



Murray Clan Society of NSW

Newsletter – March 2011

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Welcome to the first Murray Clan Newsletter for 2011. We hope that all of our readers will find something of interest in what follows.

Annual Gathering

As we advised in our previous mail-out, we have had to move our annual gathering to September. This year it will be held on **24th September** and will take the form of our usual Dinner / Dance. We are planning other weekend activities as well. Full details will appear in our next Newsletter, but please be sure to set aside the date.

Extraordinary General Meeting

As previously advised, an Extraordinary General Meeting was held on Saturday, 20th November. This was necessary because of the need to change the Constitution to allow for the Annual General Meeting to be held on the same weekend as the annual gathering.

The financial year of the Society is now the period 1st July to 30th June, and the AGM must be held within 90 days of 30th June. This means that the gathering and the AGM can both be held in September each year.

The meeting also approved the renewal of the appointment of Warwick Murray as Commissioner of the Clan.

Personal News

Since our last Newsletter we have lost two of our stalwart members.

Kath Murray

Kath Murray was a foundation member of the Clan Society and made a major contribution to its establishment. She had previous experience as a member of Clan McLennan which she willingly contributed to the Murrays. Kath was of great assistance to Fred Murray in compiling the genealogies for "The History of the Australian Murrays". Although unable to attend functions in her later years, she will be remembered by those who knew her as a great supporter of the Clan Society and as a lovely person. Kath passed away recently at the age of 90.

Max Hand



Max Hand was a long-standing member of the Committee and another great supporter of the Clan Society. I had the privilege of saying a few words on behalf of the Clan at his very well-attended funeral in Wingham. I referred to the fact that many of us were surprised to learn that Max was 85, as his energy and enthusiasm seemed those of a younger man. Max was also a former president of the Paterson-Easton Association, and as such was a continuing strong link between that organisation and the Murrays.

Max was a generous man, being ready to put his hand in his pocket to donate to the Clan Society. He supported the Clan in many practical ways, from negotiating a Mercedes car for the use of the visiting Earl of Dunmore to setting up a tent early on a wet morning at the Bonnie Wingham Festival. A thorough gentleman, he will be greatly missed.

Max Hand was the Murray Clan Banner-Bearer in the 2009 Bonnie Wingham Procession

Edwin Murray Chafford Saxby

Although Ted Saxby was not a member of the Clan Society, there would be many members, especially former Taree residents, who would be saddened to hear of his passing. Ted was a descendant of James and Bridget Murray and opened a chemist shop in Taree in 1951. It still trades as Saxby's Pharmacy and is operated by his son-in-law, Ian Carr. As well as being a successful businessman, Ted was devoted to his church (Taree Church of Christ) and the community. He contributed much through Apex and Rotary as well as through his membership of the board of Manning Valley Senior Citizens' Homes. In honour of his community work, a section of Banyula Lodge at Old Bar has been named the Ted Saxby Wing. He was also awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship by Rotary International. Ted was a wonderful family man and a great friend.

Sick List

Our long-serving Treasurer, Colin Murray, has been very ill of late, and has just returned home after five weeks in various hospitals. Our thoughts are with you Colin, and we hope your recuperation goes smoothly.

Fred Murray of Gloucester, famed for his singing and haggis-addressing at our dinner dances, has also been laid up in hospital for some time. We wish you the best, Fred, and hope that things will soon be improving for you.

Alma Murray has spent some months recovering from a fall whilst painting. Alma has been a loyal member of the Clan for many years, as was her late husband Scott. We sympathise with you, Alma, and hope for a full recovery.

John Easton of Newcastle, Chairman of the Paterson-Easton Association, has not been well. We wish him a swift return to good health. John is formerly from Belbora near Krumbach and attended Taree High School in the late 50s.

Other News

Early in February, Clan Commissioner Warwick Murray and family travelled to New Zealand for the wedding of their eldest son Andrew to a lovely New Zealand girl, Marcelle Scafedi. The newlyweds will make their home in Perth. Andrew formerly served in Iraq with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Warwick's younger son Cameron will again be the master of ceremonies at the Bonnie Wingham Grand Highland Ball in Wingham on 4th June, wearing his Murray of Athol tartan kilt.

Short-term Share Accommodation – Forster

Donna Germon (descendant of Bunyah Murrays) has a spare bedroom (with shared kitchen) in her flat at Forster which she would be happy to rent to a non-smoking person or couple needing short term accommodation in the area. Contact her at PO Box 622 Forster 2428 or on 0412 700 599.

W J Murray of Sydney

In the book "The History of the Australian Murrays from Roxburghshire, Scotland", the authors, Joan and Fred Murray, made frequent references to "W J Murray of Sydney". This W J Murray had an extensive collection of letters and other papers relating to the early history of the Manning River Murrays.

Both Joan and Fred are no longer with us, and I would be interested to know who W J Murray is, or was, and whether his valuable collection of documents is still intact. I have not been able to find anything in the Clan Society records that would identify him.

As I am researching aspects of the family history, I would be interested in hearing from anyone who might know the whereabouts of this material.

Scottish Festivals

As far as possible we try to ensure that our Clan is represented at various Scottish heritage events throughout the year. If you would like to attend any of these festivals and help to staff the Murray tent, please contact Warwick Murray at warwickmurray@bigpond.com.

2 nd April	Bundanoon Highland Gathering
28 th April – 1 st May	Standing Stones Celtic Festival, Glen Innes
2 nd – 5 th June	Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival
2 nd July	Aberdeen Highland Games
27 th August	Toukley Highland Games
17 th September	Clans on the Coast, Port Stephens

If you are attending the Bonnie Wingham Festival, do look for the Murray tent at Wingham's Central Park on Saturday 4th June. Call in and enjoy banter with fellow clanspeople and enjoy the massed bands and games featured on the day. Entry is free. Over eighteen other clans will be represented.

Music and the Murrays – Hughie Murray links Past and Present

There are many historical references to the musical interests and capabilities of the early Manning Murrays. Joan and Fred Murray, in their book *The History of the Australian Murrays from Roxburghshire Scotland*, wrote about the early days on the original property, *Camphouse*. They quote the late Frank Murray of Ballina (grandson of the original Thomas and Agnes Murray) who recalled his grandmother sitting in her rocking chair on the verandah of *Camphouse* with a small table nearby covered with many books, and Aunt Annie singing and playing Scottish music on the accordion (p. 40).

The original Veitch Murray left the Manning to settle in Queensland, where he enjoyed a distinguished career in the sugar industry as a grower, mill director and councillor. In later life he returned to the Manning to visit his relatives, with a large family gathering being held at William Murray's farm at Burrell Creek. Journalist Hugh James Murray, in his detailed account of the event, recorded that:

Music filled in a good part of the time. The violins sounded sweetly in the soft mountain air and here and there enthusiasts danced the steps and reels which are peculiar to Scotland and to those who carried the customs and traditions of the romantic north land to new and distant countries . . . (Murray, p. 58).

It seems that the family of the original Hugh Murray also had music in their blood. Hugh's great grand-daughter, the late Lily Sambell, wrote about the golden wedding of her grandparents, John and Isabella Murray of Bunyah. It took place on 20th April, 1920. Lily wrote:

I believe my mother, Ada, prepared 23 roosters (without extras) for this function. When the pipers arrived, which was a surprise, everyone began to step, and Uncle Geordie held a candle to their feet to see if they were stepping satisfactorily (Murray p. 25).

Geordie was the eighth child of the original Hugh. According to the "Murray book":

Both Geordie and his brother, Thomas, played (and loved) their "fiddles" and would delight in playing the old Scottish songs and reels whenever the opportunity arose. He also shared with Thomas a love of Robbie Burns and the bagpipes (Murray, p. 27).

Joyce Kidd, in her remarkable book "*Memoirs*", told of how music was part of family life at their farm Glen Athol at Bunyah. She wrote of the musical interests of her parents, Thomas, son of the original Hugh, and his wife Lavinia.

We were taught to respect our teachers at school, to say our prayers at night, and to say grace before a meal. We did not have much formal religion, as there was no church building in Bunyah in those days. My mother, who was Church of England, played the hymns on the piano and sang along with them. She had a fine singing voice, and I can still remember "*Shall we Gather at the River*", "*Rock of Ages*", "*Abide with me*", "*Nearer my God to thee*" and other well-known and loved hymns she used to sing. She played them on the organ also (p. 3).

Mum played the piano and Dad the violin. Mum would sit at the piano and play and sing. She had a fine singing voice, and my siblings and I would listen with pleasure as she played many of the old favourites like "*Juanita*", "*Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep*", "*Come where my Love Lies Dreaming*", to name a few. Then Dad would play his Scottish reels and Mum would harmonise with him on the piano. My father, after a hard day's work, would come home and sit in the rocking chair and sing, without benefit of accompaniment, but just singing from the contentment of a day's work well done . . . (p. 4).

Later Joyce described the country dances that were organised in private homes and the Bunyah Hall. She wrote:

A lot of the Murrays were naturally musical and so dancing and singing came easily to them (p. 8).

The Manning-Great Lakes magazine *Focus*, in its issue of September 2010, carried a very interesting interview with musician Hughie Murray, a descendant of the original Hugh through his son, the abovementioned John and Isabella.

The article appeared as a lead up to Hughie's band's performance at Nabiac. I was particularly interested in the significance Hughie gave to his ancestors' interest in music. The *Focus* interview with Hughie Murray appears below, with the kind permission of the publishers. It can also be viewed at <http://focusmag.com.au/mgl/interviews/hughie-murray> .

Hughie Murray

The days of the big band are far from over and the Nabiac Hall will be jumping on its stumps later this month, with the launch of the latest tour by the Big Ol' Bus Band. Well-travelled band leader Hughie Murray is on a mission to bring live music and entertainment back to community halls, with a mighty ten-piece swing band and Australia's hottest swing / burlesque dancer Kelly Ann Doll. The Nabiac performance will be a tribute to Hughie's late grandfather Hugh Scott Murray II, who played fiddle at local hall dances in the area many years ago.

After years of travelling, performing and songwriting with Grammy Award winning artists Keith Urban, Lou Rawls and INXS, Hughie 'tree-changed' from Sydney and Nashville to the Krambach property that his dairy-farmer grandfather had lived and worked on.

But there may not be much time for kicking back on the front porch over the next year, with a major regional tour planned in a 55 seater bus, as well as regular Sydney gigs. Hughie spoke to Roger Marmion about music, his travels, the band and the big ol' bus.



The Murray Clan has a reputation for being musical. How important has music been in your life?

Back before I was around, my grandfather Hugh Scott Murray the 2nd – I'm the 3rd – played fiddle in the Murray's band, which played all the old halls in the area. Dad used to tell us stories when I was a kid, but I don't think I really got the importance of music in country communities until I started touring 'The Duelin' Piano Show' out into country areas.

Music opens back doors to meet new people at all levels, and I am always interested in meeting new people. Apart from family, it is the constant in my life that enables me to feel like I am always moving forward creatively.

When did you first decide to pursue a musical career?

At High School I knew just one song called the Baby Elephant Walk, and I would play it over and over in the hope that my keyboard prowess caught the attention of one particular girl. I had a few real jobs until I started to make enough as a touring piano player / singer at about twenty years of age.

Soon songwriting took over. Early on I remember I thought I was pretty good at the songwriting caper. Then I really listened to Don Walker, Irving Berlin, Johnny Mercer and Burt Bacharach, and it literally hit me over the back of the head that my songs lacked a lot in comparison. I've been working at it as a craft ever since, and I expect to be still doing so until they bury me at Krambach!

How did your time in Nashville shape your musical style?

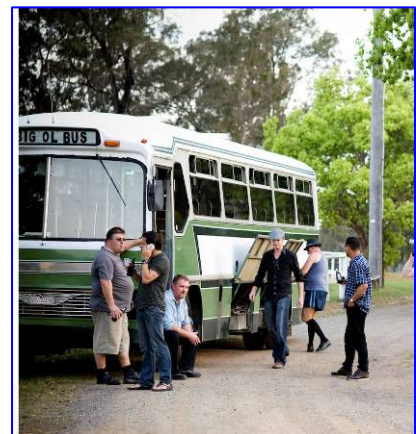
Musically, when I first arrived it was a 'Country Hat' town. My mates and I would crash lunches and launches of new albums for free food and booze put on for boys in their hats and big belt buckles. But then a lot of amazing artists of all genres started moving to town from L.A. and New York, because it is such a beautiful place to live and the music and the town became very eclectic. An example of how the town can change you.

I heard a singer called Bekka Bramlett perform one night. She has sung with Elton John, Dwight Yoakam, Billy Joel, Joe Cocker and Faith Hill and had also replaced Stevie Nicks in Fleetwood Mac for a long while, but I hadn't heard of her. We ended up at her house for a party and she had an old beat up honky tonk piano that the beer made me play.

After jamming that night, I called her and we arranged to co-write together. Working with her changed my whole approach to singing and writing tunes. I don't think she even realises it, but the songs we wrote in the wee hours of the night and the way she sang them freed up my whole approach to music.

You're touring with a large band. Is that a logistic challenge?

Yes! Did I take too long to answer that? We just bought a 52 seater 1985 classic Hino from a really helpful guy called Graeme up at Port. It's fair to say, though, from a motoring point of view I am quite ... challenged. On top of trying to work out simply how to turn it off (no, you don't just turn the key!) there are ten musicians, two dancers and crew to sort transport, accommodation, availability, and rehearsals for.



It is a lot of organisation, which my wife Bec handles the majority of. I owe her big time. Her years working at ABC TV in Sydney have had her up to the challenge, but still every show is a lot of work. The adventure and playing in the old venues for enthusiastic communities – that’s what makes it all worth it.

What can local audiences expect from the Nabiac gig?

It will be swinging; there will be people flying through the air, and it should be a night to remember for everyone. Think New Orleans, New York and Nabiac steamed in a pork bun exterior of tin and timber roof and walls. Dancer Kelly Ann Doll is Australia’s best Swing and Burlesque performer. The Ten Piece band has played onstage with artists like Smokey Robinson, The Doobie Brothers, Keith Urban, Human Nature, Guy Sebastian and more.

You’ve got a big tour planned and you’re playing predominantly regional areas. What’s the attraction?

Anyone who has seen ‘The Long Way Down’ with actor Ewan McGregor and his mate Charley on a motorbike will understand the lure of the adventure. This really has become an adventure for us. It’s on a shoestring budget, with all involved never really sure how much they’ll get paid for any given performance – if at all, sometimes.

Why are they coming? Because as one player said, “It sounds like fun. Making memories we can all remember when we’re old and grey.” In Sydney and Melbourne they are some of the best players around and get paid accordingly, so my hat goes off to the musicians and dancers involved as we get this bus out on the road.

And from my experience with the ‘Duelin’ Piano Show’, communities in the country really love a good local event.

Thank you Hughie



The enthusiastic crowd at Hughie Murray’s Nabiac performance.

Preserving our History

In the previous item, I mentioned the *Memoirs* of the late Joyce Kidd. I was recently lent a copy of this book by a cousin of Joyce’s, Donna Germon. Joyce, as many readers of this Newsletter would know, was the first secretary of the Murray Clan Society. She came from Bunyah, and was the daughter of Thomas Veitch Murray and Lavinia Anna Murray (nee Summers). The book is a 69 page self-published volume which preserves an invaluable record of her family’s settlement at Bunyah, her own childhood on the farm, her experiences at Bulby Brush School (a walk of three miles), her years of happy marriage to Earl, and her last years. It is a well-written, absorbing story that covers a period of enormous change.

Joyce describes how she and her siblings were baptised by Rev S P Stewart of the Free Presbyterian Church in Taree when he did his rounds through the outlying districts. She describes how family observed Sundays, even though they could rarely attend church. There are stories of Christmas, when the children would tie tree branches to the verandah posts, light Chinese lanterns ordered from Hordern’s in Sydney, and wake up on Christmas morning to the sound of their mother playing carols on the piano. Here are two fairly typical extracts (pp. 9-10):

Another of my happy childhood experiences was going on a picnic – just my parents and my sister and brothers. Dad would harness “Old Joe”, our sturdy little half-draught horse, to the big “slide”, and we would all pack in and go over to another part of the property where the contour of the land was quite different from the home surrounds. We’d have to cross the creek and go up quite a steep long hill and down the other side, and it seemed like a different world to us. Mum would have cooked cakes and made sandwiches etc. We would have home made lime or raspberry syrup (made by Mum) and Billy Tea for the older people. This was made on an open fire with dry wood and twigs from nearby. We kids loved those days. We’d play ball games, mostly with solid India rubber balls, or discarded tennis balls. . .

. . . Dad had to earn a living to feed his big family (no family allowance then!) so could not spare too many days away from working on the property. There were paddocks to be ploughed, land to be cleared, fences to be erected, vegetables to be planted – no handy greengrocer – but also no superphosphate used. Dad grew potatoes, pumpkins, squash, turnips, cabbages, beans etc. and beautiful watermelons. I can still remember the thrill of seeing him walk up from the garden carrying a big watermelon. Of course the anticipation of eating it was foremost in my mind. Dad would deal it out with a big knife, giving us all a most generous slice. I liked to have a knife to eat my melon, but my young brothers would just bury their faces into theirs, and eat without regard to decorum. It was a sad day when the watermelon season was over. I must explain that the gardens were always located down near the creek so that the creek water could be carted to water the vegetables. There was no such thing then as town water with hoses and sprinklers. Everything was done the hard way, but the vegetables were beautifully fresh and not contaminated in any way by pesticides etc. Instead of watering a lot, my father tilled the soil frequently, that is, he chipped it slightly with a light flat hoe. This kept the soil loose and allowed the air to circulate – too much watering would harden the ground. My father also cultivated many acres of land with horse and plough, turning the soil over with the plough and walking miles behind the draught horse. What patience and what stamina! No wonder they enjoyed their meal breaks. Nowadays all this is done with a tractor. What an acquisition that first tractor was.

I have often heard people express regret that they did not write down stories told by their grandparents, or that they did not encourage their parents and grandparents to record the stories of their lives. I was particularly pleased that my own father Fred, a founder and Patron of the Clan, wrote down the story of his life before he passed away three years ago at the age of 90. In doing so he has left us with a unique description of life on the Pampoolah farm and in the village of Harrington, as well as significant observations on his later life. He wrote it all in his characteristic copperplate handwriting (some 60 pages). It was a big effort, but incredibly worthwhile.

I would encourage all of our older members to consider putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to record those details of the past – social, family and personal life etc – that will be lost forever unless we take steps to preserve them.

Email Addresses

If you are receiving this Newsletter by post and would be happy to do so by email, would you please advise me of your email address. As always, would you please let me know if we have any of your details wrong, or if you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter.

I am conscious that much of the content of this Newsletter relates to the Manning Murrays. I am also aware that many of our members belong to other branches of the Murray family. If any member would like to contribute an item of general interest, I would be very happy to receive it.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it on 24th September.

Ross Murray
President
On Behalf of the Committee