



Murray Clan Society of NSW

Newsletter – October 2012

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Greetings to our Members and Friends

Welcome to our October Newsletter. We have a bumper issue this time, and we hope that you will all find some interesting reading. Thanks to Denise Heath and Julie Evans for sending in a couple of great articles. The research that Julie and her cousin Barb Farrell are doing is turning up some fascinating material about their ancestor Bridget Ryan which I am sure you will enjoy. Bridget and her husband James Murray had thirteen children, so there will be many people with a special interest in this story.

Don't forget to let us know if you have an email address and are receiving this by post. Please note the information about the 2013 gathering and let us know what you think about the proposal for 2014.

Annual Gathering 2013

We wish to advise that the Annual Gathering next year will be held on Saturday 20th April, 2013. The Wingham Services Club has been booked, so please set aside the date in your diaries.

Our next Newsletter will contain more details of the programme and the cost. The Committee has had considerable feedback about the nature of our Annual Dinners and we are looking at a slightly different format next year. We will still be holding a formal dinner, but rather than invite a special speaker, we intend to approach five members to speak for about five minutes each on topics relating to the Clan Society and our Scottish heritage.

We will still have items of entertainment, hopefully piping and Scottish dancing, but no continuous live music. One important piece of feedback we have received is that members want the opportunity to meet and have conversations with their extended families and other members, to share stories and information, to get to know people and generally communicate. We hope that the 2013 format will facilitate this. We are looking at using recorded Scottish music as background but at low volume so as not to inhibit conversation.

The Committee is anxious to meet the needs and wishes of members, and we hope that the 2013 gathering will achieve this.

Annual General Meeting 2012

The AGM on 8th September reaffirmed the policy of holding our annual gatherings in conjunction with the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival every second year. It was agreed that in the years when we hold separate gatherings, they be held between April and June but not within four weeks of Bonnie Wingham. This keeps our gatherings to approximately the same period each year.

We have amended the Constitution to ensure that the AGM can be held each year on the same weekend as the gathering, thereby removing the anomaly that we experienced this year. If anyone would like a copy of the revised Constitution please let me know.

Annual Gathering 2014

I realise that it's a long way off, but in 2014 we are again due to hold our gathering in conjunction with the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival. We are letting you know now, because the 2014 Festival will be an exceptional event. The Scottish Australian Heritage Council, just for that year, will be transferring the celebration of Scottish Heritage Week from Sydney to Wingham! The Earl and Countess of Dunmore, Malcolm and Joy Murray, have accepted an invitation to preside over the festivities.

What is so special about 2014? The reason for the excitement is that 24th June, 2014 is the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, where in 1314, Scottish forces led by King Robert Bruce imposed a crushing defeat on the English forces led by King Edward II. It was an important battle in the fight for Scottish independence from England. Now of course we don't celebrate it in the gloating, triumphal way that some cultures celebrate centuries-old battles, to perpetuate old hatreds and divisions. After all, most of us probably have English ancestry as well as Scottish, with a smattering of other nationalities as well. Rather, we acknowledge Bannockburn as a significant event in Scottish history.

The tentative plan is to hold a Grand Scottish Ball on the Saturday night of the Festival (22nd June), followed by a formal Bannockburn Dinner on the Sunday.

The Committee has agreed that we should be part of these celebrations. The difficulty for us would be that the only time we could hold our own function would be on the Friday night, 21st June. The Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival Committee has indicated that if we wish to hold a Friday night function, just for that year, we could have the Earl and Countess of Dunmore all to ourselves for the evening.

We have nearly two years to think about it, but we would be interested to hear opinions from members about this proposal, especially those from outside the Manning district. Could we manage a Friday night just for once? Please let us know what you think.

Bridget Murray, the Irish Famine, AFL and a Television Program: A son and daughter of Listowel meet across time

Contributed by Julie Evans, Bridget's great-great-granddaughter

Bridget's Early Years

Bridget Murray nee Ryan, a daughter-in-law of our ancestor Isabella Murray, was born 25 December 1835 in Bruff, Ireland. Little is known of her early life – family lore is that she was educated by French Nuns. It might have been the Order of The Faithful Companion of Jesus who came to Limerick, not far from Bruff, in 1844.

Research suggests that her parents were probably Johanna Hynes and Launcelot (Lanty) Ryan, who married in Bruff in July 1831. Records show that a Launcelot Ryan was tried for bigamy in Limerick in 1837 and was transported to Australia for seven years. This would explain why Bridget was said to have a father in Sydney when she came out as a Famine Orphan in 1850. There is no indication that they ever reunited.

Somehow Bridget ended up in a Workhouse in Listowel, a market town in County Kerry, Ireland. We can only assume that her mother died leaving Bridget alone and destitute. She was selected for emigration to Australia under the Earl Grey Scheme.

The Earl Grey Scheme was the brain-child of Sir Earl Grey, the Secretary of State for Colonies, and was designed to meet an Australian demand for domestic servants and marriageable young women. It would also serve to reduce overcrowding in Irish workhouses.

In the late 1840s many ships came to Australia bringing young girls travelling alone. The orphans arrived in Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart and Port Phillip and from these ports were spread across eastern Australia. Many suffered at the hands of their employers and husbands with beatings and violence. Others found prosperity in their new land. Many married successful gold miners, landowners, farmers and shop keepers and led happy and fulfilling lives in Australia. The scheme was relatively short-lived - lasting only two years.

Arrival in Australia

Bridget left Plymouth on the *Thomas Arbuthnot* on 28 October 1849. She arrived in Australia on 3 February 1850, having celebrated her 14th birthday on board. She was on one of the last vessels as the scheme was suspended in May 1850.

The girls were housed at Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney until they moved on, to Yass, or another inland town, or were found employment. Bridget spent 10 days at Hyde Park Barracks and then went to employment with Captain Duncan McKellar at Waterview House in Balmain. He was a Master Mariner.

Bridget marries James Murray

It is not known how Bridget met her husband, James Murray, who had come to Australia with siblings in 1848. Perhaps because Bridget's employer was also a Scot, there was a connection with the Murray family. Perhaps James, who had been working in Sydney, had business with Captain McKellar. We will never know.

Bridget and James married in December 1850 and went to live on the Manning River. It was an area where timber cutters and farmers were establishing homes and families at this time. The means of transport would have meant that the journey from Sydney would have taken a number of days. Land in this area was settled from the 1830s and at the time these early families were establishing themselves the local indigenous population far outnumbered the new settlers.

Bridget and James had thirteen children and became pillars of their community. Bridget outlived her husband by 16 years and died on 10 November 1909, just before her 74th birthday. Her obituary said that she was "an old and respected pioneer of the district" and "noted for her kindness of heart and sunny disposition."



Bridget Murray nee Ryan



James and Bridget Murray

Family stories say that she never lost her Irish accent. The gravestones of James and Bridget are still well preserved and stand out in the cemetery at Tinonee.



Tinonee Cemetery

The Television Program Connection

In 2008 I made contact over the internet with Mary Cogan who lives in Listowel, Ireland. Bridget Ryan was in the Listowel Workhouse before she was sent to Australia in 1850. Mary has been very helpful in a number of ways as I continue to research Bridget's background. I wrote out Bridget's story and Mary posted it on a blog she writes called *Listowel Connection*. The two links below are to Bridget's story:

<http://listowelconnection.blogspot.com.au/2011/10/from-workhouse-in-listowel-to-australia.html>

and

<http://listowelconnection.blogspot.com.au/2011/10/more-of-bridget-ryans-story.html>

The next step in this story was that Mary became involved in a television program being made by Ireland's National Public Service Broadcaster, RTE. Listowel was to feature in one of six episodes of a documentary series called *The Gathering, Ireland 2013* which is about the people of Ireland welcoming home anyone with a connection to Ireland be it recent or from a long time ago.

The ex AFL Sydney Swans player, Tadhg Kennelly, who comes from Listowel but now lives in Sydney, was chosen to appear in Episode 4. When filming that episode in Listowel, Mary told Tadhg and the film crew about her Australian friend Julie and Julie's great-great-grandmother Bridget who also travelled from Listowel to Australia. The producer was interested and decided to add Bridget's story to the episode. He came to Australia on 14 September to interview me. They gave me very little warning and sadly I was booked to fly to Brisbane to see my sister on the very day they wanted to film! So – I “called in the troops” and asked my cousin Barbara Farrell, also Bridget's great-great-granddaughter, to do the interview. She spent more than an hour with a film crew, being interviewed by Tadhg Kennelly as they sat outside Hyde Park Barracks, Macquarie Street, where the Famine Orphans stayed when they arrived in Australia and where the Irish Famine Memorial (www.irishfaminememorial.org) is located.



Barb told him about our family's pride in our Irish ancestor who endured so much hardship but survived and thrived.

The thirty minute episode featuring Tadhg and Bridget, and Barb, is to screen in Ireland on 23 October. I don't know which, if any, of the Australian TV channels will show the program but it can be viewed on the RTE website <http://www.rte.ie/player/au/>

We don't know how much of the interview will survive the editing process. Even a few minutes would be a wonderful tribute to Bridget, who left Ireland as a thirteen year old for a life in a country she could only imagine.

Charlie Murray – Husband, Father, Soldier, Bushman, Musician



Denise Heath (Murray) has sent us a fascinating tribute to her father, Selwyn Alexander ("Charlie") Murray who died on 11th May, 2012 at Calvary Mater Hospice, Waratah from stomach cancer.

Charlie was born on 5th July, 1922 at Nabiac NSW. He married Alice Lillian Ferguson (born 20th August, 1924 at Bermagui) on 19th August, 1944 in Taree.

Denise writes: "Dad went AWL from the Army to marry my Mother (Oh true love!) He said he couldn't get leave so it was this way or wait until he came home. As a punishment he had to do kitchen duty for about 8 weeks. How he would have hated that! He said he never looked at a potato the same ever again."

She continues: "Dad served in New Guinea on the Kokoda Track, suffered from dysentery, was wounded with shrapnel in his back, which I can remember my Mum still getting out in little pieces in 1965. Dad said the worst was across the back of his knees as it took a long time to heal because of his still being active and because of the heat in the tropics. He would suffer from bouts of Malaria for many years after coming home."



Charlie & Alice had seven children:

Clifford Dennis Murray 16 May, 1945 at Nabiac, married with 10 children;

Russell Charles Murray 14 November, 1946 at Gloucester, married with 3 children;

Denise Anne Murray 25 May, 1950 at Bega, married with 3 children;

Shirlene Alice Murray 17 November, 1952 at Bega, married with 3 children;

Cheryl Joy Murray 7 August, 1956 at Wauchope, married 3 times, divorced 3 times with 2 children;

Janeen Fay Murray 24 September, 1959 at Wauchope, married with 3 children;

Helen Jean Murray 27 September, 1962 at Nabiac, 3 relationships, 3 children.

Denise tells us: "Charlie was a very good musician. He could play anything he picked up, piano accordion, button accordion and guitar. He also wrote some really wonderful songs which are being sung all over Australia by Leonard Samson, the son of an old friend.

“One Lady wrote to a paper in Queensland and wanted to know who wrote *Old Tin Liz* and where she could obtain the words of the song. Mum’s sister, Annie, saw the article and let us know so we could send the words to her.

“Dad has sung with Slim Dusty when he has been in the district on tour, Slim wanted Dad to go on tour with him at one stage but Dad had to refuse as he had about 4 or 5 children at the time and didn’t think he should leave his young family for so long. Dad first met Slim when they were very young and in a competition together. We last saw Slim a few months before he died, and he and Charlie reminisced about how long they had known each other. I just wished I had taken photos of the two of them standing there with their hats on, Slim holding his guitar and both of them laughing and swapping jokes backstage.



“Dad has worked on numerous farms, built them up, and then moved on to build another one up. As a result, we have lived in quite a few places. I am fond of saying ‘I’ve been every where man’ (just like the song by Lucky Starr). We lived at Black Creek, Minimbar, Wallarobba, Allworth near Stroud, Kendall, Batar Laurenton, somewhere near Bega, and many other places I can’t remember right now.

“Dad has worked at many jobs, including sleeper cutter for the railway, farming, crane chasing, mill worker, carpentry, horse breaker, bullock driver, milk carter, fencing, truck driving, blacksmith, shipping clerk, and steel industry worker before having to retire when he was about 60.

“Dad was truly a gentleman, loved by everyone, always looked on the bright side of life. He just loved to make everyone laugh. At the time of his death, Dad and Mum had 81 descendants:

7 Children

27 Grand Grandchildren

45 Great Grandchildren

2 Great Great Grandchildren

Alice passed away on 18th June, 2001 in Newcastle.”

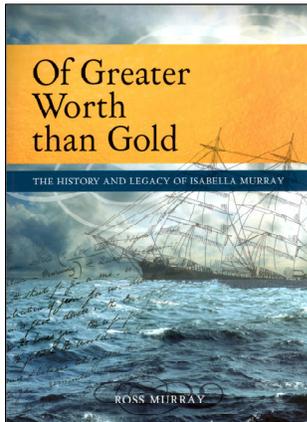


Welcome Jake Noah Murray



Jake Noah Murray was born 11th May 2012, a son to Shaun Ian Murray and Kylie Anne Murray (Nee Woollard) and a brother for Chloe and Jessica. He is another grandson for our Vice President Ian Murray and another great grandson for long time Committee member Joyce Murray. He was christened at St John’s Anglican Church, Wingham on 7th October 2012 and was the youngest person present at our 2012 Annual Dinner.

Isabella Murray Book



The book *Of Greater Worth than Gold: The History and Legacy of Isabella Murray* has generated considerable interest and I thank those people who have contacted me for their kind comments. The book tells the story of the migration of the Manning River Murrays from Scotland and their early life in Australia. I would be grateful if members could pass on information about the book to relatives who do not receive this Newsletter (or, better still, buy it for them for Christmas!)

The 96-page colour-illustrated book costs \$25.

There are three ways you can obtain a copy:

1. Buy one from either the **Wingham Museum**, or **Manning Valley Books** in Manning Street Taree, or **Words and Wares Bookshop** in Tuncurry.
2. Send me a cheque with your address details and I will post it to you (postage \$3 extra).
3. Deposit the \$25 + \$3 for postage in my bank account (using your name as the reference), and email or ring me with your address. My account details are:

BSB: 812170
 Account number: 6950322
 Account name: RD & PM Murray.

Future Newsletters

Another Newsletter will be sent out in early 2013 with the final details of the 2013 Gathering. In the meantime, I would be happy to receive items of interest about people (like the Charlie Murray and Bridget Ryan items in this Newsletter), travels (been to Scotland anyone?) or any general news about the Murrays. The more stories I get, the more varied the Newsletter can be.

Ross Murray

President