to see my Aunt Mabel trying to keep pace with the Duke of Edinburgh as he strode along.

It was only as I grew older that I realised the incredible effort and commitment Ivor gave to so many organisations and their committees. Foremost was the National Trust, but also there was the Nature Conservation Council, the Clean Water Committee, the Wirrimbirra Sanctuary and even the local St Ives Progress Association, to name just a few.

Most, if not all of the organisations whose meetings he attended, still remain active and influential. I can imagine that today's meetings maybe aren't quite as lively as when my Uncle Ivor was involved, often as The Chair. He was passionate about many things, including the Trust, other worthwhile organisations and of course his home garden which he and his wife Mabel fondly tended together.

Although both Annie Forsyth Wyatt and Ivor Forsyth Wyatt were awarded The OBE, my uncle doesn't have quite the number of plaques and signs that his mother achieved. There are but two that will remind me of his dedication to the preservation of historical buildings and natural beauty. One is a sign beside a small fig tree he planted a few years ago outside this National Trust headquarters building. There is also the sign showing the location of the Ivor Forsyth Wyatt Reserve. You'll find this small parcel of native Australian trees and shrubs at the corner of Link and Mona Vale Roads in St Ives.

Christopher Wyatt Lee (Clan Committee Member) 16th April, 2005

(Ivor Wyatt was a member of the original committee of Clan Forsyth, Sydney Branch)



FORSYTH CASTLES: ECCLESGREIG CASTLE

This is the second article written by Alistair C.W. Forsyth of that Ilk on the Forsyth Castles of Scotland. In our previous issue he wrote about Glengorm Castle. He continues this series of articles with the history of **Ecclesgreig Castle, St. Cyrus, Kincardineshire** by Alistair C.W. Forsyth of that Ilk, Chief of Clan Forsyth.

Continuing our research into Forsyth castles, Ecclesgreig, in the parish of St. Cyrus, Kincardineshire, is not only interesting but also a sad example that these wonderful buildings were not only destroyed by wars but could also be vulnerable to economic circumstances.

It was in 1718 that William Forsyth born in Aberdeen 1687, married Elspeth daughter of Gilbert Gerard of Wealkerhall, Aberdeenshire and they then set up home in Huntley, Aberdeenshire, where their eldest son William was born in 1721. In 1734 William Senior moved to Glasgow where he became a Merchant and was admitted a Freeman of the City of Glasgow in 1735. He died in 1759.

Young William on joining his father's business, was admitted a Freeman of Glasgow in 1746 and in 1753 married Jean daughter of George Phyn who lived at Corse of Monelly, Aberdeenshire. They returned to Huntley where he became a Captain in the Strathbogie Volunteers, and irregular unit formed for local defence following the Jacobite Rising, and he established a woollen mill manufacturing tartan cloth. Their three sons were William, born 1756 who had one daughter, John born 1762 and Joseph born 1764. John and Joseph emigrated to Montreal, Canada.

John Forsyth married Margaret daughter of John Grant of Quebec in 1803, who was the granddaughter of John Grant of Kinorth, Aberdeenshire and the sister of Frederick Grant of Ecclesgreig. The eldest son William Forsyth born 1804, who married his cousin Euretta Jane Grant and succeeded to his maternal uncle's estate of Ecclesgreig on condition he change his name to "Grant". Thus in 1842 he returned to Scotland and became William Forsyth-Grant, of Ecclesgreig.

The genealogy of the family to the present day has not been completed because the descendants still live at St. Cyrus. The castle shown in the picture was built by William, and was a sporting estate until the onset of World War 11 when the Laird was called away to join the Royal Navy where, as Captain of a destroyer, he served as escort to the convoys in the very hazardous task of conveying arms and munitions to Northern Russia.

The period following the war was a devastating one for Scottish estates. Large houses became uneconomic due the expense of maintenance and taxation with the result that many were made uninhabitable by tearing off their roofs so that taxes could no longer be levied. At the same time, in the period between the cessation of hostilities and Britain entering the European Community, when an economic floor price for agricultural production was established, the estates became uneconomic and many were sold. Rather than tear the roof from Ecclesgreig, the Laird removed the floors and boarded up the windows to create a large grain store which, then being an agricultural building, was no longer taxed. However economic pressures eventually resulted in the sale of the arable land and finally the shell of the castle surrounded by its gardens was also sold.

By this time "dry rot" a fungus that destroys and attacks wood, had broken out and in the course of a few years the roof collapsed leaving only the remaining walls surrounded by a few wild and overgrown acres of what was once the gardens. With commendable tenacity, the family did not sell the stable block, which was converted into a comfortable home from where, no doubt, they wait to learn the fate of the castle. Ecclesgreig was one of the Scottish castles situated on the rugged East coast that was visited by Bran Stoker when he was seeking inspiration for his epic story of "Frankenstein".

A tale is told of the Laird, who, with the United Kingdom having just joined the European Common Market, found one morning a French fishing boat that had strategically placed itself at the mouth of the River Northesk, the river which flowed through the Ecclesgreig estate and entered the North Sea. The estate drew a significant part of its income by offering Salmon fishing to sportsmen who came from all over the world for the season.

The French vessel had arrived in time to scoop up the salmon run, as the fish entered the river and if allowed to continue would have undoubtedly ruined the fishing for the year and perhaps for many years, for salmon return to the river where they were born to spawn and provide fish for the following year who in their turn will return. Catching fish at this time will deplete the river and so with daring perhaps born out of dismay at the possible consequences, the Laird leapt into his motor launch and sped out to the fishing intruder firing his shotgun, albeit into the air. The French prudently hauled up their nets and retired. A few days later more fishing boats appeared and so the Laird set off to repeat the tactics of scaring them off. This time, however, some four boats did not retire and produced their own guns, which they fired into the air as they closed in and captured the angry proprietor who was disarmed and bundled into a cabin, his boat secured and towed by the fleet, who, when they had made their haul, set off for France with their captive. At once the matter became a Diplomatic incident but after about 24 hours and much talking, some say shouting, an agreement was reached so that the Laird was released and the French undertook not to fish in the estuary for the salmon run again so, in the spirit of the "Auld Alliance", honour was preserved on all sides.

It is perhaps interesting to take a closed look at William, who established the woollen manufacturing at Huntley. In the course of his business he became a Freeman of Banff and also Inverurie in 1771 and in 1793 designed and made the kilts for the Northern Fencibles, a local unit raised in response for fears raised by the French expansion under Napoleon. In 1794 the Duchess of Gordon approached William Forsyth to design a plaid for the Gordon Highlanders, raised by her husband to become a regular unit in the British Army.

To assist the recruitment in the North East of Scotland the Duchess offered to kiss every man who would join the regiment, not surprisingly the response was spectacular for the Duchess was a famous beauty. The tartan made for the Gordons was based on the Black Watch sett and adapted by the inclusion of a yellow stripe. It was just after this that William decided to produce a sett for his own family, the Forsyths.

The Castle of Ecclesgreig was eventually sold to an erstwhile property developer who, on the basis of a very ambitious plan, which required the building of 200 houses in the policies and the restoration of the castle as an hotel sought planning permission. Planning permission was duly obtained but no development took place. This permission, however, enabled the developer to write up the value of his scheme considerably and then to sell the package to another property company based in Mayfair, London. With the aid of a model and elaborate computer graphics, the public were invited to purchase the houses off plan. The scheme failed and as far as is known, nothing further has happened and it is less likely to progress in the current financial climate.

One Forsyth story: by Ruth Wheat

My story begins with my two great-grandfathers on my father's side, both natives of Scotland, but born in very different circumstances. John Forsyth (the final 'e' of the surname was later dropped) was born in 1826 in Bo'ness, an industrial and mining town on the south bank of the Firth of Forth. At the time of his marriage to Isabella Grant in 1851 his stated occupation was coal miner. Over the next fourteen years they had eight children, moving in 1855 to Blackbraes Village, Muiravonside, a parish of Stirlingshire. This was another coal-rich area, and they lived in a miner's cottage when my grandfather, Walter Grant Forsyth, was born, the youngest of the family. John worked as a stonemason for some time, but had died before 1881, as the Census shows, the effects of coal dust probably having taken its toll. Life would have been hard for Isabella and opportunities few for the children, but Walter showed academic aptitude and went on to Glasgow University, where he had a brilliant scholastic career in the Arts.

At about the same time my other great-grandfather, John Wilson, was born in Edinburgh in 1832 into a middleclass family and had a much more privileged life. As a student he travelled extensively through Europe and gained the degrees of PhD at Heidelberg University and M.A. at Edinburgh. He entered the ministry of the United Presbyterian Church in 1858. Three years later he married Jane Henderson and they settled in Glasgow, where he served in several city parishes, the last one being Sandyford Church. Jane and John also had eight children, but one son died in infancy, the other, a medical student, died in his eighteenth year, so the family was reduced to six daughters. We are lucky to have a copy of a biography of John Wilson, which highlights many of his talents and interests, such as his great love of languages, Continental and classical, and his gift for writing poetry, composing verse to commemorate most important family events. John undertook the training of divinity students, especially in the subjects of Greek and Hebrew. One such student was Walter Forsyth and he became a frequent visitor to the home in Berkeley Terrace. As fate would have it, he married the eldest of the Wilson girls, Jane, in 1897, and the next year he was ordained into the Presbyterian Church.

Jane and Walter took a two-year post in South Brisbane, giving them their their first experience of Australia. Their first son was born here in 1899, and the second, my father, was born back in Glasgow in 1906. They were named in the Scottish tradition, John and Walter, but for most of their lives John was called Ian and Walter was known as Hamish. In 1909 the family decided to emigrate to Australia and served the parish of St Andrews, Newcastle for six years, then on to Sydney, serving Stanmore, Paddington and Balmain parishes. My father was not always a willing participant in the rigorous church programme, three services each Sunday, and eyebrows were raised in the congregation when at 19 he drove up to church on a motorbike!

Like his father-in-law, Walter undertook teaching work in the training of theological students towards the end of his thirty eight year ministry. They returned to Scotland only once for a visit. Some time in the 1920's my grandfather was approached concerning the reformation of the Forsyth clan, but as we know nothing eventuated at that time. Our grandmother, Jane, insisted on being called Jean, and the name carried on for the rest of her life. She was an energetic and accomplished woman, widely travelled, an experienced public speaker, and her cooking and handicraft skills were outstanding. She was honoured in 1937 with the King George VI coronation medal for service to the community, as she worked tirelessly for many organisations, especially those that helped women and children. She in turn honoured her husband's memory after his death in 1944 with the donation of a new pulpit in the Cronulla Church that they were associated with in their retirement. Our grandfather is remembered for his large library of books, containing collected works of many of the great writers such as Dickens and Stevenson, many of which are still in the family.

As to the two 'sons of the manse', theirs is a different story. Ian pursued a career in engineering and Hamish in banking. So ends this stage of our own Forsyth saga.



Rev. Grant & Jean Forsyth



Daughters of John and Jane Wilson and Jane's mother, Mrs Henderson



Another Forsyth

Isabella Grace Forsyth-Whittet was born in Toowoomba, Queensland on 12th February, 2010 at 6.50am. Weight: 6lbs, 2oz or 2780g.

Both mother Emma and Isabella are doing very well. Isabella is the grand daughter of Sydney Branch President, Bill Forsyth. **Congratulations!**

If you have any photos, articles, anecdotes, funny stories, even ancestral Forsyth photos or paintings to show members, post to:

Clan Forsyth, PO Box 396 Roseville 2069

OR email to Judy Forsyth at.... jaforsyth@ozemail.com.au

