



Murray Clan Society of NSW

Newsletter

November 2014

www.murray-clan-nsw.net

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Greetings

Welcome to our Murray Clan Society Newsletter. First of all, I apologise for the delay in getting this issue out. I have had quite a few hold-ups getting it all together but hopefully you will find something worth reading in it. I expect to produce another issue early in the New Year, so keep sending me stories and items of interest.

The Newsletter is a little longer than usual, partly because of requests from members to publish the very entertaining speech delivered by Malcolm Murray, Earl of Dunmore at the 2014 Annual Dinner.

We hope that all of our members and friends have an enjoyable Christmas break. Thank you for your support for the Clan Society.

Ross Murray

President

Annual Gathering 2014

We had a wonderful annual gathering this year on 30th May. We had one of our best roll-ups for several years at our Annual Dinner and enjoyed a first class meal in very pleasant surroundings in the Hibiscus Room at the Wingham Services Club. As usual, the dinner had a Scottish flavour with the haggis ceremony and some fine Scottish Highland dancing from champion dancer Meredith Long from Newcastle who is a descendant of the Manning Murrays.

Clan Commissioner Warwick Murray addressing the Haggis, attended by Secretary Dorothy Murray.



Our distinguished guests, the Earl and Countess of Dunmore, Malcolm and Joy Murray from Tasmania, have been firm friends of the Clan for many years and are regarded with great affection. We thoroughly enjoyed having them with us for the evening. In his entertaining after-dinner speech, Malcolm spoke of his induction as a member of the British House of Lords and made some interesting observations about the procedure and its significance. In response to requests from members, Malcolm has agreed to make his speech available for distribution via this Newsletter.

This year our gathering was held in conjunction with the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival so there were many activities to occupy members throughout the weekend. As always, we participated in the street parade on the Saturday morning and operated our Murray tent throughout the Saturday. The tent is always a friendly gathering place for visiting Murrays.



The Earl and Countess of Dunmore during the addressing of the Haggis

We welcomed a number of new members this year which is always very encouraging. For many, the best aspect of the gathering is just catching up with friends and relatives and enjoying each other's company.

Many thanks to our treasurer Timalee Murray for the photos of the dinner that appear in this Newsletter.



Meredith Long performed a bracket of highland dances



Long serving committee member Bob Murray proposes the Toast to the Clan and its Members at the 2014 Annual Dinner

Annual Gathering 2015

Our annual dinner for 2015 will be held on **Saturday, 11th April**. Please set aside this date. We expect that the function will take place at the Hibiscus Room at the Wingham Services Club which proved an excellent venue this year.

There will be more details in our next Newsletter, but we can inform you that our guest speaker will be **Stuart Weller** from Nabitac. I have known Stuart since we were at Taree High School together. He saw service in Vietnam and enjoyed a long career with the Department of Foreign Affairs including a number of overseas postings. He has published two major historical works, one on his service in Vietnam, *The Cream of her Youth* and, in 2012, an important 512 page historical study of the First World War servicemen from the Wallamba district: *Of this Watershed : the Soldiers of the Wallamba*.

Many of our members would recognise Stuart as the Master of Ceremonies at the annual Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival. He promises to be an entertaining speaker and we urge all members to try to make it to the dinner on 11th April.

Book Review - Ross Murray and Julie Evans

Contents:

Acknowledgements

Introduction

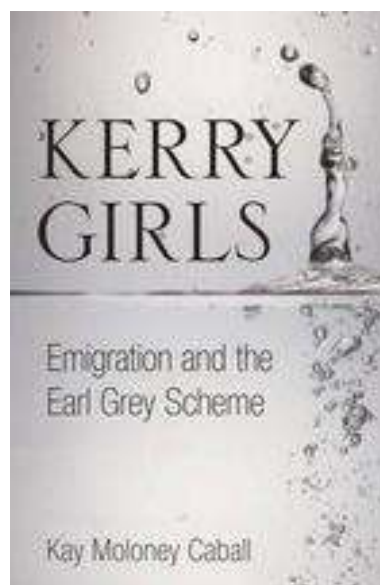
1. Background to the Famine in Kerry
2. Life in the Workhouse
3. Circumstances in Australia
4. Workhouse Decisions
5. Background to the girls
6. Voyage and Arrival
7. Working Life & Marriage in Australia
8. Pawns in an Imperial Struggle?

Conclusion: An Opportunity or a Tragedy?

Appendix: Orphan Database

Notes, Bibliography, Index

Soft cover 192 pages



A new book launched in Ireland earlier this year will be of interest to Australian Murrays, especially those descended from James Murray and Bridget Ryan. Bridget, who came from the workhouse at Listowel, County Kerry, is one of the Kerry girls of the book's title. She married John and Isabella Murray's son James and her story has been told in earlier issues of this Newsletter.

The book *The Kerry Girls: Emigration & the Earl Grey Scheme*, is by Kay Moloney Caball. It is the true story of the 117 Kerry girls who were sent to Australia from the four Kerry Workhouses of Dingle, Kenmare, Killarney and Listowel in 1849 and 1850 as part of the controversial Earl Grey Scheme.

Leaving behind scenes of destitution and misery, the girls, some of whom spoke only Irish, set off to the other side of the world without any idea of what lay ahead.

This book tells of the 'selection' and transportation to Australia of these Irish 'Orphans', their subsequent apprenticeship, and finally their marriage and attempts to rebuild a life far from home.

The author has said: "I thought that the girls – a courageous, resilient, gusty and spirited lot – should be better known ... I also found that their descendants in Australia were hungry to find out more about their backgrounds, especially their family circumstances and the reasons they were in the Workhouses."

In a recent book review in *Descent*, the Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists, the reviewer, P Garnsey, wrote:

"Not only is this book essential reading for family historians who have an ancestor who emigrated to Australia from County Kerry ... but the background to the scheme and the social conditions in Ireland at the time are relevant to the descendants of women from other counties in Ireland who arrived under the scheme. The descendants of the Kerry Girls are fortunate that Kay Moloney Caball has written such an excellent book." *Descent*, September 2014, Page 172.

The Kerry Girls is published by The History Press, Ireland. It includes photos of some of the girls, including Bridget. About five pages are devoted to Bridget's story.

At the time of writing, the book is available for AUD\$21.50, postage free, from [The Book Depository](#).

Isabella Murray Book

Copies the book *Of Greater Worth than Gold: The History and Legacy of Isabella Murray* are still available at \$25. They are available from the **Wingham Museum**.

Alternatively, you can send me a cheque with your address details and I will post it to you (postage \$3.50 extra), or deposit the \$25 + \$3.50 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.

Deaths

A number of members and supporters of the Clan Society have passed away since our last Newsletter.

Dot Dougall

Many of our older members would remember Bill and Dot Dougall who were great supporters of the Clan Society and regularly attended our gatherings. Bill passed away some years ago, but we were advised earlier this year that Dot had also passed away. Bill and Dot were a wonderful couple who enjoyed strong friendships amongst the Clan. Bill's younger sister Betty Russell from Merrylands is unable to attend gatherings but remains keenly interested in the Clan and its activities.

Norman Murray (*Contributed by his nephew, Ian Murray, Vice President of the Murray Clan Society*)



Norman George Murray ("Uncle Joe", as he was affectionately known to his many nieces and nephews) was born on 15th July 1934. A descendant of the original Hugh Murray of Kimbriki, he was the fourth child of Samuel George Murray and Alacoque Rose Murray (nee Maurer) of Bunyah.

Upon leaving school Uncle Joe obtained work on various properties in the district, eventually obtaining permanent work at one of the many sawmills in the Bulahdelah area.

Whilst in Bulahdelah he met Vera Lamb whom he married in September 1956. They were still married almost 58 years later. The union produced eight children:

Narelle (1958) who married Malcolm Tilse and who now lives at Coutts Crossing near Grafton;

Anthony (1960) who has lived in Western Australia for many years;

David (1961) who now resides in Medowie near Newcastle;

Rodney (1962) who died at the age of five years and is buried at Krumbach;

Kenneth (1964) has just recently moved to Western Australia;

Steven (1966) who now lives in the Newcastle area;

Desmond (1969) who is living in Bulahdelah; and

Maxine (1971) who resides in Victoria.

Uncle Joe spent many years as a reservist attached to the Air Force.

Shortly after he and Auntie Vera were married, his father died (December 1956). Uncle Joe loved the land. I can remember him being on many properties throughout the Manning and Avon valleys including Craven, Wingham and Pampoolah. He was also on a property in Appin (near Camden) for a number of years.

Uncle Joe was eventually able to bring his family back to the family farm at Bunyah. He share farmed the property until his mother's death in 1986. For a short time after his brother's death in 1986, he and his sons also took on the running of the brother's farm nearby.

He eventually bought the Bunyah property from his mother's estate and continued farming until he was advised to move to Taree where he lived until his death in June 2014, only a couple of weeks short of his 80th birthday.

Uncle Joe loved his country music. Some of my fondest memories of Uncle Joe were spending my holidays at Pampoolah. He always had a concert to go to somewhere. I would go along to spend time with my cousins and to hear Uncle Joe sing and play his guitar. To me he was a star. It was Uncle Joe who taught me to appreciate country music, a genre that I appreciate to this day. Many of his nieces and nephews related the story of Uncle Joe on stage at Bunyah hall singing with his kids and many of his extended family.

Uncle Joe recorded several albums, much of them his own work. On stage he sang mostly Slim Dusty, Gordon Parsons, Tex Morton among others. It was always Australian and it was always country. His albums are regularly played on the local country radio station (101.5FM).

Uncle Joe was still performing at Ormsby House in Taree and at nursing homes and charity concerts well into his 70s. He may have retired from the farm but he didn't stop entertaining wherever and whenever he was asked.

Uncle Joe's brother Fred, my father, predeceased him in 1986, shortly after the death of their mother. Their brother, Uncle John, predeceased him in 1995.

He is survived by his sister Mavis (Hile) and his brothers Uncle Hilary (Tamworth) and Uncle Ray (Grafton) and his wife of nearly 58 years, Auntie Vera, as well as seven of their eight children, sixteen grand-children and many great grand-children.

He was laid to rest to the sound of his own voice at Krambach Cemetery on 26th June 2014 near his parents, his brothers and his son.

Barbara Murray (*Contributed by her son, Committee Member Darryl Murray*)

Barbara Murray of Burrell Creek passed away on 8th June 2014 aged 100 years. She was born on 16th May 1914. Her parents, Dominic and Margaret Carles were farmers at Kundibakh. She had two brothers, Ron and Wilfred and a sister Thelma (Moore).

Barbara married Irvine Murray, son of William and Fanny Murray and grandson of Hugh Murray and Margaret Beattie. This meant that she had to move only three kilometres to Mulligan's Lane where she lived until she was 98 years of age. She then moved to Karingal Gardens nursing home in Taree.

Barbara had a family of six children: Morna (Avery), Valerie (Levick), David and Darryl (twins), Graeme and Colleen (Moran).



It is hard to believe that for much of Barbara's life there were very few motor cars, no electricity out of town, and no sealed roads. The railway came to Taree the year before she was born, but you could still catch a coastal steamer from Taree to Sydney for many years after that. Barbara always thought that having the electricity connected in about 1954 was the biggest change she experienced in her life, being able to boil water and cook without having to light a fire, having refrigeration, having good lighting instead of kerosene lamps and most of all having a washing machine.

She attended the Murray Clan Annual Gatherings regularly and always enjoyed them very much. Her recipe for a long life was quite simple: no cigarettes or alcohol, plenty of red meat and vegetables, and plenty of hard work.

You should try it – you may live to be 100 years of age also.

Seeking Information

Louise Murray from Newcastle has sent us a request for information about her Murray family history. If anyone can help, please email Louise at louise.murray.pratt@gmail.com.

Louise writes:

Hello Murrays of NSW. My name is Louise Murray of Newcastle and am researching the Murray side of family. My great grandfather was John Murray, supposedly a native of Gerringong NSW. He was born about 1860 and died at Maitland NSW in 1923. He worked on the Northern Line and mainly resided near Tenterfield where he was married to Mary Coyle and where the majority of his children were born. In later years they resided in Maitland where they both died. I cannot find any record of birth for this John in or near Gerringong / Kiama. I have come to a brick wall. On his marriage certificate he states his father was Thomas John and mother Ann Bennett. There is no record of these two. Also, according to family legend he took off when he was fourteen because he didn't get on with his stepmother.

John and Mary's children were: Rose Mary b.1886, John Edward James b.1888, Joseph Bernard b.1890 (my grandfather), Ernest Patrick b.1893, William Francis Hugh b.1895, Alfred Charles b.1897, Florence Margaret b.1899, Mina Vincent b.1901, Lionel Vincent Pierce b.1903 and Catherine Vera b.1905.

If anyone has any information on this family I would love to hear from them.

Kind regards
Louise Murray

Editor's note: Sometimes requests like this have a fruitful outcome. Since our last Newsletter we received a request from a Greg Bertoldo for information about his ancestors in Wingham, about whom he knew little. It turned out that he was descended from Isabella's oldest son John and his first wife Margaret Douglas. This was the first contact we had had with a descendant of John and Margaret, but we were able to put him in touch with Judy Bourke who is a descendant of John and his second wife Mary Jane Boyle. It is always a great pleasure to connect people with long lost members of their families.

David Murray's Dream

David Murray was a son of George Murray of Pampoolah on the Manning River. He spent his early life in Wingham where he served for many years on the local council and for one term as Mayor. He later became a successful businessman in Sydney, with a real estate office in Martin Place.

Amongst his papers, his grand-daughter Margaret Tuiqereqere has found a handwritten letter describing a "dream". It was written on the letterhead of a Sydney real estate company, where we presume David started

work when he moved to Sydney. The item, although obviously penned quickly without much attention to spelling and punctuation (some of which has been corrected for ease of reading) reveals something of the importance of family and the religious convictions of that generation.

We thank Margaret for allowing us to print this little gem.

My Grandfather David Murray's Dream – Dated 19th May, 1915

David Murray
Boswell & Co Real Estate and Property Agents, Hotel and Business Brokers
62 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY
Telephone – City 2456

Last night I dreamed the following:-

In my dream I saw Grandad Moore [presumably David's father-in-law]. He said he would tell me his experiences since he left us.

When I died I did not feel any different to my usual, only that the Saviour took me straight away to his glorious abode. I seemed to be myself the same as ever. I asked him if he had seen my father who also had passed on. He said he had never met him. I then asked him if he found the baby he said Oh yes, I found the baby alright and he is with me now. I saw the little fellow in white robes [David and his wife Mary had recently lost a child in infancy]. He seemed to be running about with a long white nightgown on of pure white he then seemed to be going on a trip with Mary and I we were putting Bess [David's elder daughter Elizabeth Janet Murray] in a cart and he was looking on. We seem to be on Oxley Island and at Uncle Hector's old home. The corn was at different stages from about 2 feet high to 7 or 8 feet and the land was in perfect condition There did not appear to be a weed left and it was all tilled and manured to perfection. Grandad said the man who done the work was a perfect farmer. The farmer seemed to live in his field he was at work at daylight until dark.

At this stage my father [George Murray] came on the scene and he was talking to Mary. She was sitting on the corner of the table and dad was telling her and I that he got his call from the lord Jesus some days before he died. He said he was walking through the kitchen and the Saviour said out of his loving kindness for him he would call him home. He said he never felt any pain from the moment that the Saviour placed his arms around him and called him home. His face seemed altered(?) but he spoke so earnestly to us telling us how that when he passed over he did not seem to remember much about it but that he had a long rest. He did not know how long he rested but he was in the Saviour's keeping. I awakened at this stage and found myself deeply grieved and fell asleep again and still continued the dream. Both Grandfathers seemed to be with us and Grandad Moore made me understand that I should never want for any good thing. I do not know whether the dream is intended to convey any message nor do I know the interpretation. Mary also dreamed of her father about the same time. I trust that some day I know the meaning of it.

Invitation to attend the Gathering of the Clans, September 2015

The 19th Gathering of the Clans – Mark your Diary

If you are considering attending the 19th Gathering of the Clans (GOTC) at Norah Head next year, the date will be Saturday, 5th September 2015. So mark your diary and spread the word to your folk.

This date will allow us to remain the venue for the Central Coast National Highland Dancing Titles.

This year we had 11 pipe bands and 17 clan societies or Scottish special interest groups represented. This is the maximum number of bands that we could host and I expect that in 2015 this may reduce to a more manageable 8-10 bands. It is not, however, the maximum number of clans or Celtic special interest groups. Without diminishing our focus on the Scottish culture, in 2015 we are aspiring to welcome more of our 'Celtic cousins' (Asturian, Breton, Cornish, Galician, Irish, Manx and Welsh) to GOTC.

If you know of any clan society or Celtic special interest group who have not been to GOTC in recent years, please feel free to pass on my email and contact details. The more we can build each other up by exploring and celebrating our respective heritage, the stronger we will all become.

Regards,
Steve Buchanan
Parade Commander / Clans Coordinator
Gathering of the Clans, Norah Head
0407 427 123
<http://gatheringoftheclans.weebly.com>

It's short notice, but...

The President of the Scottish Australian Heritage Council invites you to

Celebrate St Andrew's Day on Sunday 30 November 2014

at

The Kirkin' o' the Tartan Service at St Stephen's Uniting Church, 197 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Meet outside the Church at approximately 9.30am
with your Clan and armorial banners.

Morning Tea after the Service.

Then celebrate with the 'Flash Tartan Mob Ramble'
piped from Macquarie Street to Hyde Park.

Bring a picnic lunch and be entertained with
Highland Dancing from up and coming stars.

Draw of the Emirates Airlines 2014 raffle.

Contacts: Deputy President: Nea MacCulloch, deputy@scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au
Secretary: Susan Cooke, info@scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au

Website: <http://www.scottishaustralianheritagecouncil.com.au>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Scottish-Australian-Heritage-Council/185688806872>

Murray Clan Society of NSW

Annual Dinner 2014

Speech delivered by Rt Hon the 12th Earl of Dunmore, Viscount of Fincastle, Lord Murray of Blair, Moulin and Tillimett, Malcolm Murray

Mr Ross Murray, President – Murray Clan Society of NSW

Distinguished guests, clan members, ladies and gentlemen.

Joy and I are delighted to be amongst you once again and thank the clan for making it possible for us to attend your Annual Dinner during the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival this weekend.

We were honoured to be here in 1999 as your guests to help you celebrate the Clan's 20th anniversary and then again in 2009 for the 5th Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival and to celebrate your clan's 30th anniversary. Of course this year is the 10th Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival but more importantly to me, it is your Clan's 35th anniversary year.

As patron of the Murray Clan of Victoria and New Zealand, I have been asked by both Clans to pass on to you personally their greetings and congratulations on reaching such a milestone and they wish you many more successful years.



Since we were here in 2009, some of your Clan members have supported us during the annual Scottish Weeks in Sydney and last year we were delighted to have the support of your Commissioner Warwick Murray, at the Murray Clan of New Zealand's 50th anniversary celebrations. This year, our clansman and very good friend Frazer Murray has come up from Tasmania to support us with his pipes. This support we get from Murray Clans where ever we go is so much appreciated. It makes you very proud to be a Murray.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been invited to share with you for a few moments what we consider, 'the experience of a lifetime', inheriting a number of Scottish titles through to taking a seat in the House of Lords and delivering my maiden speech. My immediate family inherited these titles in 1981 from our cousin in Scotland, the most senior being Earl of Dunmore. The title "Earl of Dunmore" along with the others was created for the second son of the Marquis of Atholl (Charles Murray). The title "Duke of Atholl" was created for the first son, and that title carries with it the Chiefship of the name and arms of Murray.

The Earls of Dunmore lineally descended generation by generation until the Ninth Earl, our cousin, who died in 1980 without male issue. The title could only be inherited under the rule, "heir, male to the body". Most Scottish hereditary titles that were created back in the 1600s came under this rule, which meant that only sons could inherit their fathers' titles.

My family in Tasmania was always known as the collateral branch of the Earls of Dunmore. All this meant was

that we were the next in line if the current family had no male offspring. My ancestor, the Fourth Earl, seemed to be more closely associated with the history of the United States of America than with Scotland. In 1770 he was appointed Governor of the colony of New York. Two years later he was transferred to the colony of Virginia and subsequently became the last colonial governor of the American colonies.

In 1775, the events of the American War of Independence forced him to return to Great Britain. After the loss of the American colonies, he was appointed Governor of the Bahamas by King George III and had a burning desire to keep the Bahamas British. He apparently began a construction boom and was considered a waster of the people's hard earned taxes.

He had two very large forts built: Fort Charlotte, guarding Nassau Harbor, and ship-shaped Fort Fincastle. He also built several other forts, batteries and homes all over the islands. Many of these buildings have been restored and are tourist attractions today.

From when I was a teenager I can remember the delight my grandfather used to have when he received his annual proof of Debrett's peerage for any updates to our family entry.

We never contemplated inheriting the titles ourselves, as a young heir had just become the Ninth Earl in the early 1960s and was about to get married and start a family. We were just proud to be related to the Earls of Dunmore. In the late 1970s, however, our cousin the Ninth Earl informed us that he was terminally ill and for our family to prepare ourselves to inherit the titles. He had two daughters and could not have any more children. He was 38 at the time.

He died four years later at the age of 42, and my father's elder brother inherited the title as the Tenth Earl of Dunmore. Unfortunately, he was suffering from the same illness, lymphoma, and died a few months later with the titles passing to my father as the Eleventh Earl. This was in 1981, when my father was 68 years old. The Australian national and UK media made quite a lot of fuss about this at the time.

My father made a number of trips to Scotland, and during one of these visits, the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh suggested that he have his titles officially recognised by 'matriculating his arms'. This would then entitle him to seek a writ of summons from HM Queen Elizabeth to take a seat in the House of Lords.

This he did, and was summoned to take his seat in 1986. He was the first Tasmanian born person to sit in the House of Lords.

He died in 1995 and I inherited the titles on his passing. I matriculated my arms in 1996, which entitled me to seek a writ of summons and take a seat in the House of Lords.

I decided to seek the writ of summons, but postponed going to London until our children were off our hands. Our son was an apprentice chef and our daughter was still at high school and living at home at that time.

But in 1998 the Secretariat of the House of Lords informed me that there was some urgency if I wanted to follow my father's footsteps and take my seat. The Blair Government was introducing a bill in the next parliamentary session to exclude hereditary peers from the House of Lords and I might miss out on the chance to take a seat and take part in a State opening by Her Majesty.

The House of Lords has existed for over 600 years. Up to the 1980s, it was made up wholly of hereditary peers, the majority of whom were independent of party politics, sat on the cross benches and were known as the people's peers.

They are the only people in parliament who owe nothing to anyone for their seat. They represent the people rather than toe party lines.

This policy changed in the 1980s and the government of the day started appointing life peers.

Margaret Thatcher was the first Prime Minister to do this and of course most of the life peers at that time tended to show allegiance to her Conservative Party.

When the Labour Party eventually won office, Tony Blair started appointing life peers as if they were going out of fashion, because he was having a terrible time getting bills passed by the Lords within the current sitting session. As the hereditary Lords still had the numbers to send most of the Labour bills back to the Commons for amendments, Blair decided in 1998 to introduce a bill to reform the House of Lords, and the first part of that reform was to remove the sitting and voting rights of hereditary peers.

The Lords can only hold up a bill and force amendments for up to one year or two sitting sessions, (there are two sitting sessions each year).

Of course the hereditary peers knew this. They also knew that Blair was very anxious to get this reform through, so they decided to pass it without delay but with some very comfortable accepted amendments. I'll mention them a little later.

Not wanting to miss out on such a unique opportunity, we decided to go that year and take our daughter with us. This would be our first visit to the UK when the Australian dollar was only worth around 34 English pence.

My wife, Joy, heard about the cost of food in London so we took dried army food packed in our cases which was prepared at Scottsdale in Tasmania. This was sealed in flat alfoil packages and all that had to be done was open them at the top, pour in boiling water and seal it for approximately five minutes. They consisted of roast lamb, beef or chicken with roast vegetables. All we added was Deb potato to make a great meal. We would sit up in our hotel room and enjoy a roast dinner for around five dollars a head, while down the street in a restaurant the same meal could cost between 15 and 20 pounds, or 45-60 Australian dollars at that time.

On arriving in London, it was arranged for me to meet the Black Rod and the Clerk of Parliaments to receive what is known as the "new boys' kit". This contains everything you need to know before entering parliament.

It seems they were not aware that I was booked to take my oath of allegiance that afternoon, as I was told to take this kit home and study it for three to four weeks then make arrangements to take my seat. I, with some embarrassment, had to inform them that it had been arranged for me to take my seat that afternoon and that I had only three to four hours. I was then informed that this was very irregular. Of course they were not aware I had been studying my father's new boys' kit for some years.

That afternoon, I took my Oath of Allegiance to Her Majesty. The protocol was that after signing the roll, I would proceed to the Vice Chancellor sitting on the wool sack, and without standing too close, shake his hand, then proceed out of the chamber and re-enter from the back to take my seat on the cross benches. When I reached out to shake the hand of the Vice Chancellor, trying not to breathe on him (I'm not sure what the pandemic was that year) he pulled me right up against himself and whispered in my ear, "I married an Aussie girl you know". Then, as I proceeded out the rear door, some Western Australian baron sitting up the back sang out in a very Aussie accent, 'Good on ya mate'. (So much for the protocol.)

After taking my Oath of Allegiance, I sat on the cross benches as an independent for a few weeks prior to the State Opening, and listened to some marvellous speakers debating amendments to the Bill of Scotland. This related to the formation of the Scottish Parliament.

The British tabloids had somehow found out that we were arriving in Britain on our first overseas trip and that I was taking my seat in their House of Lords. This of course was like 'fodder' for the Blair Government's proposed reform of the Lords and was used to their advantage. It reinforced their view that the hereditary peer system, with heirs and descendants living all over the world, was out of date.

It was brought to notice that here was a hereditary peer who lives on the other side of the world, who had never been to Britain before, but who could have a decisive vote on the future of their country.

There was a decisive vote being taken one day and naturally I decided to abstain. Those who want to abstain are ushered out into the passage until the votes have been counted. I happened to notice the little lady standing beside me and recognised her as Mrs Thatcher (then Baroness Thatcher since being appointed a member of the House of Lords). I turned to her and said, "You're Baroness Thatcher," and she immediately replied, "And you're the Aussie Earl."

I found her very easy to talk to, nothing like The Iron Lady I had read and heard so much about over the years.

During the time I was sitting in the House, I was astounded by the interest shown in the proposed reform of our own Constitution in Australia. A Constitutional Convention had just been held and a referendum was being proposed. I was invited to give a number of addresses, prior to sitting each day, on the situation as it stood at that time in Australia. It seems that it was thought that if Australia became a republic, New Zealand would soon follow and this would give the Blair Government more reason to push the reform of their Constitution, diminishing the role of the Monarchy in Britain.

I noticed on the schedule of upcoming business in the House for the day after the forthcoming state opening, that the Queen's speech was going to be debated and the first item to be debated was the proposed reform of the House of Lords.

After so much interest being shown in the reform of our own Constitution in Australia, I decided to book my maiden speech and have a say. This had to be booked through the Office of Black Rod and Clerk of the Parliaments. Once again, I was informed that it is very unusual to make a maiden speech so soon after entering Parliament. It is usually six months or longer before you are expected to sneeze out loud, let alone deliver a maiden speech!! But I decided pull my rank and go ahead and book it anyway.

Parliament recessed for one week to prepare for the State Opening. During that time we were escorted around the Scottish highland sites where our titles emanated from: Dunmore, Fincastle, Moulin, Blair and Tillimet.

At Fincastle, I was asked if we would like to visit the newer buildings or the older buildings in the area. I mentioned we were really interested in the older buildings rather than the more recent. I was soon informed, "My Lord, the newer buildings are over 600 years old." (We saw them all.)

I was also lucky enough to have a 15 minute appointment booked with the very busy Lord Lyon in Edinburgh to thank him for the effort he had put into helping my father and myself matriculate our arms. One and a half hours and half a bottle of Scotch later he let me go.

On returning to London we attended the State Opening. The highlight for me was being dressed in hired robes, insured for 10,000 pounds. Joy was dressed in evening dress and our daughter in after-five. The

pecking order in the House of Lords is that Scottish titles take precedence over English titles and the more ancient the title, the more senior. Our titles date back to 1686 and were amongst the oldest on that day. This meant that Joy sat right behind the Royal Family and our daughter had a prime seat in another area.

Of course, the Queen's speech mentioned the reform to the Constitution proposed by the government: "removing the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords".

The following day I delivered a short maiden speech on the situation of the proposed reform of the Australian Constitution, and how I hoped the proposed reform of the House of Lords would not allow it to lose its rich tradition and heritage that had made it such a respected place and one which had made a great contribution over the centuries.

The Blair Government didn't get its own way altogether. The bill did pass the following year in 1999 with the amendment, along with others, that 92 hereditary peers would remain in the lords. These peers are elected by their fellow peers. When they pass on, their place is filled by another hereditary peer nominated and elected by the rest of us.

Naturally, living in Tasmania, I would not nominate or be elected, but I am eligible to nominate and vote for a hereditary peer when there is a vacancy.

I am now known as an "excluded peer". This just means that I am no longer eligible to speak or vote in the chamber. There are still many privileges an excluded peer can enjoy in the Lords :

- Access to a private gallery above the chamber during a current session;
- The right to sit on the steps of the throne in the chamber during a current session;
- Access to the library and the right to host any pre-booked function;
- The right to book a table in the peers' dining room;
- Continued access to the peers' guest room and the most important of all, the right to use the peers' entrance and toilets.

My wife and I have tested these privileges out on a number of occasions and were treated with respect and dignity. Even the doormen and security staff who were there in 1998 remembered us. I asked them if there had been any noticeable change since the reform. Their main disappointment was that the majority of the nominated peers do not show the staff the respect that the hereditary peers did prior to the reform.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes what I wanted to share with you this evening and I thank you for the privilege of allowing me to do so.