



Clan Forsyth

SYDNEY BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

CLAN FORSYTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – SYDNEY BRANCH
PO BOX 396, ROSEVILLE NSW 2069 **February 2011 #1**

NOTICE OF THE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PRECEDED BY A CHURCH SERVICE
LUNCH AFTERWARDS!

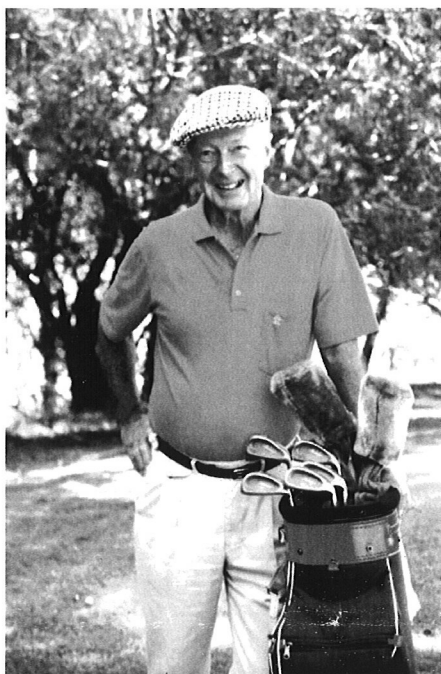
Sunday 27th March 2011

The Church service starts at **10.00am** at **Chatswood South Uniting Church**, corner of Pacific Highway and Mowbray Road, Lane Cove. Parking is available behind the church, with entry from Mowbray Road. All are welcome!

The Clan's **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will then be held in a room behind the church from about 11.00am. You may wish to come just for the meeting. Following will be a tour of the cemetery where some Forsyths are buried.

Then enjoy a light lunch from about NOON at **THE GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL** with other clan members. The hotel is directly across Mowbray Road from the church.





RAY FORSYTH 27/7/1922 – 15/10/2010

A Past President of Clan Forsyth, Sydney Branch

Ray Forsyth was born in 1922. He grew up in Willoughby, across the road from the site of the original Forsyth Tannery built by his great great grandfather James Forsyth. Willoughby then was still largely virgin bush and Ray often enjoyed walks to Middle Harbour through the nearby bush with his dog Bonza. Ray attended Willoughby Public School and North Sydney Boys High School and was a dedicated and able student. He was an accomplished cricketer and played with North Sydney grade teams. He also spent some of his time involved with this church, St Thomas' North Sydney, both as a church organist and with the church repertory group, performing his much loved Gilbert & Sullivan.

World War II intervened and for five years of his young life took him to places like North Queensland and New Guinea. As an only child he had a somewhat protected and sheltered upbringing and the war years introduced him to a tougher environment. This was made evident by his war years being spent in shorts and shoes whereas his childhood had seen him covered with long sleeves and hats, his mother being of country stock knowing the damage the sun inflicts on fair skin. Needless to say she barely recognised her son on his return from the war, he being a somewhat different colour than he had been when he went away. Apparently his vocabulary had expanded as well.

Ray had started his working life in the Commonwealth Bank, although he had a desire to study law, but the war had limited the opportunity to pursue this. His

career in the bank progressed well and when he went away to the War it was no surprise that he had responsibilities commensurate with his talents, such as paymaster duties, store recorder and the like. Some of these enabled him to ride a motor bike in order to pay the troops distributed across the Atherton Tableland, and he enjoyed the freedom of riding across the country. His unit was part of the Australian Army engineers, and he learnt many building and maintenance tasks which stood him in good stead in his home life in the years to come, being able to build sheds, fences and so on. Fortunately he was not injured in the War but it did leave its mark on him, as it did most soldiers. He had several bouts of malaria, dengue fever and other maladies common to troops in battle areas in the tropics. These maladies would revisit him several times in later life.

After the war, Ray returned to work in the Commonwealth Bank and it was there he met Joan, his partner of over 60 years. They were a fine partnership producing two children David and Margaret. The bank saw his potential and gave him the opportunity of transferring to the newly formed Reserve Bank, where he spent the rest of his career. They also moved him to Melbourne for two years, but he stayed there for eleven. During his time in Melbourne he developed two of the great diversions of his leisure life, support for Australian Rules Football and golf. He became an avid supporter of Collingwood Football Club and attended most home games with a coterie of mates from all walks of life who became life long friends. When he moved back to Sydney, he resumed his interest in rugby and especially the NSW Waratahs and the Australian Wallabies, but never lost his love for AFL. After many years he transferred his allegiance from Collingwood to the Sydney Swans, although this year's premiership win for Collingwood, the first since 1990, gave him great pleasure.

His career at the Reserve Bank continued to prosper, and he took on a number of senior roles, including in 1966, responsibility for the roll out of decimal currency across metropolitan Melbourne. The family sometimes wondered what the police would make of his Melbourne Street Directory, which had every bank branch marked and notated on the maps. He also had a stint in Karachi at a Conference where it is told someone slipped him a 'mickey finn.' The interesting part of that episode was that he entertained many people on the piano for some hours, even though he had not played for many years and had no memory of the night afterwards. While in Melbourne he had a stint as head of the note printing branch and was involved in the development and production of the first polymer bank notes, a major achievement in which Australia's Reserve Bank was a world leader.

The Bank sent Ray back to Sydney in 1967, and he continued up through the management ranks. In 1973 they sent him to London as one of the bank's two representatives. He enjoyed the experience of living and working in London and the interaction with the world's central banking community at places like the International Monetary Fund. He was in London during the Khemlani Loans Scandal and had some interesting tales of the events surrounding it and its effect on Australia's reputation and ultimately the downfall of the Whitlam Government.

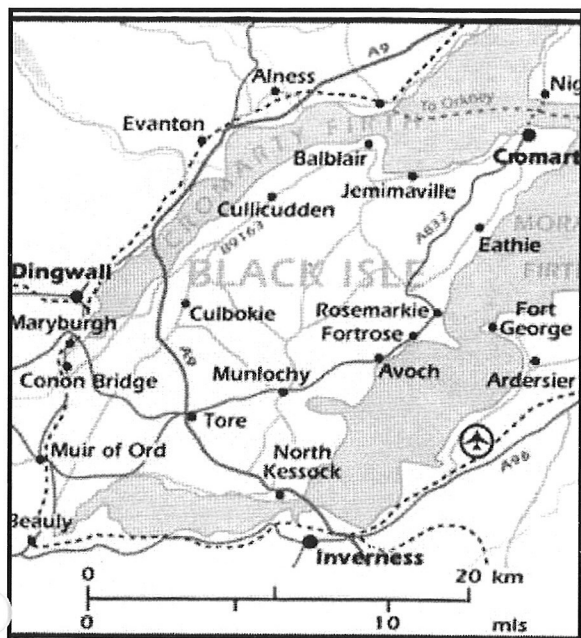
After returning to Sydney, he had a number of senior roles including his final position as NSW Manager for the Reserve Bank. His reputation was of a considerate and capable manager, and many of his staff remained in contact long after he retired. He had an ability to remember faces and names, obtained through diligence and application, two of his strong traits. He believed in treating people as one would like to be treated, one of his favourite precepts, and one which he lived his whole life. He was also a determined man, and applied himself to any task as required, believing if a job is worth doing it should be done well. His ability with numbers and memory for figures was something which stayed with him his whole life. He could quote car registrations, licence numbers and figures from many years ago, and was always a source of information for facts and figures as many will attest.

He retired at age 58 and thus has had 30 years of most enjoyable retirement. He did some voluntary work with a couple of charities over several years including some sheltered workshops and autistic children.

His great passion for golf and the many country golf tours he had with close mates were the source of much enjoyment. The camaraderie with his playing mates at Roseville Golf Club was enduring and he was playing up until he was taken to hospital. He and Joan also had a town house in Nelson Bay for many years and spent much of their early retirement

WILLIAM FORSYTH OF CROMARTY, SCOTLAND

By Alistair C.W. Forsyth of that Ilk, Clan Chief



The 17th century had proved a miserable time for Scotland.

Although the Reformation had been successfully concluded with very little bloodshed, it was not long before a power struggle ensued between the moderate and radical wings of the movement. The King, on succeeding to the throne of England, had left for London adding to the political instability in Scotland. These difficult times were made worse by a succession of poor harvests, a growing population, and disease, in the form of repeated plague and fevers, which was often a prelude to typhoid. It is said that some 40% of all children died before reaching adulthood.

In his memoirs, William Forsyth wrote: "Younger sons of good family who would have gone, only half a century before, to serve as mercenaries in the armies of the continent were learning to employ themselves as merchants at home". William's grandfather had been a farmer in Elginshire and his younger son James became a stonemason and builder in Elgin. But after more than thirty years James retired and opened a small shop in the town and port of Cromarty which had become very busy and prosperous due to a thriving herring industry. James himself was considered prosperous and had married late in life before moving to

Cromarty, William, his eldest son had been born in Elgin in 1722.

At the age of 16, William left school and was placed by his father in a London Counting House. But his apprenticeship was short-lived. Upon the sudden death of his father in 1739, William's widowed mother asked him to return home to look after their business, which supported her, two younger brothers and two daughters.

By now the herring shoals, on which the town's prosperity had been based, had moved away leaving the townspeople to return to their former poverty. William realised that the shop would not now survive but his experience in London suggested an opening for merchant house. He now purchased a small sloop for coastal trading between the communities which lay on the Firths of Dingwall, Dornock and Beaully. With no proper roads in the highlands of Ross and Sutherland he was more easily able to reach the towns of Tain, Dingwall, Dornock, Campbelltown and Fortrose. He also hired a larger sloop to enable him to trade with Holland and the larger towns in southern Scotland. His venture was an instant success. He imported teas, wines, spices, glassware and Flemish tiles together with items of decorative cabinet work. He provided blacksmiths with iron from Sweden, ships' carpenters with tar and spars from Norway, whilst for the farmers he obtained flax seed from Holland. His exports were traditional for the period, being malt, wool, fish and hides. The countryside around Cromarty had over the years had been denuded of timber as trees were used for winter fuel and it was during one of his trading trips to Newcastle in England that he became acquainted with the "black stones", as coal was called then. At once he realised the possibility of this trade and he began to import coal to the Highland communities he supplied, allowing the depleted forests to regenerate.

William, now 24 years old, had been trading for more than six years when the rebellion broke out. On the arrival of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. The turmoil in the Highlands brought his trading activities to an end. As the Clans moved south with the Prince, so the peace and security of the communities went with them. Bands of renegades remained and terrorised the population robbing and killing at will. Such men occupied Cromarty for a while looting the shops for food and clothing. They also broke into William Forsyth's warehouse and consumed all his wine stock.

With the failure of the Jacobite campaign in England, the Prince's Highland army marched back to Scotland whereupon the small English military garrison at Inverness, realising they would be surrounded and overcome, withdrew across the Cromarty Firth to Cromarty. There they took a ship and sailed away northwards. The next day an English Government agent arrived in Cromarty carrying a large sum of money, being the arrears of pay for the 1600 troops that had just departed. News came that the Highland rebels, aware of the agent's mission were pursuing him and it was at this moment that William's coastal sloop suddenly returned to port. The agent immediately boarded her and she sailed North after the retreating troops. Scarcely had she left when the rebels arrived and seized William and ransacked his house looking for the money. Disappointed, they took him to Inverness and threw him in Jail. But after two days interrogation, realising the money was irrecoverable, released him on the news that the Duke of Cumberland's army had reached the river Spey. William returned home in time to climb a nearby hill from which he witnessed the smoke rising from the battlefields of Culloden.

The tragic aftermath of Culloden is well documented. Redcoat soldiers combed the countryside looking for the Prince's army. Anyone likely to have been connected was dragged out and shot notwithstanding that they might be wounded. The same fate befell anyone thought to be sheltering rebels and sometimes whole villages were put to the flames. However, when the King's troops reached Cromarty they skirted the town and moved on without their usual search and the town was spared. Had they in fact carried out a search they would have discovered dozens of rebels, some badly wounded, resting with the townspeople. It was believed that this unusual behaviour was because William had helped their agent deliver pay to the fleeing Inverness garrison.

By an Act of 1747 the powers of heritable jurisdiction enjoyed by the chiefs and barons were abolished in an attempt to break the old feudal system. Justice was administered by the Sheriff Courts and for the first time Justices of the Peace, who were also empowered to administer minor transgressions.

William Forsyth recognised as an important leader of his community, was appointed for Cromarty. Hitherto administration of the law had been divided between the Heritable Proprietors of barons, acting in the King's name, and the church. The appointment of Forsyth was welcomed, for during his whole time of service dealing with cases of local quarrels, particularly land disputes, smuggling, petty theft and brawling, not one of his judgements was ever appealed or challenged. He would often settle petty disputes amicably by inviting the parties to sit with him and resolve their difficulties over a glass of his best whiskey.

Concerned over the poverty of his community, William sought to introduce the linen weaving industry to Cromarty using the locally grown flax, which had hitherto been sold to merchants in southern Scotland. He hired spinners to teach the local people how to use the spinning wheel to spin yarn which was then turned into fine linen cloth. As the trade grew he supplemented local supplies of flax by importing bales from Holland and even Russia. The finished product was then shipped by him in his own vessel to be sold in Leith, Newcastle and London. It was The British Linen Bank, established in Edinburgh in 1746 that selected Forsyth to be their Agent in the North of Scotland and this enabled him to help his local community by facilitating his trade.

Each year William took his family on holiday in Elgin with his Uncle Alexander's family. Alexander was also a merchant, whose son Joseph wrote the standard guide book of the day "Forsyth's Italy". a work bought by all those embarking on the "Grand Tour". During one of his visits William's Uncle recommended the employment of a young apprentice called Charles Grant. Young men eagerly sought a position with William's successful business and he was particularly pleased with Charles Grant, who, on completing his apprenticeship took a position with The East India Company in London and after a few years rose to become Chairman of its Board of Directors.

George Ross, a native of Ross-Shire returned from London, where he had made a large fortune as an army agent. He purchased a local estate and soon became firm friends with William. It was on William's suggestion that the two men built a large new pier to accommodate larger vessels and expand the town's trading position. They also built a brewery to provide a market for local grain as well as put a curb on smuggling which plagued the district. In the same year, 1772, William purchased a farm in which he was able to practice the new ideas that were being spread in Scotland for improving cultivation. With the rise in population there was a demand for more food. William also built himself a new house within the town that was much admired, for at that time it was the largest house within the borough. Although William had little time for recreation he was passionately devoted to the pastime of golf where he was able to meet many of the local landowners who, after an afternoon, would join him for a hospitable dinner in "Forsyth House". It was said that his house often resembled a crowded inn, for he would welcome many visiting dignitaries rather than they be obliged to stay at the local hostelry. He was also an Elder of the Kirk for more than forty years, a position he took very seriously and which enabled him to extend his generosity to the poor and sick, not only amongst his flock, but anyone in need who crossed his path.

It was in 1764 that he had met and married Elisabeth Grant daughter of Rev. Patrick Grant of Duthel in Strathpey. She was his untiring support and they enjoyed thirty six years of a happy marriage, during which she bore him nine children of which only two sons and two daughters survived. Patrick, the eldest became a writer with the East India Company but died, probably of heatstroke, in Calcutta, aged only twenty. The second son, John, went to a counting house in London and, through the influence of Charles Grant his father's friend, also obtained a post with the company in India and became keeper of their warehouses in Calcutta. He married Miss Mary Ann Farmer and had a daughter Mary Elisabeth. John died in Calcutta in 1823. Catherine, the elder daughter, married Isaac Forsyth a banker in Elgin in 1823 but died without heirs in 1826. Isabella, the youngest, married Captain Alexander MacKenzie of Scatwell who served in the Royal Marine, but she died in 1823 without children. William had died in 1799 and his wife in 1806. When their son John died in 1823, the Forsyth properties in Cromarty were inherited by his daughter Mary Elisabeth Forsyth who returned from India. Although she never married she was loved by the community for her charitable work.

Source References: William's own memoirs, "A Scotch Merchant of the 18th Century" by Hugh Millar, Published 1839. The Cromarty Court House Museum.

Those who visited Scotland in 1999, will remember visiting the Forsyth House, and being invited in to have a look at it by a young daughter of the house. Parents she told us were not at home. Even though we would have loved a look inside, thought there might be strife for her when they arrived home, and so we declined her offer. *Judy Forsyth*

SNAPPER ISLAND

At 1.65 hectares Sydney Harbour's smallest island is at the confluence of the Lane Cove and Parramatta rivers, and has a connection to the Forsyths. Bob Clarke, a heritage planner with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust said what you see there is one man's vision for an entire island. The man was **Leonard E. Forsythe**, an incorrigible one-eyed (the other was glass) farrier and Gallipoli digger who founded Drummoyne's Navy League Sea Cadets in 1921. Ten years later he leased Snapper Island for a tiny rent and set up the training depot. There he would train boys 13 to 18 in all aspects of seamanship. He also oversaw the reclamation work of the stone sea walls in the shape of a vessel. Two cabbage tree palms were planted as 'masts' and a hotchpotch of buildings erected. They were painted grey and labelled as decks, cabins, galley and bridge. Forsythe died in 1983 aged 91. The cadets were evicted by the Commonwealth Government but this was later overturned. However numbers had dwindled and eventually an old caretaker handed the keys to the new custodian, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. There is still much restoration to do as the buildings are dilapidated and home to the seagulls.

years enjoying its aquatic pleasures, and especially the prawns and oysters. He enjoyed early morning swims at Balmoral with cousin Reg, and when at home was closely followed by his favourite dog Sandy.

Above all though Ray was a family man, and was close not only to Joan and his children Margaret and David, their partners Martin and Sue, and grandsons James and John, but also to his cousins and uncles and aunts. Perhaps it was an effect of being an only child, but more likely it was his fundamental belief in family values. Above all Ray was a good and selfless man, who always put family and friends before himself, and who lived his life according to his principles of honesty and fair play.

By David Forsyth, Ray's son



MEMORIES OF A VICTORIAN CHILDHOOD - PART 5

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

Having experienced some ill health recently I was reflecting on the differences between the past ways of dealing with indispositions and the present system.

I inherited a wonderful old medical book entitled *The New Encyclopaedia - Our Home Physician - The Good Samaritan - Family Medicine*. This has a fly leaf inscription - Presented to Mrs. R Forsyth by her affectionate husband on her thirty fifth birthday September 25th 1883. A very weighty tome also used also to press flowers, and delighting my childhood with gory

illustrations of suppurating sores. Including a guide to phrenology and how much opium would be needed to do an amputation. The word morbid was used frequently. As Medical doctors were not always available the early families coped as best they could with what was available, and used books such as this as a guide.

When my aunt contracted diphtheria round 1886, the road past the family home had tanbark laid to muffle the sound of the horses and carts passing to the tannery. She fortunately recovered.

Two little sisters were not so lucky one was hit on the head when walking behind a swing and little Florabel Forsyth was eating a peach when she choked on the skin - I still peel peaches!

The articles on home birthing were fascinating and directed that the corsets should be loosened and no more than 3 petticoats should be worn. Delivery should not be attempted on a feather mattress as the patient and babe may not be fully visible. The mother should not stand for 3 weeks or 'morbid results' would occur!

The selection of wet nurse specified a woman of good character, not given to imbibing spirituous liquor.

Moving forward to my childhood some of the old poultices and inhalations were still used, and indeed I still resort to some of these old remedies. When ill one went to bed and stayed there until the family doctor allowed one to sit in a chair, out of a draught and in the sun with a rug wrapped round, light nourishing meals, lots of fresh squeezed orange juice.

Convalescence was next with a trip to the mountains or sea with walks in the fresh air and healthy food, until 'the roses came back to your cheeks' It was all really rather pleasant.

Now one is expected to soldier on, fill ourselves up with drugs and feel a martyr generously spreading viruses.

Now if hospitalised you have to be either in ICU or very fit as no more bed baths and back rubs with metho and talc. As soon as possible patients are discharged, returning to day clinics resembling Hieronymus Bosch paintings where they wait for hours.

No more convalescence as one goes from sick bed to work with no transition, consequently relapses are common and with an impaired immune system unable to cope.

Minnie Forsyth Gates was for many years on the board of Royal North Shore Hospital Sydney so consequently on my admissions to hospital I would be visited by Auntie Minnie and Matron. This caused panic to the nurses but assured me of the utmost attention and indulgences. How times change!

Yes, we have many advances in medical science, the alleviating of pain and anaesthesia advances are wonderful but sometimes the old cossetting would be appreciated.

Clan Website

By Tim Crossley, Branch Treasurer

The Forsyth Clan website can be found at <http://www.clanforythaustralia.org/>. The site is still under construction with only the family history of James Forsyth, The Tanner from Willoughby, having been loaded so far along with recent newsletters. You can search the site for your ancestor or browse the family photos or photos of headstones of family members. The photos also contain images of articles from old newspapers about the family. You might find these interesting. Clan Newsletters can be found under the Documents Tab on the Website. There is no need to register to use the site as all information is posted to the public access area of the site.

Privacy: The website presents the family trees of Forsyth families and as such consideration has been given to what information is made available. We have followed the current guidelines for privacy presenting only information on births older than 100 years, marriages more than 50 years ago or deaths more than 30 years ago, unless the information is in the public domain, i.e. such as a birth or death notice in a paper, a published family history, etc.

Contributing information to the Clan Website: If you have information you would like to contribute to the website such as photos, documents, or your family tree please contact the webmaster at ClanForsythAustralia@hotmail.com, or send material to that address. If you would like someone from the Clan to come and scan your photos or documents for loading to the site and preservation please make contact.