

# CLAN FORSYTH SOCIETY – AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND BRANCH  
February 2012



Well here we are a month down in the New Year. Hope every one had a wonderful Christmas. It all seems so long ago. Hope no one has been washed away this year. Last years floods are still fresh in our minds and now they are having them again out in the western part of the state. I know we complained about the drought that went on for so long, now we are complaining about the rain. Are we ever satisfied???

## Clan Camp

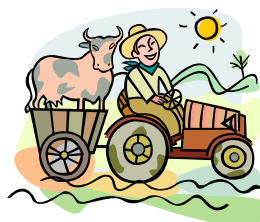
Back in October we had our Annual Clan Camp at Donnybrook. Those who went along had a wonderful time. Even got Des & Dot Phillips up playing disc bowls. Well done. Most of our Scottish Country Dancers were present and put on an exhibition at the bowls club. This was really well received and soon the dance floor was full of people willing to give it go. Everyone had a really great time.

*Picture from left, Disc Bowl Winners, Rob Kerkin & Dot Phillips, Val Ashton, Runner ups, Stacey & Monique Ashton*



## Annual Clan Dinner

That time of year has rolled around again. On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012 our dinner will be held at Harrisville School of Arts once again. See flyer for more information. It is always a great night of entertainment, food & dancing. As this is the 'Year of the Farmer', we have adopted this as our theme. Hope to see you all there.



## 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 our Queensland President, Val Ashton and her husband Vic, celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They first met at a dance way back in February 1961. Vic was working as a steward in the RAAF Amberley Mess and Val worked as a cook at the Ipswich CWA Rest Home. It didn't take the couple long to decide they would share their lives together. They became engaged in July and married by November. When you know it's the one why wait around. When they were first married they lived in the house on the Southern Amberley Road corner, at that time a shell which had to be finished before they moved in. In fact, on their first night spent in the house, one side was covered by a tarp. As they did for their whole life, the couple worked side by side, even



at this task, with Val nailing every floorboard as Vic continued with the fit out. They went on to have four children, Alan, Glenys, Lynette & Stuart. Now they also have 10 grandchildren ranging in age from 24 down to 2 years old. Their community involvement was a huge part of the couple's life. In the early days, both helped out at the Amberley Youth Club. Val was involved with CWA, as she still is today, and Vic in the church union cricket as president for 16 years and selector for much of that time. Val was involved with Harrisville Pony Club and the Illawarra and Jersey cattle associations. They worked hard on their farm at Amberley until they retired in 2005 and are now settled in the seaside town of Donnybrook. They love travelling, both overseas and around Australia. They celebrated their anniversary at the Harrisville School of Arts surrounded by family and friends. Their children proudly recognised their parent's strong marriage during the celebrations. They spoke of how the couple had always worked side by side through good times and those not so good, the example they had set for their children and the love they had for their large circle of family and close friends.

## Wallace McLeod Forsyth

Wally Forsyth passed away on the 2 November 2011, one week short of his 87 birthday on the 8 November.

The following was the Eulogy for Wally, read by Wally's daughter Pam, it provides a great insight to a unique and well loved member of our family.



Wally had a saying when anyone passed on – "Well that's something they haven't done before." We will explore some of what he had done already.

Wallace McLeod Forsyth was born on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1924 at Rosewood, Queensland, third child to Stanley and Ethel Forsyth.

Legend has it that he was named after a rich relative in Scotland in hope of receiving an inheritance. This did not come to pass, so may not be true, but never let the facts get in the way of a good story.

Granny and Poppa Forsyth, as they were called, raised a family of 1 daughter and 6 sons among the extensive Forsyth clan. The love of family was to form the backbone of Wally's entire life. We have a sense of the type of boy he was by the fact that it took 6 years for Granny to run him to ground so that he could be baptised into the Methodist Church.

Wally was brought up on a diet of hard work and discipline with an affinity

for farming. Rumour had it that he was responsible for burning down the hay stack. Granny had him hide under the floorboards of the house to avoid the sting of Poppa's strap. Wally maintained his innocence to the end. He also carried a sense of discipline forward in his life.

The family moved to the Monto district and settled at Langley in the 30's. Wally milked the cows before going to school and after. (You know the story, back in my day how tough it was.) Quick and bright, it could be imagined in another era Wally could have gone on to be anything he wished. But his destiny was to be on the land. Jeff said the other day he never wasted an hour of daylight for 70 years. He was to pay the price for this in later years.

May was the eldest and mothered her brothers. Into their 80s May would come to Green Valley and boss "brother" around. Wally grumbled but he really loved it.

Jim and Wally were just over a year apart in age and in their teens fostered an interest in mechanics, and girls. During the war they kept their motorbikes running on jungle juice. Had to chase those girls somehow.

Both May and Jim predeceased Wally.

George is younger than Wally and shared a common life story of farming and machinery. They were to form a stronger bond which we will come to shortly.

Bill was to farm a property at Bukali just to the back of Wally's place. They both had several children of similar age and all enjoyed the interaction of the closeknit community surrounding the school.

Don loves horses and he took Wally's farm horse "Hiawatha" to the show and won a trophy. For many years Don and Wally have enjoyed their weekly chats on the phone.

Gordon is the youngest of the brothers and Wally was proud of all he achieved. He was also grateful for the support he gave him this past year.

Then it came time for Wally to settle down. I'd like to share George's reminisces of the time. Wally was a bit of a lad when he was younger. There was a calendar in the dairy that he and Jim would write initials on. Wednesday one week, different initial to Saturday and so on. Then it was the same one for a long time, yes those last initials were ES. So he had set his sights on the young Edna Schimke.

Edna says it was because she could drive a tractor, ride a horse and was a decent cook – all essential for a life on the land. However it surely must have been much, much more than that for they celebrated their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 28<sup>th</sup> August this year.

In fact their marriage was so inspiring that 4 years later George married Edna's sister Beryl and so was formed an extraordinary family tie.

So Wally and Edna got on with marriage, having a family and building a full and successful life. Wally had an old ton truck, a box of spanners and about \$20 in the bank.

The first years were share farming, carting coal, whatever it took, Wally worked to provide for his family. Firstly Gary was born, then Pam. He couldn't always remember how old his children were, but generally could work it out by the relevant flood or drought that occurred at the time.

Eventually Wally and Edna managed to buy their own dairy farm at Bukali just outside Monto. The buying price was the same as he paid for his last ride on mower at Green Valley. No wonder he was upset when Jeff tried to sell the mower for \$5,000 earlier this year.

Once again the elements were to conspire against Wally's farming efforts. Drought came, he had an ever increasing family (by this time Jeff was born) and things were tough. The bills were twice the amount of the cream cheque. So he took his first ever new car to town to Smacker McEnery and traded it for an old ute and some cash.

As always happens things got better and the family grew and prospered. Wally and Edna became very involved in the Bukali community. Tuesday was cards, Friday the movies, Saturday the local dance, Sunday visiting relatives. Granny and Poppa Forsyth, Granny Schimke and the large extended family formed a wonderful environment for raising a family. Lynda was born and then Debbie completed the family.

Wally managed to find time to keep involved in the local Bukali school which the children attended. Lynda thought it was so cool when he bought a spiny anteater for show and tell. Gary, Pam and Jeff think that between Wally and Arby Dean they learnt just about all there was to know.

Always behind the scenes was Edna, and she and Wally made a good team both working hard, sometimes going one step forward and two backward. Keeping the peace, feeding and nurturing the family.

Wally's good mate was Wally Loveday and they were both on the same telephone party line (young people seek explanation later). Most nights after tea they would get on the phone for a natter. This generally coincided with washing up. It was to be 30 years before Wally washed or dried a dish. That's what he had kids for.

In the early 60s Wally decided he would swap the neverending tie of the dairy farm for the sugar cane farm and the family moved to Green Valley just outside Childers.

Guess what, the next year was a drought and Wally was forced to dig ditches for government relief money, but he stuck to the farm and soldiered on. The elements were to remain a constant. One time a freak storm came across the farmhouse and the iron started to flap on the roof. Wally did what anyone would do – drove the Commer truck alongside, climbed on the high cane side and tried to nail it down. He had to admit defeat and the roof went, and 5 inches of rain invaded the house. Later that morning he stood in the kitchen, in his raincoat, eating cold leftover stew (can't waste it you know), and then he got on with the job.

The children grew up, started their own families and the cycle continued. Wally was very proud of his 5 children, 14 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren, he loved them and they loved him back. Above all he loved Edna.

Wally continued to work hard, moving his cane assignment out to the flat ground, clearing the ground with dozers, planting the crop and it became known as "The Bush". Who knows how many miles he drove backwards and forwards, before he retired from farming in 1996.

His affair with machinery continued on with his precious grader, of which he knew every little idiosyncrasy on how it worked and what to do for repairs. In fact, son-in-law John was seeking some advice from Wally just a few days ago regarding repairs to their grader, but unfortunately he was too ill to help out. After moving from the farmhouse to Harney Street, Wally and Edna decided to build a new house down on the flat in Green Valley Court. Not long ago Wally recalled the costs involved and documentary evidence proved him to be almost spot on.

While Wally tried his hand at wood turning; Edna gardened. However Wally wasn't averse to receiving praise for his contribution to the lovely garden, minimal though his input may have been.

Some years ago Jeff in his wisdom acquired some miniature horses for the grandchildren. They became a reason for Wally to get out of bed every morning to feed them. Wally also liked dogs, though it has been some time since he had one of his own, he was more than happy to get attached to other peoples. The past year, Wally's health started to deteriorate. The constant exposure to the sun caused irreparable damage but he chose to travel to Townsville for treatment. Perhaps it was really for one last battle with the elements, as Cyclone Yasi, the biggest cyclone ever, bore down on Queensland. However all was well.

Eventually Wally returned to Childers, where Edna devoted the next six months to him, and his main wish was to be with her. About a month ago Wally was admitted to hospital with a number of health issues. Renowned for his own portfolio of sayings, jokes and generally dry wit Wally became a favourite with the wonderful nurses at the Childers Hospital, because he always had a comeback line even when he shouldn't have felt like it.

A particular trait of Wally's was his ability to power nap. He was known to throw a bag on the floor of the shed out the bush, lie down, have a kip and get up and go again. Following retirement his favourite spot was on the day bed in the laundry. He always said he was practicing for the big sleep. The last little while he was practicing real hard.

Wally always had the hard and calloused hands of a hard working farmer, but nobody minded. His hands grew softer as his work grew less, and it became obvious that his hard work was nearly over.

He passed away peacefully in his sleep on Wednesday morning safe in the knowledge of how much he was loved by Edna and his family.

Enjoy your rest Wally, because you of all people deserve it.

## Get Well Wishes

We have had Keith Noe and Heather Forsyth on the sick list this year. They have both had surgery but now recovering well.

