

# THE WAY WE ARE



## THE SYMONDS FAMILY OF WATTLE FLAT & BEYOND FROM 1853

Gillian P. Symonds



Reprints from "The Way we Were" History of the Symonds Family in Australia and beyond .

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## PREFACE

My interest in our family arose after a meeting with Aunt Ella – Mrs. Janet Ella Moseley in Adelaide in January 1987. I had met her on many other occasions and was always fascinated by the close contacts she had maintained with all members of her family, both close and distant relatives. As she was in her 89<sup>th</sup> year, I realised that this wealth of information would be lost to us all if someone didn't record it somehow. It really didn't matter how amateurish the effort was, as long as some of her wonderful anecdotes and knowledge was preserved. My father-in-law Henry (Harry) William Symonds, brother of Mrs. Janet Ella Moseley offered me unstinting encouragement, hours of reminiscences and faith that I could do it. My only regret as the project comes to fruition, is that neither of these two beautiful people are here to see that I actually did achieve my goal. Others will have to judge if this is so.

From humble beginnings of a family tree, my interest was well and truly fired and I have been inspired by the amazing accuracy of their memories to search for official records and certification. Imagine the thrill of finding another name, date, place etc. to fill in the space on the chart, to fill another piece in the jigsaw of the family story!

When one reflects about the enormity of the destruction of personal papers, records etc. one realises that some sort of ongoing family story should be recorded. Each generation has been guilty of this deed and so much of this family's social history is untraceable. Think of all the diaries, personal papers, account books, probably birth, death and marriage certificates that must have met this fate.

Nowadays with the more casual approach to all aspects of life, the computerised, standardised printed forms, the extensive use of the Internet and telephone for business and personal communications, not much is recorded quintessentially or is traceable in posterity.

As we grow older, the tone of our memories of certain events seems to change. The sorrow dims, the hardship and personal suffering seem more tolerable and the happier times are remembered with ambience and humour. To make the recalling of such events, both the ones I personally experienced and to recall the tales and stories of my elders, I propose to write them for the future, as I too, like all mankind, grow older daily and surely memories fade.

I have endeavoured to collect together as many stories and anecdotes as possible from many and varied sources. In the collection of these stories, after some initial reluctance, I have received wonderful and enthusiastic responses from you all, the members of this special family. I thank you all sincerely.

Yes, I say 'Special Family' for to come from our humble roots in rural England over one hundred and fifty years ago, and for some of us Scottish roots that go back even further, to have the courage and fortitude to leave all that was near and dear to them. To face the long and dangerous sea voyage as emigrants to a very new and raw colony, to seek an unknown destiny. To face hardships unheard of in present generations, to endure droughts, fires, floods and illness, to be able to laugh at times, to find joy when there only seems to be hardship and sorrow, and lastly to multiply and prosper, to each and every member let us be proud to have a Symonds connection!

By the very nature of this project, the recording of our history can never be complete so it is my wish that you will all use what I have gathered as a catalyst to keep your own ongoing records of your individual branches of our family tree. When information became available I have endeavoured to include it, though the connection to the Symonds family may be somewhat tenuous, by the inclusion of such information it can be preserved.

And, Oh yes, mistakes will occur, as to err is only human but I will not claim the lot are mine – only about 99%!

I must also acknowledge the patience and understanding my wonderful husband Austin gave to me, especially when I spent hours in libraries and at my typewriter and later computer. He encouraged my flagging spirits and acted as a sounding board for research ideas and when I became so wrapped up in the project, he was able to accept my exclamations of "is it meal time already?" After all it is his family but without this support, nothing could have been achieved. To my son Grant I must pay tribute to his patience and fortitude in accepting my many long and involved phone calls to sort out the dumb errors that I had an inherent flair for producing on my computer. My love/hate relationship with it, the computer, continues! My daughter Josephine Gray (nee Symonds) went out of her way to track down St. Andrews Church Beddingham, Norfolk and search Parish records for me.

As this social history has intermittently occupied me for over fifteen years, I have decided to edit this collection and to give you all the opportunity to share these wonderful stories; otherwise it will enter into the realm of family folklore as the mythical book that never got completed!

Gillian Symonds

## JAMES SYMONDS

In 1822 while the rare sighting of Enckes Comet was occurring in New South Wales, two events took place in the Northern Hemisphere that were to be one of the catalysts of this family in Australia.

In the Parish of Bedingham, Norfolk, the marriage between James Symonds, single man and Elizabeth Thurlow, single woman was solemnised on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1822 and their witnesses were Hannah Fairhead, Samuel Fairhead and John Symonds.

The baptism of Elizabeth, daughter of John and Ann Thurlow had taken place at Tittleshall on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1803, so at the time of her marriage she would have been about nineteen years old. Bedingham is located about twenty five miles south east of Tittleshall, however it was not unusual even in those days that people moved around, probably in search of employment.

By April that year Elizabeth had given birth to a son John. The baptism of John took place in St. Andrew's, Bedingham Parish on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1822 and his father's occupation was listed as 'husbandman.' Over the next eight years, five more births to James and Elizabeth Symonds were recorded in the Bedingham Parish. A daughter Rachael followed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1823. She died at Bedingham on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1824, aged 7 months. Another daughter, again named Rachael, was baptised just over one year later on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1824. She died on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1825. Two daughters of James & Elizabeth, both named Rachael, died on the same day and one year apart. A second son Walter was baptised on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1826 so John Symonds would have been about four and a half years old when his brother was born. At this time James' occupation was listed as 'labourer.' Maria followed next and at her baptism on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1828 her father's occupation was stated as 'woodman' so he appeared to have had various occupations at this time. Another son Charles was baptised on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1830.

Interestingly this entry was listed in the parish register as 'Charles Simonds' so it is quite conceivable that we have a branch of the family with their surname spelt in this way. Research shows that the family name may have originated in Scandinavia from a very early Norse or Danish name of Sigmundr. Another source suggests it is a derivative of the later Saxon name of Sigmund. Both interpretations of the name are probably basically correct because Proto-Norse is the North Germanic (Saxon) language of Scandinavia.

### John Symonds b c1757 m Susanna Legood

James Symonds m 28 Jan 1822 Elizabeth Thurlow

John Symonds baptised 28 Apr 1822 m 15 May 1849 Catherine Gee baptised 16 May 1830

Alfred Symonds 1851 - 1924

Rachel Symonds 1852 - 1853

Emma Symonds 1853 - 1938

Henry Symonds 1855 - 1935

Thomas Symonds 1858 - 1924

William Knibb Symonds 1861 - 1899

Charles Symonds 1866 - 1953

Spurgeon Symonds 1869 - 1894

Rachael Symonds baptised 23 September 1823 d. 16<sup>th</sup> April 1824

Rachael Symonds baptised 7 December 1824 d. 16<sup>th</sup> April 1825

Walter Symonds baptised 17 December 1826

Maria Symonds baptised 1 June 1828

Charles Simonds baptised 11 July 1830

THIS NOTICE APPEARED IN 'THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN REGISTER' ON  
Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1853 in the classified section.

*TO CAPTAIN C.F.RICHES, OF THE SHIP 'WILLIAM STEWART'*

*DEAR SIR – We the undersigned being emigrants on board the 'WILLIAM STEWART' now that our journey is, through the blessing of the Almighty and your skill, happily brought to a close, beg to express to you, for our-selves and on behalf of our respective families, that sense we entertain of your unwearied exertions not only to render the passage as brief as possible (consistent with the safety of the vessel) but also for our general well-being and comfort.*

*We feel deeply grateful for the vigilance and activity so constantly manifested by you in the performance of your onerous duties, and our best thanks are due for the gentlemanly manner by which your entire bearing has been characterized.*

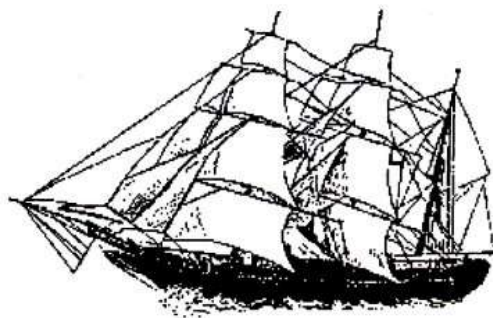
*We now bid you farewell, and be assured you will bear with you our earnest prayers for a safe and prosperous voyage home.*

*We beg also through you to convey the thanks so justly due to your officers (Messrs. MacFie and Mitchell) for their kindness and courtesy throughout the voyage, even at times when it could be least expected.*

*Farewell Sir, and that prosperity and happiness may attend you, both in your public and private life, is the heartfelt wish of the emigrants now leaving you.*

*Ship "William Stewart," Adelaide, July 1853*

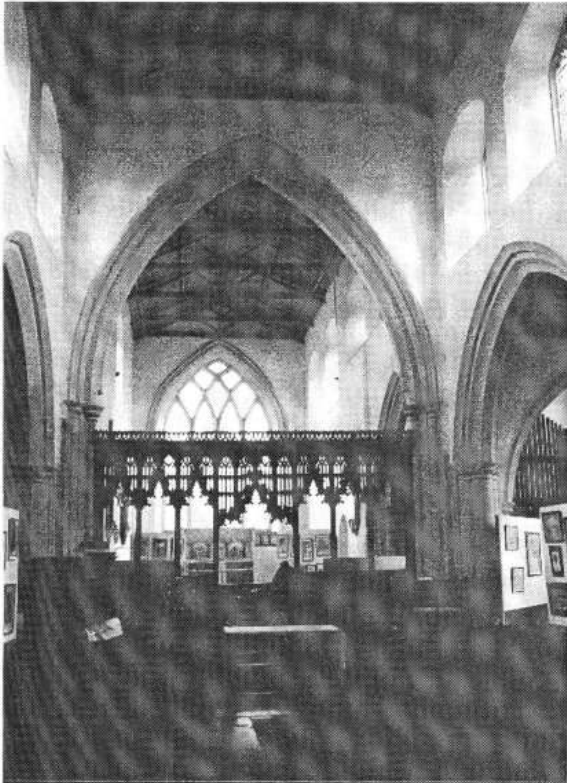
*(A list of 103 signatures followed, which included two John Symonds and one James Symonds)*



## BEDINGHAM



St. Andrews, Bedingham, Norfolk, 2001  
*(Photo courtesy Prof. Malcolm Symonds)*



The church of St. Andrews, Bedingham is located in the village of the same name. It is thought the name is of Saxon origin and is derived from the homestead of Beda's people. It is a very ancient parish and a nephew of the Saxon King Harold, called Hagan was Lord of the Manor in 1066. The church was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Originally there were two churches on the site, sharing the same churchyard, but time has obliterated the reason for this or why St. Mary's was abandoned and why St. Andrews' is such an imposing structure to serve such a small community. The church has a round tower, part of the original structure built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 15<sup>th</sup> century an octagonal tower was added to the top of it giving it a total height of 18.92 metres. Five bells are housed in the tower – the earliest was cast in 1520 and weighs 7cwt and tuned in B. In 1573 one weighing 5½cwt was installed. A third bell, weighing 4cwt was added in 1710 and

sixty eight years later in 1778, one weighing  $4\frac{1}{4}$  cwt was installed. In 1847 the newest bell, which weighed  $3\frac{3}{4}$ cwt was added. The bells are not rung now as the A frame is no longer strong enough.

In August 2001 my daughter Josephine visited the church on the day the fete was being held so had the opportunity to talk with the parishioners. No one there had any knowledge of any Symonds, past or present, in the district. She was not able to find any Symonds graves though some headstones are worn smooth, but it is likely that the placing of headstones on graves would have been beyond the means of the family. A search of the Parish records did not reveal any more information than the records that are already available.



2001 Overgrown headstones in churchyard

## JOHN AND CATHERINE SYMONDS

John Symonds was born in Bedingham, Norfolk in 1822 and was baptised in St. Andrew's on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1822. His marriage to Catherine Gee took place in the Independent Chapel, Sutton-Saint-Mary in the district of Holbeach on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1849. John was an agricultural labourer and a bachelor aged twenty-seven years and Catherine a domestic servant and spinster. She was twenty years old. Catherine, daughter of Thomas and Catherine Gee was baptised on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1830 in the Parish of Sutton-Saint-Nicholas. She also had a sister named Elizabeth who was baptised in the same Parish on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1832. John Symonds must have received some education because he signed his own marriage certificate in near copperplate hand "John Symonds." Catherine had to make her mark on the document. They were married by Samuel Ashby. John Symonds' father James' occupation was given as woodman and Thomas Gee's as a labourer. The "Independent" was an early name for the Congregational Church.

Meanwhile in Australia, the new colonies were gaining autonomy from England and in Adelaide in February 1848 worthy citizens founded the Destitute Board for the welfare of its migrants. Also in that year, on 15<sup>th</sup> December in Sydney, the Australian Mutual Provident Society was founded. This society went from strength to strength and no doubt has touched the lives of many of the members of the family over generations taking care of their insurances and investments and in 1998 this now giant Australian society was listed as a public company.

Long Sutton, Sutton-Saint-Mary and Sutton-Saint-Nicholas are all very close together in Lincolnshire. Sutton-Saint-Nicholas is now called Lutton and the villages are in an area of flat reclaimed land called the Fens. This drained area of marsh and peat plains is renowned for its rich fertile land and at the present time is England's wheat bowl.

In 1849 the European population of South Australia was estimated at 52,904. Gold was being discovered in Australia, both in New South Wales and Victoria and this was also the year Joseph Sepplet established his vineyard at Tanunda, South Australia. Catherine Symonds was a staunch supporter of the Temperance cause from the time she was 'converted' at the age of seventeen years so this event would be of no interest to her or her family though some of the present family may be interested! It took about one hundred and forty days for a sailing ship to reach Australia from England so we can only wonder if the news of gold in Australia influenced the family in the English countryside to consider the possibility of emigration. Sailing time was to be reduced as clippers and gradually the steaming sail ships took over the route and by the mid to late 1850's mail and passengers took about eighty days to make the journey.

In 1851 John Symonds and his small family were listed in the British Census of that year in Lutton in the Parish of Sutton-Saint-Nicholas. They must have maintained their own household as John was listed as head, 28 years of age and an agricultural labourer, Catherine his wife, 21 years old, Alfred his son aged one month, Walter Symonds, John's brother aged 24 years, unmarried, agricultural labourer. Also in the household that night was Robert Essam, lodger, aged 16 years, unmarried and an agricultural labourer and Robert Taylor, visitor, aged 31 years, unmarried and also an agricultural labourer.

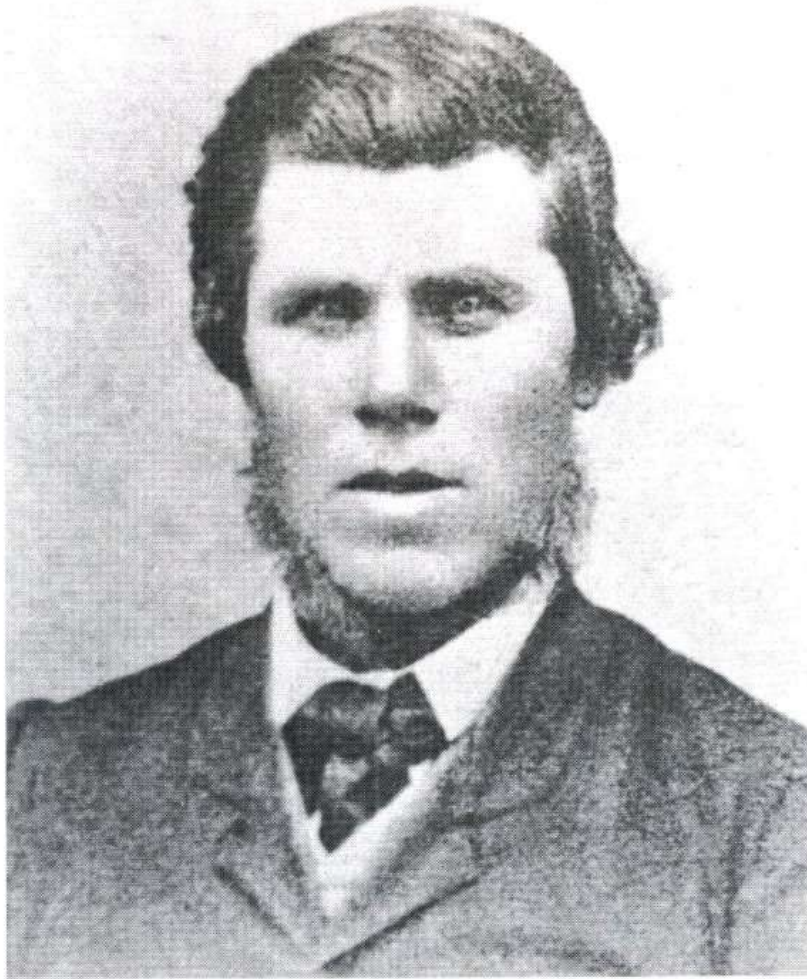
John, Catherine, Alfred aged 2 years and infant daughter Rachel left Southampton aboard the "William Stewart" under the command of Captain C.F. Riches on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1853. Meanwhile England had drifted into war in the Crimea against Russia and William Ewart Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Rachel appears to have been named after John's sisters both named Rachael, born in 1823 and 1824.

The "William Stewart" arrived at Port Adelaide on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 1853. In the notice of appreciation to the ship's surgeon Thomas Bicherton, and printed in The South Australian Register on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1853 it seems that the passengers had an exceptionally healthy voyage with the ship's two hospitals only used for the births of four babies during the journey.

South Australia continued developing and in that year the 'Lady Augusta' and the 'Mary Ann' navigated the Murray River to Swan Hill and in Melbourne, the same month as the 'William Stewart' arrived in Port Adelaide, Cobb and Co. was formed. This company, as well as having the biggest mail network throughout Australia, was later to provide mail and passenger services between Cape Jervis and Adelaide, passing through Yankalilla and Wattle Flat, until motor transport took over.

On their arrival in South Australia, John, Catherine and family first resided at Edwardstown. Emma Symonds was born on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1853 at Black Forest exactly two months after the family's arrival. We must marvel at Catherine's courage to embark on a journey to a new country, already pregnant and





John Symonds

caring for a two year old and an infant and to later have to face this birth without the care and comfort of her extended family.

Tragedy struck the family two days before their first Christmas in Australia. Their daughter Rachel, aged 16 months, died of dysentery on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1853 at Black Forest. Her death was registered by her father John and at the time he was working as a labourer at Black Forest Mills. The Black Forest was heavily timbered land that stretched from Adelaide to the coast. For security for the new colony the government felt unless this land was cleared, invaders would be able to reach Adelaide using the forest as cover for a covert operation. It appears that John had found employment in the Black Forest saw mill.

It is not known how long the family stayed in Adelaide but their second son Henry was born at McLaren Vale on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1855. The Stacey family, later to be linked to the Symonds family by the marriages of two of John's sons to their daughters, was also living at McLaren Vale at this time.

John leased land at Hay Flat, south of Yankalilla in 1856 and was there for three years. This section 1088 adjoins a block now owned by his great great grandson Barry Symonds. It had been recorded that at the time, the family trekked to Yankalilla with all their worldly goods – a Government Issue tent, pots and pans, three pigs and a fourpenny bit! We do not know exactly from whence their journey began, perhaps you could say Lincolnshire in early 1853, but in the mid 1850's it still took about one week to travel the fifty miles between Adelaide and Yankalilla. John and Catherine's third son Thomas was born at Yankalilla on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1858.

John purchased his first parcel of land at Wattle Flat on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1867. He purchased sections 661 and 662 each containing eighty acres from John Heathcote. Heathcote had been granted this land in October 1853. These sections were up on the hills and what a contrast this landscape at Wattle Flat was from the flat,

TO THOMAS BICKERTON, Esq., SURGEON-SUPERINTENDENT OF THE SHIP 'WILLIAM STEWART.'

DEAR SIR – We, the Emigrants, on board the ship WILLIAM STEWART, now that our voyage is, through God's blessing so happily brought to a close, feel bound in duty to offer our grateful and sincere thanks for unremitting attention you have paid to everything connected to our health, safety and comfort – exertions which have been so visibly blessed in the unparalleled healthy state of the passengers throughout the voyage, manifest in the fact that both hospitals would have remained untenanted but for those interesting occasions which have added four additional members to our society.

We are sensible that to God our thanks are first due, but next to Him our gratitude is owing to you, Sir, who have shown so much care and anxiety for our welfare. Language cannot convey all we feel for your skilful and tender care of the sick, as well as for the unvaried urbanity and good temper with which you attended our little ailments, and at all times we have come in contact with you. We repeat that we are unable adequately to thank you for the many kindnesses we have received at your hands; but we cannot part with you without expressing thus publicly the feeling we all entertain towards you, and we trust that in your future life the same blessings may always attend your efforts for the health of your patients as have made our voyage remarkable in the annals of immigration.

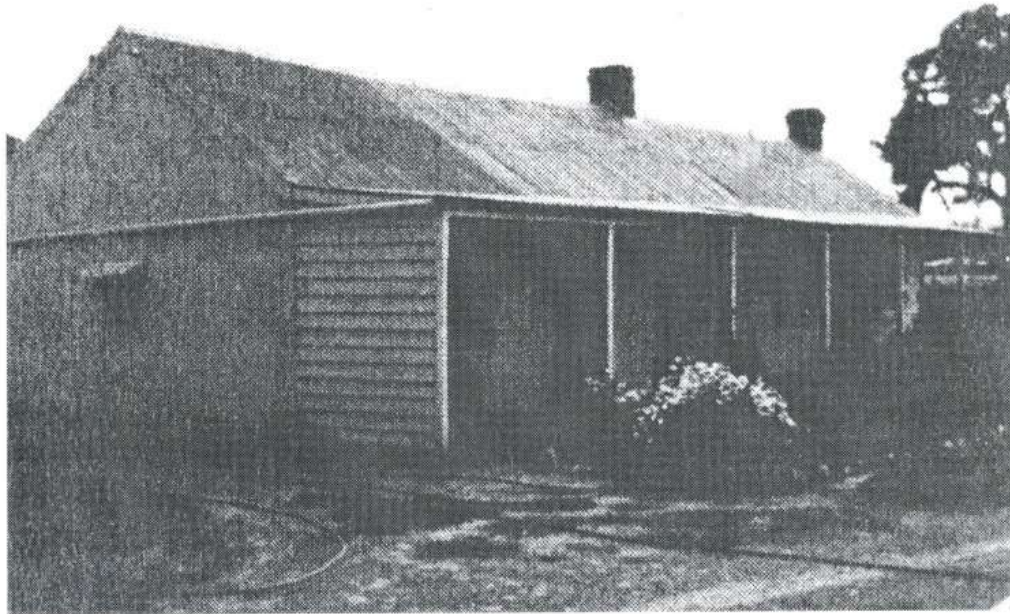
We take farewell of you with regret, although in doing so we cannot but express a hope that Australia will show such an appreciation of your professional abilities as will induce you to adjourn there, and so give us an opportunity of an occasional greeting; but if we never meet again, be assured you take with you the hearty good wishes of the emigrants on board the 'WILLIAM STEWART.'

Ship 'WILLIAM STEWART' Adelaide, July 1853.

This is a copy of a notice appearing in the newspaper 'The South Australian Register,' on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1850 in the classified section. It also carried a list of signatures nearly identical to those appearing on the notice of appreciation to Captain C.F.Riches of the William Stewart



Ruins of John & Catherine Symonds house on Myponga section 662.  
Photo taken July 1999



Bords Flat Post Office

marshy English Fens. Lush (by Australian standards) this secluded valley, bisected by a creek, was wooded with stands of wattle and tall gum trees and surrounded by steep hills. Some members of the family remember it said that John used to walk from here down to Wattle Flat daily to carry out his teaching duties.

In 1864 John leased section 410 from Charles Sharpe. This property was the Bords (Boords) Flat Post Office. Bords Flat was an early name for Wattle Flat, being named after a Mr. Bord an early Post Master. John later purchased this land and members of the family occupied it for a hundred years. The property, formerly owned by John Heathcote was where Agnes Neil Smith was postmistress in 1849. When Mr. Bord was postmaster, a fortnightly mail service ran between there and Adelaide and it cost seven pence to dispatch a letter to Adelaide. While her husband James Smith was employed by Mr. Heathcote as a provisioner for his shepherds, Agnes who was well educated, remained on her own acting as postmistress. The family always understood that the small window on the wall of the house closest to the road was where the postmaster or postmistress of the day passed the mail to local residents. James' duties were to ride out to the remote shepherds' huts delivering their supplies and later, as he was an accomplished ploughman, having learnt the skills in Scotland, was promoted to these duties.

Thomas Hardy, founder of Hardy's vineyards and wineries took James place as shepherds' supplier. Later James went to the Victorian goldfields and must have been successful as Agnes managed to save the money he sent home and on his return they were able to purchase section 445. They called this property 'Brookside' and about eighty years later, John Symonds grandson Henry (Harry) Symonds was to reside there for a time. It is interesting to note that on several occasions the Symonds and Smith families lived in the same houses – at different times – in the district. John and Catherine's son Charles was later to marry Agnes and James Smith's niece Jannett Hayter Smith.

While living in what I will now refer to as Wattle Flat, Agnes gave birth to a son and it is believed he only lived for seven days. He was buried under a large gum tree opposite the house, but no trace of this grave remains.

The amount of land under crop was small in the early days. Ploughing was very hard using a small, usually single furrow plough pulled by a horse and the seed was broadcast by hand by walking up and down the ploughed land carrying the seed, usually in a bag and scattering it all around. It was then mixed into the topsoil with harrows of tree branches pulled by the horse. The farmer had to fence his plot to try and keep out wandering stock and marauding kangaroos. With all the vicissitudes of pests, weather, fire, birds and wandering animals, recorded yields at the time were anything from fourteen to forty bushels per acre on virgin land.

John Symonds was best known as a schoolteacher at Wattle Flat. On the long voyage to South Australia he was assisted by a fellow passenger to further his education with the view of a teaching career in his new country. This dream was realised at Wattle Flat in 1863.



Wattle Flat & John Symonds home

The school at Wattle Flat is believed to have been started in 1856 and in 1859 an entry in the Government Gazette noted the teacher of the licensed school was Stephen W. Horton. Subsequent records show a letter was received by the Board of Education in 1862 seeking financial assistance to erect a school at Wattle Flat, which was about three and a half miles from the 'Wissanger School' in Yankalilla. Mr. William R. Wright had been chairman of a meeting held in Yankalilla to formulate a request for the Wattle Flat School and the Education Board decided to defer a decision on the matter until they consulted the Inspector of Schools.

John Symonds was teaching in 1863. His school was in a private dwelling and in that year there were 29 pupils but it is not known where this school was held. John continued to teach, including all his own children and we can only wonder if it was an ordeal (for either his children or himself) to teach all of ones own family but it is noted that not one of his seven surviving children took up the teaching profession! Descendants of some of his pupils, though not members of this family tell a story in relation to John's



Wattle Flat School c1950  
(photo courtesy Yankalilla Area School)

teaching methods. Their forefathers used to say that when his lessons failed to go through a student's head, John used his two foot oak ruler to put the lesson through the pupil's other end! I guess lots of the family members have experienced a belt on the backside from their various schoolteachers during their school years.

The Wattle Flat School became an official Government school in 1867 when a new school building was erected on the site of the licensed school. John was the first teacher in this new building and his stipend was six pence per week for each pupil. This building underwent many additions and alterations over the years and it was in continuous use until mid 1948 when it was closed. Primary school students previously educated at Wattle Flat, Second Valley and Torrens Vale Schools were transferred to the Yankalilla School and these three small schools were permanently closed.

In October 1867 Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh and second son of Queen Victoria, generated much excitement with his visit to South Australia as part of his Australian tour. So much excitement that when a mail packet on the horizon was mistaken for the Duke's ship, the celebratory cannons were fired on Glenelg foreshore! Also in 1867 when the first open-field greyhound coursing meeting in Australia was held in Naracoorte, no one was to know that John's grandson Henry (Harry) William Symonds and great grandsons Ivan and Austin were to move to Naracoorte in 1953, 86 years after the construction of his government school (where they all commenced their education) to farm in the area.

Three more children were born to John and Catherine at Wattle Flat – William Knibb on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1861, Charles on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1866 and Spurgeon on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1869. In the same year as Spurgeon's birth, Henry who was then fourteen years old took over the management of the farm.



John Symonds house at Wattle Flat (photo taken 1987)

Many aboriginals lived on the Fleurieu Peninsula and up until the early 1900's it was a common occurrence for students at the school to see tribal groups of them passing by on their way to Myponga Beach. They used to travel from Encounter Bay via Inman Valley and Wattle Flat to Myponga Beach.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 1872 John purchased section 417, possibly from Thomas Kenny for a purchase price of one hundred pounds and on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1872 added section 408 to his holdings. By this time his eldest son Alfred was married and had two children of his own.

John was a conscientious teacher and encouraged his students to gain a good education. Life was hard and children were often needed at home to work on the developing farms so education was low on the list of priorities of many struggling families. It was not until the Education Act of 1875 that attendance at schools in South Australia became compulsory. The Council of Education report on Wattle Flat School in 1876 states that John Symonds instructed fifty-five students and the school had no free scholars. The school was opened for 231 days of the year with an average daily attendance of twenty-four students. Thirty-two scholars presented for examinations and 43.30% passed. John collected fees of twenty-four pounds fourteen

shillings and eight pence from parents for school fees. He was very pleased when two sisters, Irene Mary Pyne and Kate Pyne, who he had taught followed his chosen career and became schoolteachers. Irene taught at Wattle Flat following John's resignation, from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1881 until the end of September 1886. Her sister taught there from 16<sup>th</sup> April 1888 until mid October 1892 and returned to Wattle Flat for a further ten years from 1<sup>st</sup> May 1916. In 1887 Kate E. Pyne taught twenty-five students with an average daily attendance of seventeen. The school was open for 217 days during the year and the parents paid nine pounds eighteen shillings and ten pence in school fees.

The 30<sup>th</sup> April 1881 was the date of the first census held for all six Australian colonies and was thirty years after the last one that John and his family were accounted for in England. South Australia had a population of 286,211 including 3,451 in the Northern Territory and 6,346 Aborigines in settled areas.



Avenue of trees planted by J.Symonds  
Photo 1987

John continued teaching and taught for over eighteen years at Wattle Flat School. He resigned in 1881 and died the same year on 10<sup>th</sup> November aged fifty-nine years of 'marasmus senilus.' He was buried in the Yankalilla cemetery.

The last traces of this school where so many of the Symonds children commenced their schooling was finally obliterated in 1977 when the original chimney and fireplace, built in 1867 was demolished and the home of Mr. Douglas Wenham built on the site.

A living memorial to John Symonds is a magnificent avenue of gum trees that he planted lining the main road at Wattle Flat. They were still standing in 2003 which is a miracle that this stand of trees have survived one hundred and thirty years and have been spared in any District Council road widening activities!

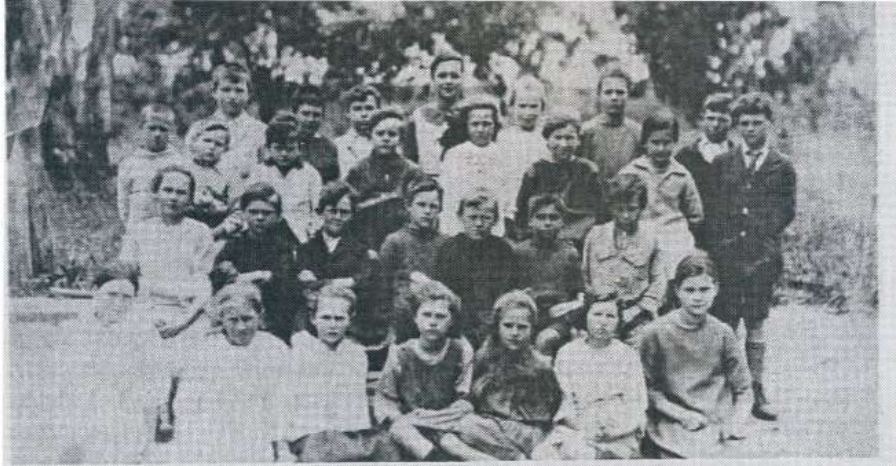
The first officers of the Salvation Army in South Australia, Captain and Mrs. Sutherland arrived in Adelaide on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1881. Catherine was to admire and support this organization and even when she was an elderly lady, continued to sew patchwork quilts for the poor to be distributed by the 'Salvos.'

By the time of his death, two of John's sons were married, Alfred to Caroline Stacey and Henry to her sister Sarah Ann Stacey. Between them, they had given him nine grandchildren and more children were born to both couples after his death. Henry was still managing the farm and Alfred was living at Minlacowie at the time of their father's death.

After thirty-two years of marriage, hard working, devout and courageous Catherine was widowed at fifty-one years of age with seven surviving children. Over the next few years they all gradually married and left home. Charles married Jannett Hayter Smith and lived in the family home. Catherine lived in the end

rooms of this house for a number of years and after Spurgeon's widow remarried and moved away, 'Grandma' was shifted to his house across the creek where she remained living alone until her death.

Catherine must have learnt to read as she read the scriptures daily, often by candlelight, right up until the time of her death. One of the big family bibles, almost in pieces through constant use, is in the possession of her great grand daughter Elva Parham.



*WATTLE FLAT SCHOOL, c.1925*

Back Row: *Charlie Clarke, Brice Bowyer, Pete Clarke, Maud Clarke, Muriel Bowyer, Gwen Wenham, Laurie Martin.*  
 Second Row: *Bert Cuthbert, Harry Bowyer, Frank Clarke, Kingsley King, May Wenham, Alice Clarke, Mavis Bowyer, Ray Buckley.*  
 Third Row: *Jean Clarke, Ken Symonds, Laurie Clarke, Alf Bowyer, Jack Clarke, Harry Cuthbert, Lin Wenham.*  
 Front Row: *Daphne Clarke, Flora Geister, Vera Bowyer, Alma Symonds, Pat Wenham, Eugene Clarke, Eileen Stock.*



*WATTLE FLAT SCHOOL, 1940*

Left - Right: as One Row: *Bob McLean, Doug Symonds, Bill Bartram, John Jiesman, Mavis Clarke, Lois Wenham, Glen Wickham, ?, Ron Langley, Neva Wenham, Don Clarke, Keith Newbold, Arthur Clarke, Ron Wenham, Maureen Wickham, Denis Jiesman, Tom Wickham, Coral Symonds, Gwen Clarke, Howard Bowyer, Joan Symonds, Brenda Bartram, Max Fowler, Ivan Symonds, Doug Wenham, Don McLean.*

(Photo courtesy Yankalilla Area School)

Her house across the creek was a popular place with her son Charles' children. Their Grandma was a good cook so they liked to visit her as she always had something nice in her cake tins for them! Ella was to say many years later that Grandma's cooking was so much better than that at home!



Grandson H.W.Symonds at John and Catherine Symonds grave  
c.1987 prior to him carrying out restoration

Apparently she was much loved by neighbours and had many friends in the district. In her later years many enjoyed listening to her stories about her life. It fell to Catherine, with her small children to trudge over the hills searching for their precious stock that had wandered. She often said before starting she would 'commit her wee bairns into the care and keeping of the All-Father and how wonderfully and tenderly He guided her and hers through the trial and difficulty of the period.' Many hours were spent by Catherine sewing for what she called her 'Glory Box.'

She made many patchwork quilts among other items and donated them to either the Methodist Church or the Salvation Army and though she had very little, she also tried to put aside some money regularly for her church..

Catherine's granddaughter Ella could remember her clearly and recalled an accident that happened at her house. Ern her grandson was playing by pushing a chair about when he fell over it and badly cut his lip, which bled profusely. Grandma comforted him and carried him home to his parents across the creek and Ern had the scar on his lip for the rest of his life.

Australia began the new century in the grip of drought and participating in the Boer War. In September 1900 Queen Victoria signed the document creating the Commonwealth of Australia and four months later she died at Osborne House, Isle of Wight. Electors voted for their representatives in our first Federal Parliament on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 1901 but it was not until the election held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1903 that Australian women were eligible to vote, thus in Catherine's lifetime women in Australia gained voting rights.

After being bedridden for about ten months, suffering from dropsy and in a very distressed state, Catherine died at her home on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1910. Her death certificate states 'diabetes, mellitus and senility' as the causes of death. She had been widowed for twenty-nine years. Ella remembered that during her illness she had been cared for by 'an Auntie, my mother, Hetty and Cathie.' Ella described the funeral as 'It was the first funeral I had ever attended and the memory lingers. The service was held outside under two big lucerne trees and the hymn sung was "Forever with the Lord." The hearse was a horse and buggy with the back seat removed and the casket was placed there, covered with a black velvet rug.'



In the days of elaborate, glassed in horse drawn hearses, protocol and ceremony, this was considered a very simple tribute to a loved and esteemed lady. She was laid to rest on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1910 beside her husband John in the Yankalilla cemetery. Just two weeks after her death the nation was plunged into mourning the death of King Edward VII and George V was the new king.

Catherine had lived in Australia just a couple of months short of fifty seven years and at the time of her death was survived by four sons, one daughter, forty eight grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.



Catherine Symonds



Spurgeon's house  
Photo taken in 1987

IN MEMORIAM

*Mrs Catherine Symonds, who entered into rest at Wattle Flat, near Yankalilla, on May 8, 1910 in her 81<sup>st</sup> year, was the widow of the late John Symonds. Her maiden name was Gee. She was born in Lincolnshire. In conjunction with her husband and eldest son she arrived in South Australia in 1853. Her first home was Edwardstown and after several changes of abode the family finally settled in the Yankalilla district, where the deceased spent the remainder of her life.*

*Mrs. Symonds was converted at the age of 17 years. After marriage she, with her husband united in fellowship with the Baptist Church. In the latter years her lot was cast with the Methodist Section of Christ's Church, and with which she was a devout and respected adherent at the time of her death.*

*Our departed sister was regular in her attendance at the house of worship, and liberal with her gifts and services to the cause of God. She was a staunch supporter of the temperance cause and from early years instilled in the minds of her family of eight children the evils of intemperance.*

*During a painful illness of ten months the deceased was visited by Rev.A.A.Smith, whose visits were greatly appreciated. The surviving members of her family comprise four sons and one daughter, forty-eight grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren.*

*Mrs. Symonds was a most devoted wife, a loving mother, and was highly esteemed by a large circle of friends. Her husband predeceased her by twenty-nine years, having entered into his rest in 1881.*

*The mortal remains of our deceased sister were interred in the Yankalilla Cemetery on May 10, 1910, the funeral service being conducted by Rev.G.W.Johnston.*

G.W.Johnston

IN MEMORIAM

*Mrs. Symonds Sen. was, to my thinking one of the choice spirits of the Church. No one can tell the faith and perseverance this noble woman exercised in the early days, when money was scarce and the growing needs of a family were great. "But her children rise up to call her blessed." She lived to a ripe age. Three chief features of her life I noticed when ministering for three years in the Yankalilla Circuit were faith, power in prayer, and great liberality. She was always so anxious about the growth of the Church and the conversion of the people. Born in the days of Church revival, when the power of God as manifest and constant in her native town, she carried that power through days of weakness, ill health and continued prostration. She never missed an opportunity to speak a word for her Master. All the young people who visited her were advised to give themselves to God, and many prayers were offered by her for*

them. When some of her nephews and nieces were received into the Church in my time she cried with joy. She had a great love for the Salvation Army, and entered into sympathy with it for its social work and rejoiced when conversions were made. She kept what she called her "glory Box" and, though enjoying a very small weekly income, she always put aside every spare shilling for God's work. Several times during my three years she put money in my hand, saying, "Here are a few shillings for God's work; you know best what to do with it." More than once the circuit fund was increased by it. Once I gave 10s. towards the support of Mr. Lyons, our evangelist, and when I told her of conversions through his work her face lit up with celestial light. I often wondered how she could afford what she did, and remonstrated with her for I knew she was poor, but she would say, "My dear, I do love to help God's work." She spent long hours, like Dorcas of old, making patchwork quilts, and the 'glory box' received much from this source. My faith has often been increased when in doubting moments, I thought of this dear old lady, nearly blind, living so much by herself and yet so patient and kind. So anxious about the kingdom of God, yet shut out for years from privileges which God's people have in His temples and the company of the faithful, I expect to find her very near the throne when I reach the New Jerusalem.

Chas. E. Williams

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. A.A. Smith says, regarding Mrs Symonds: Of course I knew her well, and saw her often. She was one of God's good women, a dear old lady whom to know was to love. Hardy, industrious, resourceful, she was a typical pioneer. It was an unbounded delight to sit and listen to her talk about the early days – how she trudged over the open country seeking the cattle; how she, before starting, would commit her wee bairns into the care and keeping of the All-Father, and how wonderfully and tenderly He guided her and hers through the trial and difficulty of that period.

She was a brave, heroic soul, and served her family in the fear of the Lord. She lived to see her children, and her children's children, rise up around her and call her blessed. Her trust in God was unflinching. During her days of suffering I would say: "Well, Mrs. Symonds, what would you do if He were not with you?" "Oh! Mr. Smith," she would exclaim, "I don't know what I should do without Him." To the very last she retained her interest in all God's work. No one visited her without being faithfully questioned as to their personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Out of the little cash she saved she would hand me a sum, saying, "Don't put any name, a donation from a friend towards the Church."

To minister to her was a veritable benediction.

She has gone but her influence will live forever; and with some of us that influence will abide forever –

"As some rare perfume in a vase of clay,

Pervades it with a sweetness not its own."

We all have memories we cherish of the bewitching harmonies in music, of the wonderfully beautiful in nature, of the exquisitely delightful human associations. But to my mind, only next to the direct influence of God's good spirit is the sanctifying influence of the good who being dead yet speak to us, as they never could while they lived. Truly –

"With the morn those angel faces smile,

Which we have loved long since and lost awhile."

The Reverend A.A. Smith was the Methodist minister at Yankalilla in 1906

**John Symonds** bap. 28<sup>th</sup> April 1822 m. 15<sup>th</sup> May 1849 Catherine Gee bap. 16<sup>th</sup> May 1830

#### EIGHT CHILDREN

- 1 Alfred Symonds b. 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1851 d. 1924 m. (1) 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1870 Caroline Stacey b. 1845  
(2) 1913 Margaret Jane Collins
- 2 Rachel Symonds b. c. 1852 d. 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1853
- 3 Emma Symonds b. 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 1853 d. 4<sup>th</sup> Apr 1938 m. 1866 Alfred Bakewell b. 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1853
- 4 Henry Symonds b. 29<sup>th</sup> Mar 1855 d. 8<sup>th</sup> Jul 1935 m. 5<sup>th</sup> Apr 1876 Sarah Ann Stacey b. c. 1855
- 5 Thomas Symonds b. 20 Apr 1858 d. 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1924 m. 18<sup>th</sup> Apr 1882 (1) Amelia Mills b. 1862 d.  
19<sup>th</sup> Apr. 1898  
(2) 19<sup>th</sup> Jun 1901 Caroline Truman b. 5<sup>th</sup> Apr 1865
- 6 William Knibb Symonds b. 17<sup>th</sup> Sep 1861 d. 4<sup>th</sup> Sep 1899 m. 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 1883 Hannah Gertrude Sagar  
b. 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 1861
- 7 Charles Symonds b. 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1866 d. 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1953 m. 4<sup>th</sup> May 1887 Janet Hayter Smith b. 29<sup>th</sup>  
Jan 1866
- 8 Spurgeon Symonds b. 10<sup>th</sup> Sep 1869 d. 4<sup>th</sup> Apr 1894 m. 15<sup>th</sup> May 1891 Flora McRae b. 19<sup>th</sup> May  
1870

## WATTLE FLAT, WOOL & OTHER THINGS

This lush fertile valley, called Bords (or Boords) Flat when first settled was originally part of a land grant to John Heathcote on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1853 by Sir Henry Edward Fox Young, Lieutenant Governor of the Province, though small parcels of land had been granted earlier.

Wattle Flat is situated approximately eighty kilometres south of Adelaide and six kilometres north of Yankalilla. It is watered by the Carrickalinga Creek, which flows into the Gulf of St. Vincent at Carrickalinga Beach. The area was originally timbered with wattle and manna gum. Early writers often commented on the beauty of the area with its under story of ferns and wildflowers and enfolded in the steep surrounding hills.

In my research, I have reached the conclusion that the Wattle Flat Post Office had operated from at least four different locations until its closure. The first Postmaster was a Mr. Kemmis. The next Postmaster was Mr. Boord (hence the name Bords Flat for the area) and his post office was in the end of the house on section 410 leased by John Symonds in 1864. Agnes Smith was the postmistress at this location in c.1849. Later the Post Office was moved to a front room in the house on section 407. William Knibb Symonds built this house.

When Charles Symonds' daughter Ella was an elderly lady, she recalled having, as a young girl, to take the hurricane lantern and walk across the paddocks on winter evenings to await the arrival of the stagecoach to collect the mail for the family. The coach usually arrived at Wattle Flat about 6pm and it was about a quarter-mile walk each way for Ella so this would seem the Post Office was still on section 407 at that time.

Next, the Post Office was relocated to section 417. In 1906, the Postmistress was Mrs T.L.Clark and communication with Adelaide was by daily coach. By the time of its closure on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1956, the Postmistress was Miss Florrie Hunt and it operated from another site. It was in small asbestos premises fronting the main road near her home.

The following extract published in the Cyclopedia of South Australia, is an account written by a passenger on a coach making the journey south to the coast.

*"Sellick Hill – If the township has little to boast about by way of scenery, the road that bears the same name more than makes up for the deficiency. To drive up it is to be impressed, but to stand on the ridge at the top gazing downwards to where the plains and the sea are visible beyond the outlet, and then to career round the curves on the box-seat of the coach behind four good horses and beside a clever whip, is to have as exhilarating an experience as one can desire. A traveller who has obtained wide acquaintance with the hills has compared this trip with others, such as Norton Summit, from Eagle-on-the-Hill, and from Blair, to the plains, and unhesitatingly gives the palm to the run down Sellick Hill. He says "there is more of it, and it is more fully in sight. It is shaggier and more romantic, sterner and more varied, has higher colour in the rocks, and is altogether grander and more impressive."*



Sports Day at Wattle Flat 1912

These two newspaper clippings are glued in the Yankalilla Rate book 1856.

*Government Gazette 4<sup>th</sup> August 1859.*

*House of Assembly*

*Yankalilla: Mr. Strangways presented a petition from the residents of Yankalilla praying that the electric telegraph might be extended to that district.*

*The petition was received and read.*

*26<sup>th</sup> September 1859.*

*District of Yankalilla*

*Notice is hereby given that a public meeting of Ratepayers of the District, duly held on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of September inst. a RATE was made of ONE SHILLING in the POUND upon the Assesment of the District; and all persons liable are required within 14 days from the first publication of this notice, to pay the amount of the Rate according to Assesment to the Clerk and Collector, at his residence.*

*David Davies, Chairman*

*September 26, 1859*

In March 2001 the family of Charles Symonds daughter, Janet Ella Moseley (nee Symonds) presented a painting of historical significance for the area to the Yankalilla District Council on a permanent loan basis.

The painting, titled 'A Grey Day, Second Valley' was painted by James Ashton. The exact date of this work of art is not known but it was sold during the early 1900's for thirty-five pounds, which was a notable price at that time. This artist was born on the Isle of Man in 1859, studied at the York School of Art and was a marine painter and teacher. He arrived in Adelaide on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1884, taught at Prince Alfred College, and in 1885 founded the Norwood Art School. He also founded the Academy of Arts and Art Galleries in five South Australian towns.

The painting had been passed to Graham Moseley, Ella's son about eleven years previously, but had been in the family's possession for about fifty years. He and his sisters Elva and Constance, felt it was fitting that the painting be permanently on display in the Council Chambers in Yankalilla for all residents and visitors to the area to enjoy as their mother was born at Wattle Flat and had lived there and at Yankalilla for many years.



•HISTORIC ARTWORK - Canberra resident Mr Graham Moseley and sister, Ms Elva Parham, presented a historic picture of Second Valley to Yankalilla council last week. Accepting the painting were council Chief Executive Officer, Roger Sweetman and Chairman, Wendy Hunt.

*(Courtesy Victor Harbour Times 29<sup>th</sup> March 2001)*

Like all of Australia at that time, the very survival of the family on arrival at Wattle Flat depended mainly on agricultural pursuits, of which wool and sheep played a pivotal part. In the same year John & Catherine Symonds arrived in South Australia, England terminated convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land and the last convict ship, the 'St. Vincent' arrived in Hobart Town on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1853. It was not until January 1868 that transportation to Australia completely ceased when the last convict ship, the 'Hougoumont' arrived in Fremantle, eighty years after the arrival of the first convicts at Botany Bay. Meanwhile, Adelaide, which had been named after the wife of William IV was a thriving municipality, and in 1840 had been the first Australian settlement to be incorporated into a municipal government.

From the beginning of the first colony, the wool industry has waxed and waned, together with the fortunes of all associated with wool production and I guess our forebearers, who concentrated on the improving and increasing of their flocks, never envisaged the emergence of synthetic fabrics. The first wool auctions were organised by Thomas Mort and held in Sydney in 1843 and the same year, in Hindmarsh South Australia, John Ridley demonstrated his invention of a combined wheat reaper and thresher. In 1884, 19 year old Hugh McKay of Raywood, invented and successfully trailed a combine harvester, using his harvester, drawn by two horses to reap, thresh and clean grain from two acres of his father's crop.

The economic removal of the fleece from sheep has preoccupied many graziers. As far back as 1868, mechanical ways of doing this was explored when John Higham patented the first shearing machine and in 1877, inventors Wolseley & Savage patented their machine that would bring about big changes within the industry. Australia's sheep flock had increased to over 106 million head in 1891 and the population to over three million people. While Australia was gripped in financial crisis in 1892 and banks were closing their doors, Jack Howe won the machine shearing manufacturers prize for a record tally of 237 merinos shorn in a day. This award probably did not do the cause of machine shearing much good when, later the same year he had a tally of 321 sheep shorn with blade shears!

In 1916 with the First World War raging in Europe, the British Government purchased the entire 1916-1917 wool clip for about thirty million pounds. The press of the day told pastoralists this was 'war measure' and not a panacea for the ills of the trade, which indicates that all was not well in the industry at that time. Wool prices plunged to three pence a pound in 1920 and David Fletcher Jones established his tailoring business in Warrnambool, Victoria.

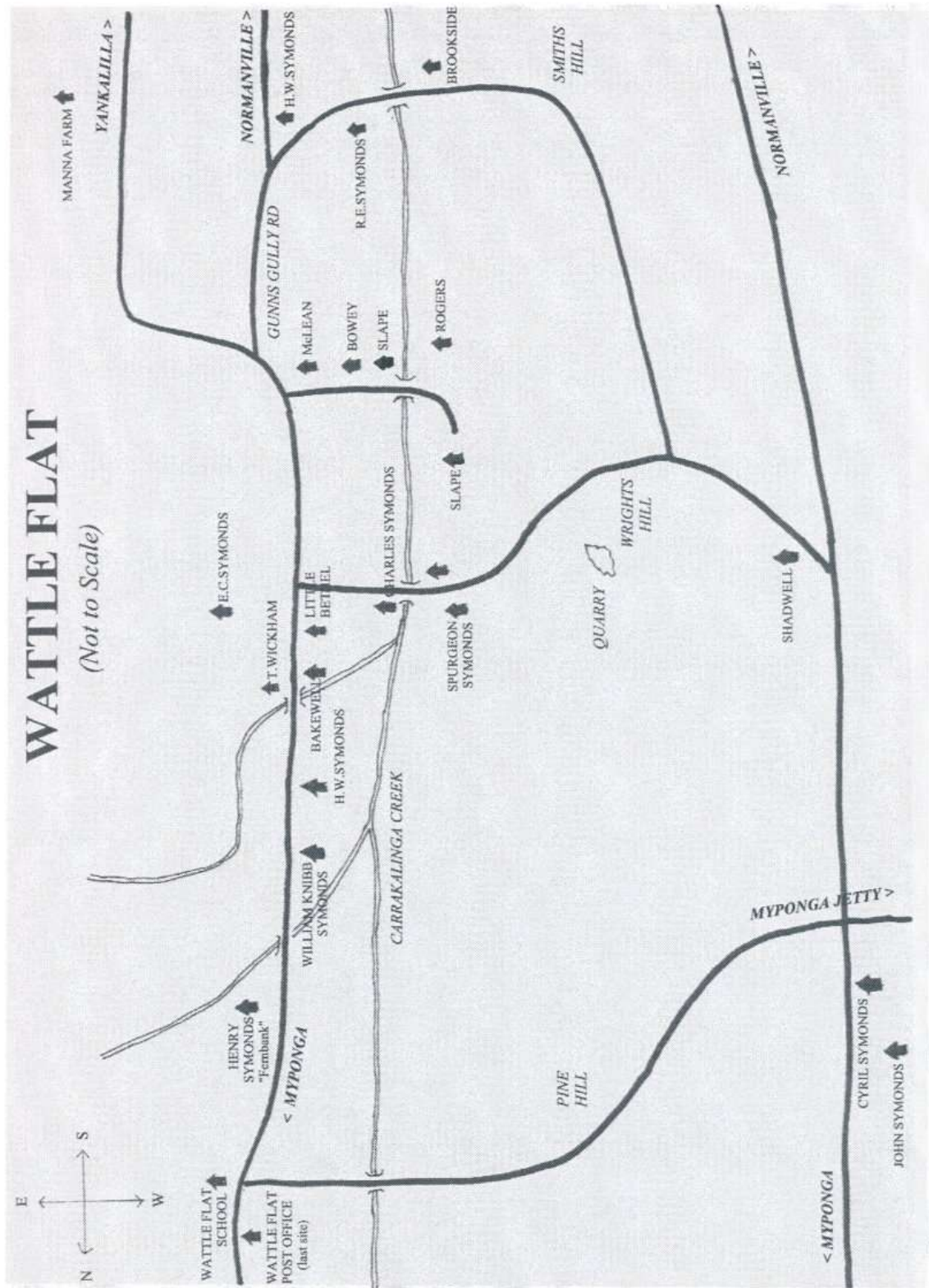
Thirty years later, Australia's Prime Minister Bob Menzies committed a squadron of Australian fighter planes to join the US forces in Korea and the price of wool soared. At the wool auctions in Geelong in 1950, wool fetched two hundred and forty pence a pound – 'a pound a pound' and the first Holden Ute, an icon in the agricultural industry, rolled off the assembly line. Comic Court won the Melbourne Cup that year, Sedgman & McGregor regained the Davis Cup and in 1952, Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne.

After the halcyon days of the 1950's, the shortcomings of the wool industry in Australia began to be gradually exposed from the mid 1960's. The demise of the wool industry was imminent. The manufacturing machinery was old and slow, costly to run and no attempt had been made to research and meet the needs of the consumers. Machine washable, fully synthetic fabric could be imported into Australia cheaper than woollen fabric could be produced. It was the beginning of the end. In an attempt to gain marketplace recognition, the wool mark was created. It has since become the world's most recognised trademark.

Wool prices recovered somewhat in 1972 when one bale of wool sold at Albury for 720 cents a kilo. This was the highest wool price for twenty years. Brian Morrison of Euroa became the world champion shearer when he sheared 410 sheep in eight hours.

The wool industry was in crisis in 1990. The Australian Wool Corporation had 2.5 million bales of wool stored in warehouses throughout Australia, had exhausted its \$1,800 million reserve funds and was heavily in debt. The floor price for wool was reduced from 870 cents a kilo to 700 cents. The floor price scheme was scrapped in 1991 and the Labour Government admitted that Australia no longer rode on the sheep's back – in fact, some observers were saying the wool industry 'bit the dust.' It was generally acknowledged that the industry debt in this country was \$2.8 billion.

A world record price for a bale of wool was achieved in 1995 when a bale of ultra fine 13.8 micron wool from Appledore's farm in N.S.W. sold for \$1,071,668.00. Some may think that price indicates a recovery of the sector, but wool continues on its roller-coaster ride of downturn and economic recovery. A recent development of sport wool, which is clothing capable of controlling body temperature, may once again temporarily lift wool out of the doldrums. A stoic acceptance of the way of life and a determination to 'hang on' during droughts and economic downturns gives us our cultural heritage and affinity to all things associated with the industry. The days of the Golden Fleece are long gone.

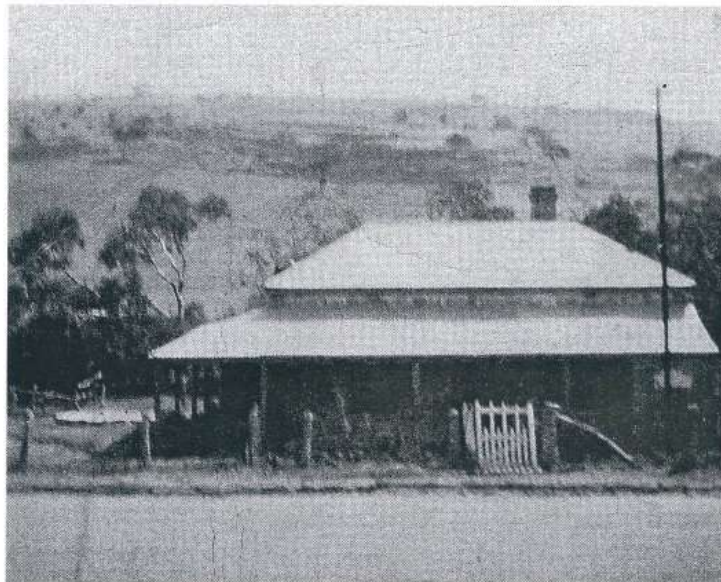


The beginning of the new century saw a continuance of the struggle for rural people in Australia. Dry years were gradually turning into fully-fledged droughts.

The world was stunned by the acts terrorism that caused the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Many thousands of lives were lost but one year and one day later, which probably had more impact on Australians, was the bombing of the tourist areas in Bali. Many Australian tourists were killed and injured.

By 2002 Australia was once more in the grip of a severe drought and in the first months of 2003, devastating bush fires, especially in Eastern Australia saw millions of acres of bush and farming land alike torched. The fires even reached into the suburbs of Canberra.

Now, one month later, in early February, Australians can only wait and hope that our country is not enmeshed in another world war. Australian troops are already on their way to the Middle East, specifically with a possible attack on Iraq and North Korea too is threatening nuclear action. Many of our family fought in the previous two world wars – I hope the need for this doesn't arise again. Now Australia has committed troops to the allied invasion of Iraq in March 2003.



This is the premises from which Thomas and Johanna Clarke conducted the Wattle Flat Post Office. The post office was on the right hand side of the house and in a closed off section of the front verandah.





CHAPTER FIVE

**ALFRED SYMONDS**



Alfred Symonds

Alfred was John and Catherine (nee Gee) Symonds eldest child and was born in the Holbeach district in Lincolnshire on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1851, though one source lists his birth as occurring on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1851. He emigrated with his parents and infant sister Rachel aboard the "William Stewart," arriving in Adelaide on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1853. He received his education from his father but whether it was in his school or informally at home prior to the commencement of John Symonds' school, we can only speculate.

As Alfred and his brother Henry grew up, they had to take over more of the burden of running the farm when they were quite young because John was engrossed with his teaching duties. Alfred was eighteen years old when Spurgeon, his youngest brother was born – his mother Catherine was thirty-nine years old and had given birth to eight children over a span of eighteen years!

Caroline Stacey, daughter of George and Sarah Stacey of Myponga Beach married Alfred on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1870. This marriage took place at the residence of the bride's father at Myponga Jetty. Caroline's parents had arrived in South Australia aboard the 'Seapark' in 1852 and they, like John and Catherine Symonds lived for a time at McLaren Vale before shifting in 1856 to Myponga Beach which was 'just over the hill' from Wattle Flat. Caroline who was born in England in 1845 was twenty-five years old when she married the nineteen-year-old Alfred.

I don't know if Caroline possessed any personal property but reform had commenced in Australia and by 1870 women in Victoria could own property in their own right and not be forced to hand it over to their husband. Other states slowly followed Victoria and introduced this legislation.

Alfred and Caroline lived at Wattle Flat and in December 1870, when Alfred was nineteen years old, the first of their eleven children was born. Their first three, Alfred James on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1870, Phillip George on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1872 and Phillip Henry on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1873 were all born at Wattle Flat. Phillip George died on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1872. He was just over seven weeks old and the death certificate states he was 'accidentally poisoned by laudanum' at Boords Flat! The same year as the first Phillip was born, the final link in the overland telegraph was completed but telegrams linking Adelaide with the outside world could only go as far as Palmerston in the Northern Territory as there was a break in the cable in the Java Sea.

Yankalilla Council records show that from 1870 and for the next four years Alfred was the occupier of part of Myponga section 410. This was the land that John Symonds occupied from 1868.

In 1872 Alfred was called upon to serve as one of twelve jurors at an inquest. Levi Shadwell, a twenty-four year old nephew of Robert Shadwell, was killed while he 'was under the influence of harvest wine.' He attempted to bring a reaping machine down a hill and it got out of control and ran over him. This accident probably happened on Wrights Hill road. The accident occurred at Wattle Flat on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1872. Levi was buried in Yankalilla Cemetery on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1872. Charles Symonds, Alfred's brother purchased the Shadwell property in 1912.

Alfred and Caroline's next three children all had their births registered at Edithburg, which is on the south east of Yorke Peninsula. William Ernest was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1874, Edith Jane on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1875 and Sarah Constance on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1877. On the electoral roll of 1878, Alfred Symonds' place of residence was listed as Edithburg. The next birth, that of their seventh child, a daughter called Fanny Maria occurred at Minlacowie, which is on the western side of Yorke Peninsula, on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1879. Two more children, Hilda on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1882 and John Thomas Stacey on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1884 had their births registered as occurring at Brentwood.

Brentwood is very close to Minlacowie so it was possible that the family were living in the same place but Caroline may have been at her sister-in-law Hannah Symonds' (wife of William Knibb Symonds) home for the birth. Hannah also gave birth to a son Horace at Brentwood in 1885.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1886 another son, Stanley Washington was born. His birth was recorded as occurring near Georgetown, which is about 24kms south of Gladstone in the mid north of South Australia. It was just two months before this birth that the railway from Adelaide to Bordertown was officially opened so the railways were gradually encompassing the state.

Phillip Henry and William Ernest enrolled at Wattle Flat School on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1887. This enrolment entry showed they had attended school at Georgetown during the previous year. Nearly two years after her last confinement, the birth of Caroline's eleventh child took place at Yankalilla on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888. This son was named Leslie Anderson. Again another Symonds wife had borne a large family and in Caroline's case, she had given birth to eleven children over eighteen years.

1888 was also the centenary of white settlement on Australia though I doubt if too many farmers felt they had much to celebrate when the country was in the grip of the worst recorded drought since colonisation. South Australia was known as the 'Granary of Australia' and its crop yields were dismal and many farmers faced ruin.



Alfred Symonds and Sons rolling mallee at  
Nullawil in 1893

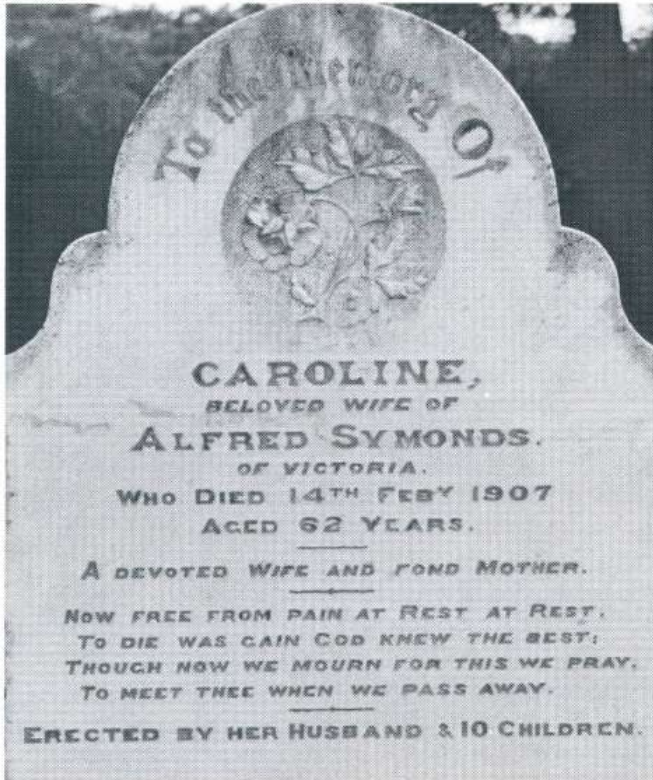
In 1890 Alfred took up land in the mallee country of Victoria at Nullawil. His initial block was the location of Nullawil 50 of 525 acres and the adjoining block, Nullawil 50A of another 525 acres was taken up in his son Phillip Henry's name. Land on the east side of Nullawil was purchased in Caroline's name and their other son William had approximately 600 acres in this area. Records of Myponga Jetty School show that in 1891 Fanny, Sarah, Edith and Hilda Symonds transferred from Myponga School to Myponga Jetty School. This school and the Bible Christian Church beside it were built in 1875. We can only speculate that perhaps Caroline and her younger children remained at Myponga Beach with the Staceys while Alfred and his older sons went to Nullawil to establish the farm. Records of the Dry Tank (later called Winston) School show five Symonds children attended the school – Hilda, John Thomas Stacey, Fanny Maria, Stanley Washington and Leslie Anderson. The School's attendance sheet of 1897 shows John attended on 182 days, Stanley 182 days and Leslie only 171 days.



Alfred Symonds house at Nullawil. Photo taken on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1896

It was a courageous decision for Alfred and Caroline and their family to leave the lush valley at Wattle Flat and seek more land in the dry hinterland of the Victorian mallee. Even though the mallee is not considered to be large timber, it still required a lot of very hard work to clear enough land to make wheat farming profitable. All the clearing would probably have been carried out with horses pulling bush rollers in the lighter timbered areas and axemen cutting down individual trees in the areas where they were larger.

Alfred was an original trustee of the Dry Tank Wesleyan Church and remained as a trustee until 18<sup>th</sup> January 1920 when he left the district. He was the first secretary of the trustees and on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1894 he signed a presentation certificate for the occasion of Mr. & Mrs. William Down's wedding on behalf of the other trustees of the Dry Tank Wesleyan Church.



Caroline Symonds grave Yankalilla Cemetery

While Caroline was on holidaying at Myponga Jetty, with the Stacey family she died suddenly on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1907. The cause of her death was 'valvular heart disease and goitre.' She was buried in the Yankalilla Cemetery one day later. Caroline was 62 years old. After Alfred's wife died, he remained for some time at Wattle Flat and stayed with his brother Charles and sister-in-law Janet. Like most of the Symonds menfolk, even to the present generation, he was inventive and skilled with his hands so was able to build the first wood stove ever installed in the family home at Wattle Flat. Prior to the installation of the stove, Janet and her daughters and before them, Catherine, had to do all the baking in a brick oven. Long lengths of wood, mainly wattle, were fired in the oven to heat the bricks. When the fire had died down to ashes, they would be removed, then firstly the bread followed by the pies and cakes would be baked in the residual heat given off from the bricks. Imagine the heat in summer! No wonder the women were overjoyed with their wood stove.

Alfred was fond of music and singing and did a little composing for his own pleasure. He was not impressed with the very small folding harmonium the family had so he purchased the organ from the Methodist Church in Myponga and gave it to them. This may have been the organ that his brother William played in the church. His niece Ella, who was a keen musician all her life had a much more suitable instrument on which to practice. Alfred returned to Dry Tank and lived alone for a time and then remarried. I believe his second marriage, to Margaret Jane Collins occurred in Bendigo Victoria in 1913. An inscription in Alfred's family bible would have been written by him in 1908.

*Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>*

*I Alfred Symonds celebrate my fiftyseventh, 57<sup>th</sup> Birthday alone at home Nullawil.*

*A wet afternoon, yet all is well,*

*Alone, but not alone, for God is always near.*

*Yea, he hath been my guide,*

*Then I have nought to fear!*

Some tension was caused within the family with this marriage. His son Phillip said their father complained at the time that his new wife couldn't cook a decent rabbit stew! He remained at Dry Tank with his new wife and his sons farmed at Coobang near Parkes, New South Wales where Alfred owned some land.

The Symonds' owned five blocks of land at Coobang. This area was formerly Coobang Station but was broken up into smaller blocks when the Government instigated a plan of closer settlement in the area.

Leslie had the homestead block, and his brothers John (Jack), Stanley, Phillip and their father Alfred all had adjoining blocks across a lane on the north side.

Such were the problems within the family that contact with Alfred rarely occurred and he never met some of his grandchildren. Alfred died on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1924 in the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne from lobar pneumonia. He was buried in the Brighton Cemetery on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1924. Alfred was seventy-three years old when he died and not the age of seventy-six years that was recorded on his death certificate.

*May life be song, and melody be sweet  
Every note in time, loves Hymn complete  
Onwards abounding unison  
Lift up the soul light up the home  
Your end be peace.*

*Alfred Symonds 20-6-12*



Early photo of Caroline Symonds grave and other graves in background in Yankalilla cemetery.

## CHAPTER SIX

# ALFRED AND CAROLINE SYMONDS CHILDREN

### ALFRED JAMES SYMONDS

Alfred James Symonds, born at Wattle Flat on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1870 and was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds eldest child.

Alfred, called Uncle Jim by his nieces and nephews, shifted with his brothers from Nullawil to New South Wales and farmed at Temora. He was acclaimed within his family as the organizer and when his nieces and nephews visited him, they would be allocated jobs to do and he would return to the house for a sleep! He did not marry and when he retired from farming, went to Brighton, Victoria to live. His sister Fanny Maria, who also did not marry, kept house and looked after him.

His nephew Edward Symonds visited Melbourne in 1936 and stayed with them. It was while staying at Brighton on this visit that Edward attended the test match at the M.C.G. where Donald Bradman scored 100 runs before lunch. Alfred died at Kew, Victoria in 1953. Incidentally, Sir Donald Bradman died in Adelaide on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2001.



Alfred James Symonds

## PHILLIP HENRY SYMONDS



Phillip Henry Symonds

When Phillip was an elderly man, he told his nephew Edward Symonds of an incident with the Cobb & Co mail coach that happened at Wattle Flat when he was living there. The coach was on its regular mail run from Adelaide and pulled up in the evening as usual in front of the Wattle Flat Post Office which would have been in William Knibb Symonds residence. There didn't seem to be much activity from the driver so on investigation it was discovered that though still in his seat, the driver was dead! He had apparently died after the previous stop, but the horses, familiar with the route had kept on going without guidance to their

Phillip Henry Symonds was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds third child and was born at Wattle Flat on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1873. When Phillip enrolled at the Wattle Flat School on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1887 it was recorded that he had previously attended Georgetown school. His father was wrongly listed as 'Albert' and his occupation was a labourer. By the time his sister Sarah enrolled one year later, corrections had been made with the father listed as Alfred and his occupation as farmer. The family lived on Myponga section 661. Phillip's schooling at Wattle Flat was for a very short time as he left school in July 1887 with the reason given as 'kept home.'

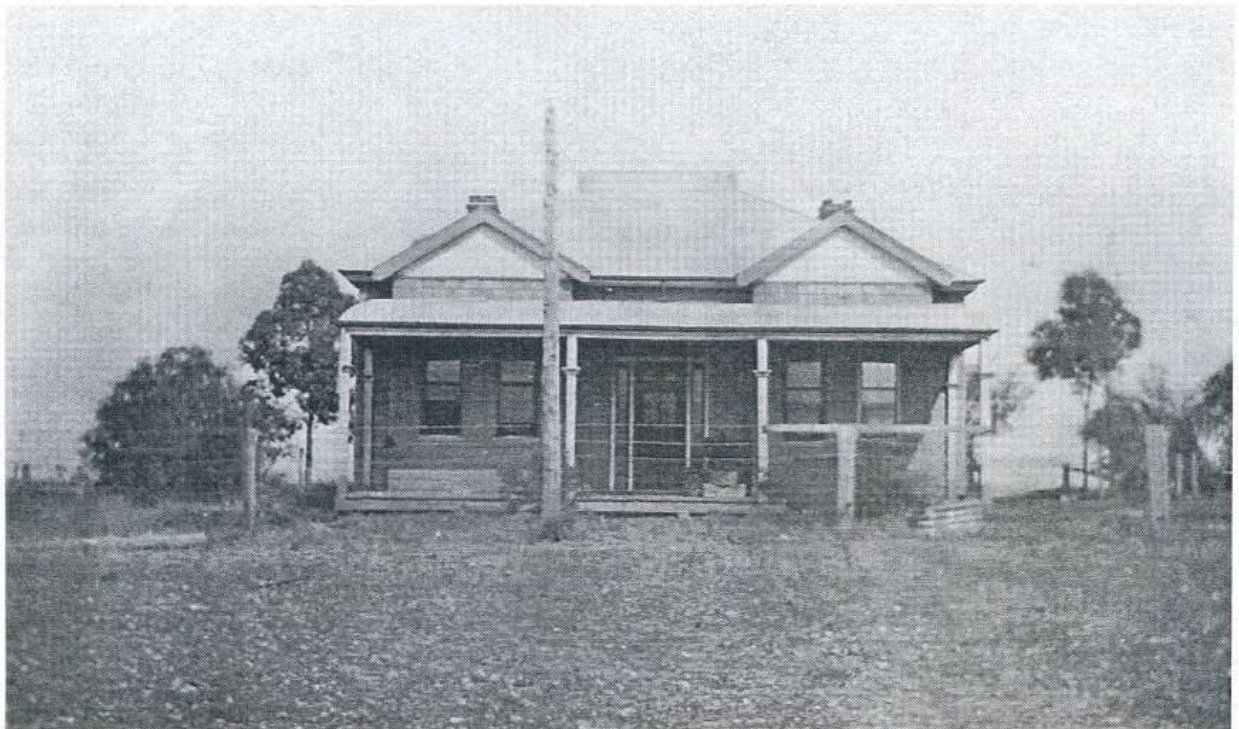
He was seventeen years old when the family took up land in the Victorian Mallee at Nullawil in 1890. His father took up Nullawil section 50A consisting of 525 acres and adjoining the rest of his property, in Phillip's name. He farmed at Nullawil with the family until he sold out and accompanied his brothers and sisters to New South Wales in 1901. A clearing sale at Phillip's farm was held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1901. He selected land at Coobang, eleven miles from Parkes, which was originally part of the old Coobang Station, and remained in the area for the rest of his life.

next stop. There was a staging post at Rowleys at Myponga so maybe the horses had come from there without the benefit of a reinsman or brakes being applied, over the hills and down into Wattle Flat. This puts a whole new meaning on the term “arriving dead on time!”

Phillip and his youngest brother Leslie carried out the Symonds blacksmithing tradition in this branch of the family. Even though Phillip is acknowledged as the designer of a large block trolley that was a vast improvement on those used for cartage at the time, wagons of similar design were used earlier on Symonds farms. These very large trolleys had rear wheels approximately five feet high and front ones smaller that were attached to a turntable so it had more manoeuvrability and could be turned in a smaller circle than any other design of wagon available at the time. This design of wagon was used when the family shifted from Nullawil to Coobang in 1901. Wagons similar to this design were used on Symonds properties at Wattle Flat and at Jamestown where one was taken by Thomas Symonds, probably when he moved to that area in 1899. In the early 1950's one was still in use at the Symonds farm at Wattle Flat to cart hay, though by that time it was pulled by a tractor. The one in the photo is loaded with 186 bags of wheat in three-bushel bags, weighing nearly fifteen tons so coupled with the weight of the wagon it would have been a very heavy load for the horses to haul. Leslie Symonds used eleven horses



Ethel Symonds



‘The Gums’ Homestead



to pull the load eleven miles from Coobang into the Parkes railway station and it took him all day to deliver a load and return home to the farm. When the family commenced farming at 'The Gums' Coobang, they found

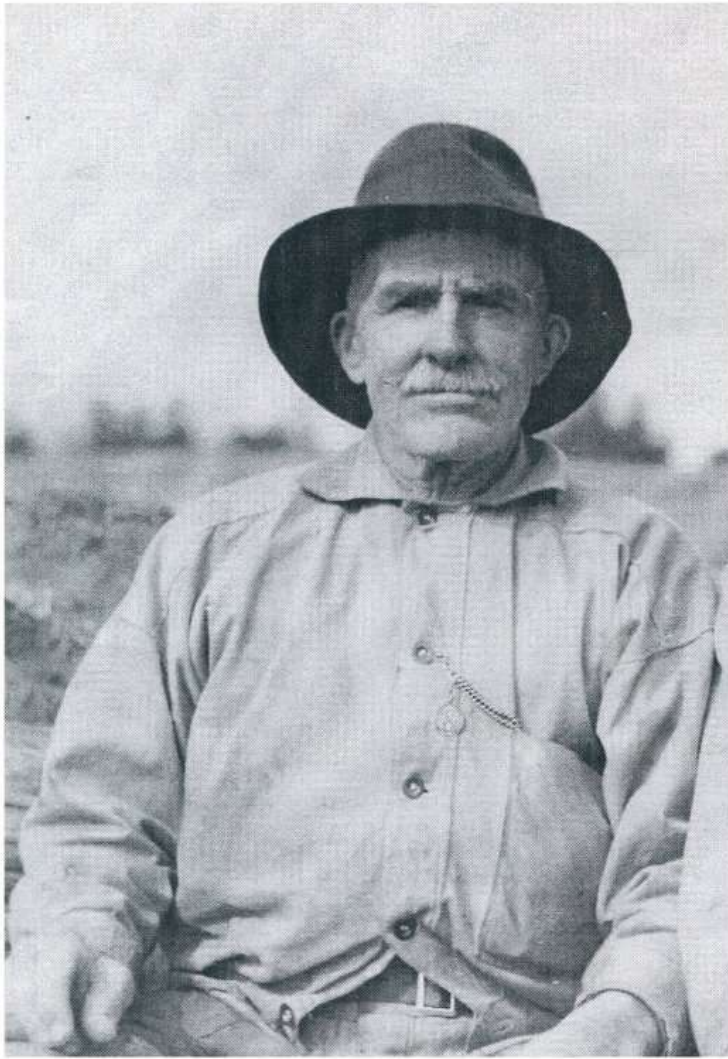


Symonds Wagon carting wheat at Coobang  
(Leslie Symonds is on the left)

they needed an additional wagon so approached the local wagon builder John Westcott with their order. He thought Phillip's innovations were too radical and initially refused the order and it wasn't until the order was increased to three wagons that he undertook to build them.



Phillip & Ethel Symonds



Phillip Symonds

They agreed on a price of eighty pounds for each completed wagon. The wagon painter employed by John Westcott was an outstanding tradesman called Henry Kinscher and as each wagon was manufactured it was given a name and painted with fine line embellishments, as was the fashion at the time. Phillip called his 'Daylight' and the other two were named 'Starlight,' owned by John (Jack) and 'Moonlight,' owned by his brother Leslie. Needless to say, the design proved to be extremely successful and John Westcott manufactured many more to Phillip's design. The Symonds - Kinscher association continued as Alfred Symonds, Phillip's nephew, married Sarah, daughter of Henry Kinscher.

Phillip married Ethel Harper at Temora on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1913. Ethel, who had been born in Hurtlevale N.S.W. on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1885, was the daughter of David and Hannah (nee Spencer) Harper. They had five children, Merle, Earl, Keith, Roy and Vera Symonds. Ethel Symonds had suffered with diabetes for fourteen years prior to her death. She spent the last two years of her life in hospital in Dubbo and died on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1958. She was 74 years old and was buried in the

Presbyterian section of the Parkes cemetery. Phillip Symonds died suddenly at his home, "The Gums" nearly four years after his wife's death, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1962 and was buried in the Presbyterian portion of the Parkes cemetery.



L. to r. Earl, Phillip, Merle, Ethel, Keith, Vera and Roy in front

## WILLIAM ERNEST SYMONDS



William Ernest Symonds

William Ernest (Bill) Symonds was the fourth child of Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds and their first child to be born at Edithburg on Yorke Peninsular. His birth occurred there on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1874. He attended school at Georgetown and when the family moved to Wattle Flat enrolled at the same time as his brother Phillip on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1887 and stayed at school for one month longer than him. William left Wattle Flat School in August 1887 and the reason for finishing school was given as 'kept home.'

Bill married twice and had two children – a son Con and his daughter was named Mavis. One of his marriages was to Ellen Beatrice Hill in 1917. He retired from farming and lived with his second wife in Moonee Ponds, Victoria and died c1958.



Edith Jane Symonds

## EDITH JANE SYMONDS

Edith Jane Symonds, named after the town of Edithburg where she was born on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1875, was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds fifth child. Edith married Joseph King in Prahau but the couple did not have any children. Of Alfred and Caroline's ten surviving children, only two daughters, Edith & Sarah and three sons, Phillip, William and Leslie married. Edith died in Prahau in 1931, aged 55 years. She willed her home to her unmarried sisters so they would always have somewhere to live.

### SARAH CONSTANCE SYMONDS

Sarah Constance Symonds was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds sixth child. She was born at Edithburg on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1877. She married Edgar Herman Day. When they were first married, they farmed at Nullawil in Victoria. Their first four children, Edgar, William, Percival and Annie were born there. In about 1902 the Day family moved to Reeves Plains, near Gawler in South Australia to farm there.

Sarah & Edgar are buried in the Willaston Cemetery.

### FANNY MARIA SYMONDS



Fanny Maria Symonds, seventh child of Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds was born on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1879 at Minlacowie on the Yorke Peninsula.

In February of that year the infamous Kelly gang of bushrangers carried out a daring raid at Jerilderie where they robbed the Bank of New South Wales of two thousand, one hundred and forty one pounds.

Fanny did not marry and kept house for her brother Alfred when he retired to Brighton, Victoria and by all accounts 'spoilt him rotten!' She died in 1937 aged 58.

### HILDA SYMONDS



Hilda Symonds, born 17<sup>th</sup> March 1882 at Brentwood, Yorke Peninsula was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds eighth child. Hilda did not marry. In 1882 first demonstrations of electric light were carried out in Melbourne and Brisbane and the rail line between Adelaide and Pt. Augusta was opened.



### JOHN THOMAS STACEY SYMONDS

John Thomas Stacey Symonds was Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds ninth child. He was born at Brentwood on Yorke Peninsula on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1884. John, called Uncle Jack by the family had a 'happy-go-lucky' outlook on life and was never worried about any aspect of farming. The rest of the family thought him to be a somewhat irresponsible and lazy farmer. He sowed his own crops at Parkes but got his youngest brother Leslie to do his harvesting. He died c.1948



John Thomas Stacey Symonds

### STANLEY WASHINGTON SYMONDS

Stanley Washington Symonds was the tenth child of Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds. He was born on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1886 and it was registered as occurring 'near Georgetown.' 1886 was the year B.H.P. opened its silver and lead smelting works at Broken Hill, N.S.W. Stanley shifted to Parkes from Nullawil with his brothers and sisters and farmed in the Parkes area. Later he farmed at Condobolin. He died c1971.



### LESLIE ANDERSON SYMONDS



Leslie & Alice Symonds

Leslie Anderson Symonds was the eleventh child of Alfred and Caroline (nee Stacey) Symonds and was born at Yankalilla on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888. Leslie left Nullawil and share farmed at Temora before joining the rest of his family at Coobang, N.S.W. He married Alice Bowland in the Aria Park Methodist Church on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1911. Alice, daughter of William and Harriet (nee Fairley) Bowland and was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1884 at Braidwood, N.S.W.

Leslie was an extremely fit young man and a keen Australian Rules Footballer. He used to ride his bike thirty four miles along bush tracks from Coobang to Trundle, play a full game of footy, then pedal his bike home again. The roads would have been extremely rough and corrugated so he was a very keen sportsman to make a round trip of sixty-eight miles on a bicycle to play a match!

The stationmaster at Parkes Railway Station used to tell everyone how strong Leslie was after he saw him toss some freight on his wagon. No doubt it was one of those designed by his brother Phillip. Leslie arrived at the station with his wagon and horses to collect his packs of new wheat bags. Each pack contained three hundred new



Leslie & Alice Symonds 1911  
Melbourne Botanical Gardens on their honeymoon

jute bags and he asked the stationmaster to steady each pack on its end on the platform and then let it tilt over the edge on to his shoulders. He would then carry the pack across the tracks and toss it on to his wagon parked the other side!

While living in Coobang, Leslie and Alice had eight children, seven of whom survived to adulthood – Marjorie born 1914, Janet 1915, Alfred 1917, Nerina 12<sup>th</sup> September 1919, Mildred 1921, Dulcie in 1922, Edward in 1923 and Cora born in 1924.

In 1926 Leslie and Alice sold their farm at Coobang and moved their family to another property they had purchased eighteen miles west of Trundle. They called this property 'Wilga Ridge' and it actually consisted of two farms. They purchased a second farm, 'Ironbarks,' so called because of the large stands of these trees on it, which was four miles further west than Wilga Ridge. Leslie now owned three thousand acres in the area. Research many years later showed that land in this area was very deficient in iodine. As their two sons left school, they worked this farm with their father. Les and his brother Phillip set up a sawmill

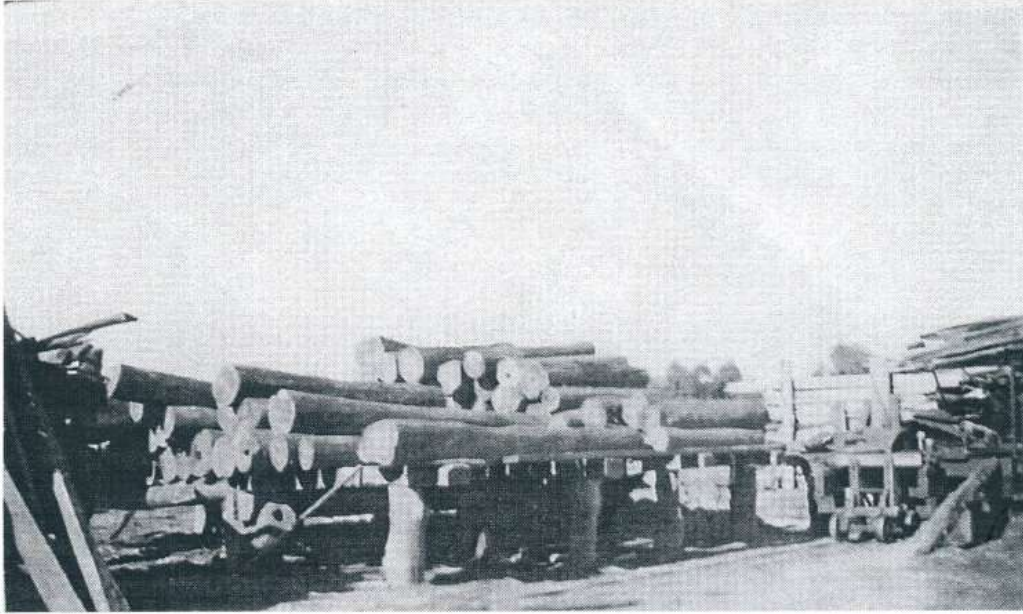


Farm machinery being winched on to Leslie Symonds wagon at Coobang while moving to Trundle 1926.

on the Ironbarks block in 1939 to cut timber from the property so a new house could be built for their son and nephew Alfred and his new wife Sarah.

Leslie donated a small portion of Wilga Ridge land and assisted the people of the district to build the Wilga Ridge Presbyterian Church on this land. Prior to the erection of this church, services had to be held in private homes throughout the district.

About 1959, Leslie and Alice retired to Camden but four years later they returned to live in Parkes. Alice died c. 1973 and Leslie, aged 89, died in the Parkes District Hospital on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1978. He had been ill for some time and was buried in the Parkes Cemetery.



Symonds Saw Mill either on The Gums or Ironbarks



Wilga Ridge – photo probably taken on a Sunday when the family usually visited.



## ALFRED AND CAROLINE SYMONDS GRANDCHILDREN

### ANNIE IVY DAY

Annie Ivy Day, fourth child and only daughter of Edgar Herman & Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day was born at Wycheproof, Vic in 1901. Annie was one when her parents moved to Reeves Plains S.A. and later, like her siblings attended Reeves Plains School.

She married Roy Trestrail and they had an orchard in Williamstown S.A. The couple had four children, Evelyn, Delys, Edward and Patricia. Even though times were tough, they managed to help other needy growers but circumstances took their toll on Roy who eventually took his own life. Annie was left to bring up their family. She was a talented dressmaker so to help the family survive, she did sewing for other people. Annie was also a good pianist.

Annie (nee Symonds) Trestrail died on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1979.

### ARNOLD HENRY LLOYD DAY



Arnold Henry Lloyd Day

Arnold Henry Lloyd Day was the seventh and youngest child of Edgar Herman & Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day and was born on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1919.

When his older brother Percival and his family left Pinnaroo to travel to his new farm in the Forbes district of N.S.W., Arnold went with them. He was fourteen years old and the journey took six weeks. He travelled on the wagon with two farm hands. Prior to the outbreak of World War II he worked on the property called 'Lima.' Arnold was twenty years eight months old when he joined the army. He was posted to the 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion and served in the New Britain Islands for fifteen months and then was posted to New Guinea. He rose to the rank of sergeant and was discharged in August 1946. On 9<sup>th</sup> June 1949 he married Joyce Smith.

After his discharge, Arnold came home to the Forbes District where he share farmed until he was able to purchase his own property at Bogan Gate in about 1951 and resold it in 1959. He endured eight years of extreme weather patterns while on this property. Arnold farmed through two droughts, two floods and a bush fire in this time! While living here, he was a member of the tennis club and secretary of the local sports club and used to play in tennis tournaments throughout the district. Joyce and Arnold had five sons, Brian, David, Gary, Noel and Terrance.

In November 1959, Arnold and Joyce purchased a farm at Dubbo and lived there until they retired in c.1983. They moved into Dubbo and he and Joyce enjoyed travelling extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand. Lately Arnold's health has been causing his family

some concern as he is suffering from Parkinson's disease and has had to be cared for in a Nursing Home in Dubbo.

### EDGAR HERMAN DAY

Edgar Herman Day was the eldest child of Edgar Herman and Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day and was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1895. He attended the Reeves Plains School. Edgar, called Eddie by his family, played football and tennis.

He saw active service in the First World War. He was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Division and was seriously wounded in Flanders, France. He spent many months in hospital in France and when he recuperated, was sent back to the battlefields. He returned home in 1918. As a returned soldier, he was allotted a soldiers settlement block of land containing three hundred and eighty acres at Reeves Plains, near Mallala S.A. and successfully farmed this property.

In 1921 Eddie married Elsie May Ritchie Priest. They had two children, a daughter May and a son Lindsay. Tragically, Eddie was only thirty-six years old when he died of cancer in 1931. He was buried in the Willaston Cemetery near Gawler S.A.

### HAROLD WILFRED DAY

Harold Wilfred Day was the sixth child of Edgar Herman and Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day and he was born in 1913. Harold did not receive much schooling due to ill health during his childhood.

He lived in Gawler for many years and worked as a hay carter for Badenocks Chaff Mills. He delivered many thousands of tons of sheaved hay to the mills where it would be cut into chaff for feed. In later years this chaff was used mainly to feed racehorses.

Harold married Ida Myrtle Bittner late in his life and did not have any children. Ida and Harold moved to Maitland, S.A. where he retired.

Harold died in July 1992 and both he and Ida are buried in the Maitland Cemetery.

### PERCIVAL LUKE DAY



Percival Day, Maisie and Mervyn Day

for the thirteen hundred-kilometre trip to Forbes. Their wagon was loaded with their dining room suite,

Percival Luke Day was born at Nullawil, Vic. on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1899. His parents were Edgar Herman and Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day. He was three years old when his parents moved from Nullawil to Reeves Plains S.A.

In 1926 Perc moved to a property at Pinnaroo, S.A. On 18<sup>th</sup> March 1930 Perc married Florence Harriett Pearl Rowntree. Pearl, as the family called her, was born at Maitland, Yorke Peninsula S.A. in 1907. They lived at Pinnaroo for the next six years where their children Mervyn and Maisie were born. Perc could see the shortcomings of farming in the Pinnaroo area, especially as he wanted to farm on heavier soils in a higher rainfall region where he could diversify into breeding fat lambs and wool growing as well as broad acre grain growing. By this time, his Symonds uncles were already farming in the Parkes area so Perc took two trips to this area before purchasing a suitable property to farm. He selected 'Hillcrest' in the Forbes district.

The family left Pinnaroo in April 1936

bedroom suite and a few personal possessions. The rest of the space on the wagon was needed for chaff and emergency water rations for the horses. Two workmen and Perc's fourteen-year-old brother Arnold travelled in the wagon. Perc, Pearl and their two children travelled in their Chevrolet car. On leaving Pinnaroo they travelled north to the Murray River, which they then followed as close as possible until they crossed it and travelled to Hay on the Murrumbidgee River. The Hay plain was the most difficult section of the journey. Sometimes their horses were short of water and supplies of it could only be obtained from Government Bores with troughs and ground tanks. Feed was not a problem as they carried their own chaff and grazing was good for the hobbled horses at night. Problems arose when it rained as the heavy plains clay built up on the wagon wheels making it excessively heavy for the horses to pull. The Chev also had the problem of the clay clogging between the wheels and its mudguards. The trip took them six weeks. 'Hillcrest,' on the Bogan Gate Road must have been a very welcome sight!

Perc was a competent and successful farmer and very good at mechanical engineering. Four more children were born to Perc & Pearl in Forbes – Elliott, who died on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945, Valda, Merle and Betty. Perc died at home on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1958 and was buried in the Methodist section of Forbes Cemetery following a service conducted by Rev C. Ohlston and assisted by Perc's son-in-law Rev. K. Maher. Some years after the death of her husband, Pearl moved into Forbes and established a boarding house. She was a very popular landlady and is fondly remembered by her past guests. She retired to Jemalong Retirement Village and Nursing Home where she died in January 1991 and was buried in the Uniting Section of Forbes Cemetery on 29<sup>th</sup> January

#### **STANLEY SYMONDS DAY**

Stanley Symonds Day was Edgar Herman and Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day's fifth child. He was born in 1908. He served in the armed forces during W.W.11.

He share farmed at Forbes N.S.W. and later he share farmed a property called 'Flemington' at Fifield, N.S.W. He had a reputation for being a methodical and successful farmer who always kept all his implements in good condition. Immediately prior to his retirement, Stanley share farmed at Ootha N.S.W.

In 1960 he sold up his plant etc. in N.S.W. and retired to Gawler in S.A. Stanley never married and died on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1992 and was buried in the Willaston Cemetery.

#### **WILLIAM ALFRED DAY**

William Alfred Day, who was born on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1897, was the second child of Edgar Herman and Sarah Constance (nee Symonds) Day. William was educated at Reeves Plains School and like his brother Eddie, played football when he was young.

He worked as a labourer on local farms and when things got tough during the Depression, he was employed at the Thebarton Brewery. He married Jessie May Oliver and they had three children, Ashley, Dawn and Maxwell.

William served in the A.I.F. during W.W.11 but did not serve long enough to be eligible for a Soldiers Settlement block of land. He was employed with the E.W. & S. Department. He had worked in this job for many years until he had a heart attack and died in 1956.

William was buried in the Willaston Cemetery near Gawler, S.A.

#### **ALFRED LESLIE SYMONDS**

Alfred Leslie Symonds, born on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1917 at Parkes N.S.W., was the fourth child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds. He started his schooling at the Coobang Public School in 1926. When his family moved to 'Wilga Ridge' 18 miles west of Trundle, his mother taught him at home using 'Blackfriar's Correspondence School for Isolated Children' method for eighteen months before he completed his schooling at Glenowra Public School. This school was five miles south of the homestead and he and his sisters Marjorie and Janet had to travel there each day in horse and buggy. Alfred left school when he was twelve years old.

He worked on the family farm with his father and brother Edward. Alfred had a gift for engineering and was interested in mechanical technology all his life. He foresaw that the horse era on farms was over and machinery would very soon replace them. This prediction did not sit well with the family, as they were very

concerned with the costs involved with any change. With Alfred's interest and knowledge in all things mechanical, he soon became very proficient at maintaining the farm machinery and motor vehicles. During harvest and in the little spare time that he had, he used to sew bags for the neighbours. It took him three years to earn enough money to buy a bicycle! This bicycle was the only means that Alf, accompanied by his friend Tom had to socialize with his peers. They would go to the local cinema or attend dances in the area. Sometimes they would ride their bikes to dances that were held thirty miles away! Alf played cricket and tennis and liked to break in horses. There were also plenty of feral animals on the farm to hunt.

In 1937 he started share farming for the Cameron family on 'Boxdale.' This property adjoined the Ironbarks block and was in the Condobolin district. Here he did some scrub clearing for the use of the land but seasons were very dry so he had difficulty in getting any wheat crops off the land.

Alfred met Sarah Elizabeth Kinscher (called Sadie), in 1937 in the Fields Café in Parkes where she worked. She was the daughter of Henry Peter Christian Kinscher and Sarah, nee Stacey, Kinscher. Henry was the master craftsman who, unbeknown to Alfred and Sadie, had done the painting and sign writing on the three wagons made for Phillip, John and Leslie Symonds in 1916. Alfred & Sadie married soon afterwards. Their first child, Leslie John Symonds was born on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1939 at Parkes. In 1939 Leslie and Phillip Symonds set up a sawmill on



Alfred Symonds

Ironbarks to cut timber to build Alf and Sadie a small house on the block. This was about the start of the Second World War and things were becoming increasingly difficult on the farm.

Alf was called up but wasn't accepted for military service because he was needed for the manpower program in Australia. He was required to maintain machinery for other farmers in the area and to set up a Charcoal Burning Plant to produce charcoal. Petrol and kerosene were in very short supply during the war so with the use of charcoal in a gas producer, people had a way of using their vehicles and machinery during times of severe rationing. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1941 their daughter, Deanna Lorraine Symonds was born at Trundle.

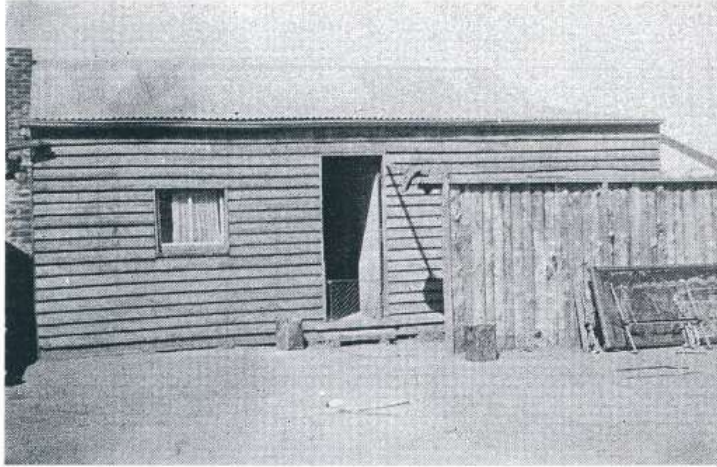
Alfred set up his own sawmill on Ironbarks in 1943. As well as farming, he milled mainly hardwoods to supplement his income. In 1952 he sold out and moved to a property north east of Trundle. This was called 'Oakleigh' and Alfred managed the Trundle Steel and Joinery sawmill on it for the Pike family. When the timber cut out on this block, he purchased the sawmill and moved it to the southeast outskirts of Trundle and it was in operation for a number of years. During 1956 he built a new home in Gobondery Street, Trundle.

Later he sold this sawmill and moved to 'Pine Grove,' which his eldest son Leslie had just purchased. From here he worked on machinery maintenance in the Trundle district before taking up share farming on the Larkin's family property called 'The Glen' at Tottenham



Alfred & Sadie Symonds  
Photo taken at "Wilga Ridge"

N.S.W. Their youngest child, Bruce Christian Murray Symonds was born at Trundle on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1961. While Alf was share-farming this property, his youngest child Bruce commenced school. He



Back of house on 'Ironbarks'

Alfred Symonds c.1962



purchased a house in Parkes and in his spare time set about carrying out renovations. Alf travelled from Parkes to The Glen as necessary to fulfil his share-farming contract.

When Alf turned sixty-five and retired, he became interested in electronics and learnt to build stereograms, amplifiers, electric door chimes etc. He enjoyed these activities but due to failing eyesight, cannot do the close work necessary for electronic circuitry. At eighty-five, his is still very interested in all things mechanical and is still designing and building drill presses, saw benches and such like and is planning to attend the family re-union in 2003.

### CORA ISABEL SYMONDS



Cora and Bert Klobe

Cora Isabel Symonds was the ninth child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds. She was born on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1924 at Nurse Cock's Private Hospital in Parkes N.S.W. Her parents were living at 'Myrtle Farm,' Coobang at the time but while she was still a toddler, the family moved to 'Wilga Ridge,' west of Trundle. She attended Glenowra School and the children travelled there each day in a sulky drawn by an ex-pacer called Sailor. Cora had an affinity with the horse and today still talks about his wonderful pacing action.

She was taught to play the piano and retained this skill all her life. Cora would sometimes fill in as organist at church but says she was too nervous to do it all the time. Her father who was an accomplished sportsman taught her to play tennis on the court at Wilga Ridge so she could join the rest of the family and neighbours to play social tennis. Like her sisters, she remained at home when she left school and had to take her turn with all the household duties in and about the homestead.

When Cora was in her early twenties, she and two of her friends went to Mildura for a couple of seasons

picking grapes. She met Albert Klobe in Mildura. They were married in the Wilga Ridge Presbyterian Church, on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1948. The young couple lived for a short time in Nhill, Victoria before returning to Wilga Ridge to share farm with Cora's father. When this property was sold, they moved into Trundle for a couple of years.

In 1958 they moved to Yenda, a small town not far from Griffith, N.S.W. and Bert was employed as a miller for the Rice Growers Co-Operative Mills. By now the couple had three children, Aileen born in 1949, David born 1952 and Peter, born in 1955. They spent the next thirty years in Yenda where Cora was very active in the Presbyterian Church, C.W.A. and the Yenda Tennis Club. She won several tennis competitions and trophies and in recognition for being an office bearer of the club for a number of years, received a life membership. Their fourth child Judith was born in 1966. Later in life Cora took up lawn bowls. She was also on the executive of the Yenda Senior Citizens Club.

Cora was a keen knitter and made many beautiful woollen jumpers for her children and grand children. She made crochet bedspreads for her three eldest grand children and has also done leatherwork, tapestry and woodwork. Gardening is another interest and she created a lovely garden around her home.

Cora and Bert's son David was killed in tragic circumstances in a road accident when an oncoming vehicle pulled from behind a truck and into his lane, on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1974 at Griffith. He was a keen motorbike rider and had won some division races at the Calder Race Track on his Ducati.

In 1994 Cora and Bert moved to Lavington N.S.W. to be closer to their youngest daughter Jude who lived at Wodonga. Tragedy struck this family again in 1996 when Jude and her husband lost a baby with AIDS. Jude and her family moved to Mt. Isa Qld. but Cora and Bert remained in Lavington and took part in community activities there. They were active in senior citizens groups and the Presbyterian Church.

Cora became ill in late 1999 and moved into care at Irwin House in Cobram Vic. It was a sad time for her and Bert as they lost their surviving son Peter to cancer at the age of forty-five. Bert lived with their daughter Aileen and her husband Richard on their dairy farm at Yarroweyah that was about a fifteen minute drive from Cora in Cobram. Late in 2001 Bert was able to move into Ottrey Lodge and could visit Cora regularly. Cora died at Irwin House, Cobram Victoria on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003 and on 10<sup>th</sup> February, after a Uniting Church Service at Cobram, she was laid to rest at Lavington Lawn Cemetery, Albury, N.S.W.

### DULCIE CAROLINE SYMONDS

Dulcie Caroline Symonds was born on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1922 at Niola Private Hospital in Parkes N.S.W. She was the seventh child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds and was four years old when the family moved to 'Wilga Ridge' at Trundle. She attended the Glenowra Public School and travelled there by sulky pulled by 'Sailor' unless he was lame and then the children had to walk five miles each way to school! Dulcie sat for her 2C Qualifying Certificate.

Like her sisters, she had to help at home when she left school. She took her turn with housework, cooking, laundering and gardening as well as the milking. Many winter's nights were spent cutting up pie melons for melon jam. She also helped her father with mustering and cutting chaff and would ride to collect the mail. Another of her duties was carting water for the gardens. She had to use a forty-four gallon drum attached to a sledge. The sledge was made using a strong forked tree branch that had been trimmed with an adze so it had a flat bottom that would slide easier over the ground and this was pulled by a horse. The water had to be bucketed out of a dam and into the drum and then the horse pulled the sledge home. This was very hard work!

Just prior to going to Sydney early in 1941 to help her sister Marjorie when she became ill, Dulcie announced her engagement to Reginald Swindley who was serving in the R.A.A.F. The Swindleys farmed on 'Carlisle,' a property adjoining Wilga Ridge. While in Sydney Dulcie got a job at a soap factory until her marriage. Reg was granted 'harvest leave' from the air force so they were married on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1941 in the Wilga Ridge homestead. The minister was the Rev. T.M.McBurnie. Dulcie's sister Janet was bridesmaid, George Swindley, the groom's brother was best man and John Symonds was pageboy.

The R.A.A.F. moved the couple many times during the early years of their marriage. They lived in Canberra, Richmond, and Melbourne, back to Richmond, then Canberra and later to Melbourne's Flemington Race Course. Dulcie and another air force wife found work as machinists making toys. Later they did piecework. Reg was shifted back to Canberra and then to Kingaroy, Qld where he was appointed to the Red Cross non-combatant forces working on airplanes. Their first child, Hazel Eileen was born in 1944 while they were at Kingaroy. Reg was on leave prior to being posted to Japan when the A bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945, so was sent to Oakley, Qld. instead.

After Reg's discharge from the air force, they went home to Carlisle, Trundle for twelve months before purchasing 'Woodville' where they lived from 1947 until they sold the property and retired in 1990. Their second child Joyce was born in 1946 at Trundle. They had only been at Woodville for six months when a huge flood washed away a lot of their fences and the water came up to the floorboards of their house. Three more children were born to Dulcie and Reg. Ronald was born in 1949, Doreen in 1952 and Mary was born four years later in 1956. Dulcie taught Sunday school for many years at the Wilga Ridge Presbyterian Church.

Dulcie well and truly epitomizes 'having a green thumb' as well as having beautiful gardens, grew lots of vegetables and maintained a large orchard. She taught herself floral art and won many prizes at local and district agricultural and flower shows. She also found the time to make most of the clothes her daughters and herself needed. She was often called upon to make fancy dress costumes for her children.

In 1990 they sold their farm and retired to Forster where Dulcie still lives. Reg died on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2001. Nowadays Dulcie still does a lot of craftwork and still has the ability to grow anything in any available soil.

### EARL SYMONDS



Earl Symonds

Earl Symonds, born at Temora on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1916 was the second child of Phillip and Ethel (nee Harper) Symonds. There was no hospital at Parkes at the time so Ethel had to travel from "The Gums" to Temora for the birth. Earl was one of three boys and two girls in the family.

Earl spent his early years on his father's farm. Between the ages of six and fifteen, he attended the Coobang North Public School, which adjoined his parents' farm. He can remember using his father's second team of horses to cut Bathurst burr during one school holiday. The previous owners of Coobang Station had introduced this pest when they imported some American feed during a severe drought in the early 1900's. During his school years he and his siblings would be woken up at 5am to milk the cows, feed the poultry, separate the milk and make the butter. It was very hard work for the young children and they would usually just be arriving at the school door

as the last of the children were going inside for the morning session. All this work would have to be repeated when school was out. Also, the gardens had to be weeded, kindling wood cut to light the fire in the morning, and the eggs gathered. Saturdays would be spent gathering wood for the fire and feed for the animals for the coming week. Sundays the children attended Sunday School and Church and had some free time.

The first teacher at the school boarded with them. This extra money supplemented the family's income. The house was small so his Mum, Dad and three children shared a room so the teacher would occupy one alone

Australia was in depression when Earl left school and the family found life very hard at this time. They had to kill rabbits for meat and sell their skins for grocery money. He worked at home with his father and when the opportunity arose, took whatever work he could get. He found temporary employment at a sawmill twenty miles away and had to travel to and back from this job each day. The journey, with a horse and sulky took an hour and a half each way but he was paid ten shillings per day. Share farming was also carried out and payment for their toil was two shillings and six pence per bushel of wheat grown.

The family did not socialize much as his parents did not believe in dancing but sometimes played a bit of tennis. The children rarely went anywhere. Earl and his brothers and sisters would travel to Parkes once a year with their parents. They were not allowed to buy anything as they didn't have any money but were allowed to look around the shops. He was about twenty years old when he was allowed to go to town (11 miles away) to see a girl in his second hand Studebaker car that he had bought for twenty pounds. There was no such thing as holidays until 1937!

In 1940 Earl was called up for National Service. From then until 1945 he was posted to Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin. During this rather lonely time, a fellow unit member Joseph Doust encouraged him to write to his sister. They corresponded for two years without meeting and when they finally met, Earl found Grace was a shy young lady and the youngest of twelve children. Grace, youngest child of George and Martha Anna (nee Lomas) Doust had been born on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1920 at 'Toomvale' Fifield. Grace and Earl were married in Parkes on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1946.

On his return from the war, Earl continued to share farm. He applied for a farm but in a mix up between a solicitor and bank manager, lost his hard earned deposit of two thousand pounds as it was not used in the set time of ninety days. His brothers held the share-farming contract and were reluctant to relinquish it so Earl set up a blacksmith and farm machinery repair business on eight acres of land on the outskirts of Parkes. Someone said to Earl "You won't make any money in blacksmithing" and Earl replied "I'll make more than I have now, which is nothing!" After building some extensions to the existing house on the property, Earl established his business and together with Grace raised their eight children. Earl had a novel way of making more income from his property. He purchased and moved a number of houses to his land and then rented them out. As each child left home, one of these houses were sold to give them a start in life.

After a special vintage farm machinery exhibit at the Parkes Show, Earl and a number of interested farmers and townfolk sought to find a permanent sight for this district's heritage. Some of the inaugural supporters of this scheme, together with Earl and Grace, were Len Unger, Norm Plowman and Lou Davey. To get the project underway, three acres of Earl's property was sold to the council and converted to Crown Land so a machinery museum could be established. Ninety per cent of the old machinery was donated though some small engines were acquired at auction sales. For many months, Earl spent all his weekends and spare time using his home made crane truck to pick the old machinery and transport it to the Pioneer Museum. His old truck used to use forty four gallons of fuel a fortnight and all these costs were met by Earl. It was his wish that the younger generations would be able to appreciate the history of the district and gain some foresight into the hardships the district pioneers had to endure to establish viable farming practices in the district. The council are now establishing the Sir Henry Parkes Cottage and Museum development on this site and have plans that it will ultimately contain an antique motor museum, art gallery and other assorted craft and gift stores.

## **EDWARD SYMONDS**

Edward was the eighth child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds and was born in 1923. He worked on the family farm at Trundle with his father and brother Alfred until he signed up for service in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and joined the army as a mechanic on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1942. He met Betty Smith when they were stationed at the same base at Bandiana, Vic. Betty was in the Stores Section.



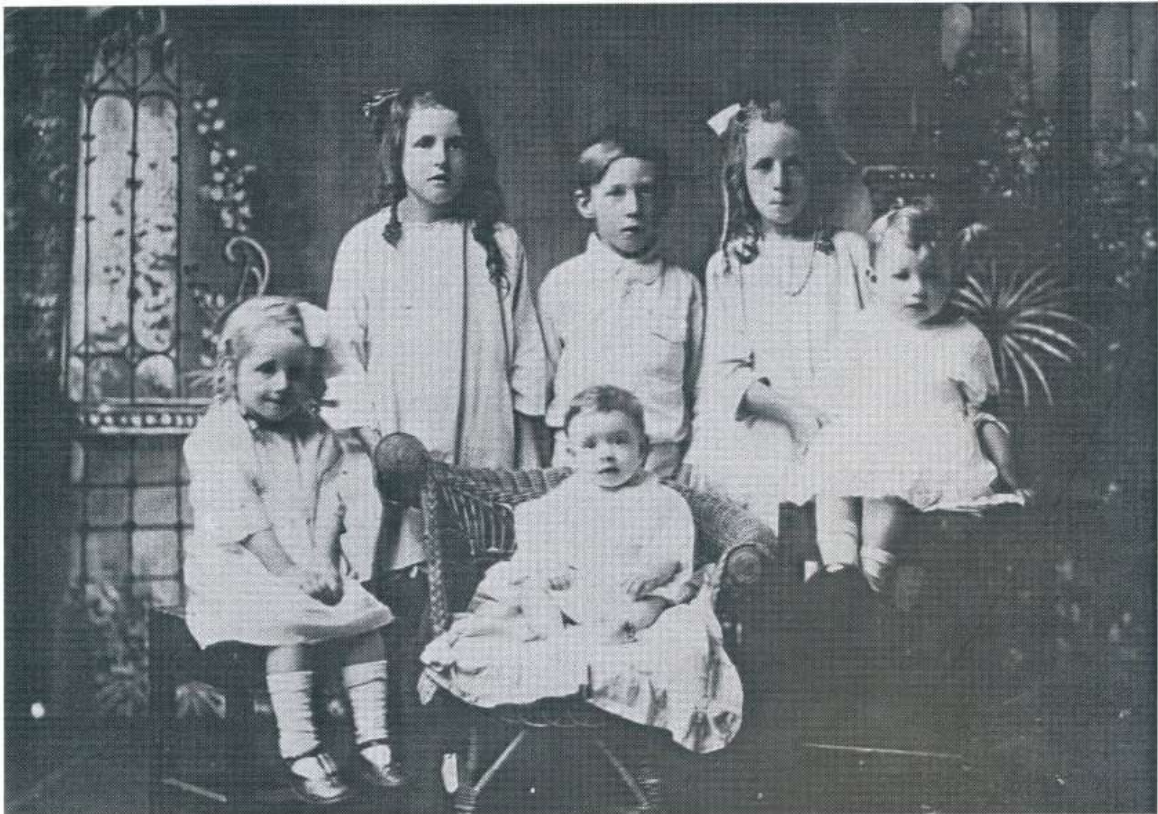
In the latter part of Ted's (Edward) army service, he 'didn't exist' as far as bureaucracy was concerned. His papers and record of service, enroute to New Guinea were destroyed when the ship carrying them was bombed and sank so the army did not have evidence of his service. This has caused Ted many problems trying to gain recognition of his army service for his entitlements. He was discharged on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1946.

Betty and Ted were married at Sunshine, Victoria on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1947 and they returned to the farm at Trundle. Their first child, Desmond William was born on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1950 and their daughter Bronwyn Elizabeth was born on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1954.

They remained at Trundle for about three years but Betty found the hot weather there extremely trying so they moved to Victoria. For the next three years, Ted worked for the farm machinery manufacturer McKay's.

Their next move was to go farming again at Foster, Vic. and after several years there, were fortunate to be granted a very good Soldiers Settlers block of five hundred and sixty acres in a very productive farming area at Mortlake, Vic. Their farm, where Betty and Ted lived until they sold out and retired to Port Fairy in 1982, was situated seven miles from Mortlake, towards Ballarat. In the year of their retirement, Mother Nature turned on a spectacular winter. That year snow fell in the Mortlake district, turning the countryside into a fairyland of white paddocks and rows of snow laden windbreak trees. It was exactly one hundred years since the previous recorded snow falls in the area.

Their son Desmond and his wife live in Geelong and their daughter Bronwyn, her husband and two children live in New Zealand.



L. to r. Mildred, Janet, Alfred, Marjory, Dulcie. Ted sitting in chair.

### JANET EILEEN SYMONDS

Janet Eileen Symonds was the third child of Leslie Anderson & Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds and was born at the Niola Private Hospital, Parkes on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1915.

She started her schooling at Coobang with her elder sister Marjorie and brother Alfred and when the family moved to 'Wilga Ridge,' Trundle, she attended the Glenowra Public School. When she left school she had to stay home and help her mother care for the large family of eight children. The family made their



Janet & Marjorie Symonds

Cyril & George Lister share farmed 'Kadina,' 'The Gilgai's' and 'Alawa' in the Bogan Gate district in the mid thirties. Frank purchased 'Alawa' from Mr. Ferguson in 1937 and Janet and Frank lived there after their marriage. Janet must have had an extremely busy life for the couple had six children and she still found the time for all her other interests outside the home. Janet was a prominent CWA member and won two RSL prizes in the late fifties. She was a Girl Guide Leader at Bogan Gate for many years and supported Frank in his pastoral, agricultural and sporting interests. Their children were Arnold born in 1941, Maurice born in 1944, Heather born in 1947. Tragically, Heather died of meningitis when she was about eighteen months old. She was buried in the Trundle cemetery. Their other three children were Stanley born 1950, Louise born 1952 and Warren who was born in 1957. Frank and Janet were both very interested in their town and prominent members of the local Anglican Church. Frank was a Church Warden from the late thirties until 1966 when he relinquished the position to his son Arnold.

Arnold purchased Alawa from his parents in 1976 and they retired into Parkes. After being in the family for fifty-seven years, and due to ill health, Arnold sold Alawa in 1994. Janet died on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1978. Frank continued to be interested in the property until it was sold. He died in Parkes on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1995.

own bread so Janet had to take her turn at getting up at 4 am to light the fires and punch down the bread dough that had been made the night before in readiness for early baking. She had to take her turn at doing the ironing and mending, cleaning or cooking and getting breakfast ready for her father when he came in from feeding the horses. The family grew all their own vegetables so helping with the gardening was very important. Another of her duties while at home was to ride a horse down to collect the mail from the mailbox. The farm was lucky to receive mail three times a week.

In 1933 Janet went to Melbourne with her Aunt Fanny Symonds. She was there for twelve months and worked in a blouse factory. When she came home from Melbourne, she did a correspondence dressmaking course.

Janet met Frank Lister at a ball in Trundle. They were married at Wilga Ridge homestead on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1939. The Lister family had come to Trundle c.1914. Frank,

## KEITH SYMONDS

Keith Symonds, third child of Phillip Henry and Ethel (nee Harper) Symonds was born on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1917. Keith served in the armed forces during the Second World War and then returned home to "The Gums."

At the time of his father's death, he and his brother Roy were living and working with their father on "The Gums." After he left, he purchased a property near Dubbo and worked at times in an abattoir in the area as well. He married Marjorie Lorna (nee O'Brien) Butler on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1978 in Dubbo. This marriage only lasted a short time. Keith sold his farm in 2000 and is now living in a retirement home in Dubbo. He has had some health problems of late.



L. to r. Earl, Merle & Keith Symonds

## MARJORIE ALICE SYMONDS

Marjorie Alice Symonds was the eldest surviving and second child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds. She was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1914 in Nurse Cock's Hospital at Parkes.

Her early years were spent on 'Myrtle Farm' in the Coobang area near Parkes. Marge (as she was called by her family), started her schooling at the Coobang School and when this property was sold and the family moved to 'Wilga Ridge,' she continued her schooling at the Glenowra Public School. When she left school she had to assist her mother with housekeeping and cooking for their large family.

Marge spent twelve months as a companion to her Aunty Fanny. Some of this time was spent at Temora before going to Melbourne. Her Aunt Edith died and left her house to her unmarried sisters so the ladies lived in Melbourne and were able to socialize and go out to euchre parties, church and other functions. After twelve months as a companion to Aunt Edith, Marge worked for the next-door neighbour looking after their children. In 1939-1940, she was in Forbes working as a ladies companion.

Marge married Charles Walkden on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1940. They lived first in Sydney, then at Long Jetty, N.S.W. They had an orchid farm at The Oaks near Camden and later moved to Campbelltown. Marge and Charles had two children, Raymond and Evelyn.

They had been married for fifty years when Charles died on 26<sup>th</sup> Jun 1990. Marge, aged eighty six, moved into a retirement village in Camden in 2001 and until then she had lived alone and done all her own housework.

The following essay has been transcribed from an oral history of her family, told by Marjorie (nee Symonds) Walkden.

*"Myrtle Farm – Our Home"*

*On 300 acres, 11 miles from Parkes in the beautiful Coobang Valley, was the farm of Leslie and Alice Symonds and was named after their sulky horse 'Myrtle.'*

*Dad and Mum were married in the Methodist Church at Aria Park on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1911. Dad and his brothers Phillip, John and Stanley were share farming at Temora. They balloted for land at Coobang, near Parkes when Coobang Station was cut up into 300 acre lots. They were successful in obtaining five blocks. Dad received the homestead block as he was married. They took up the land in 1912. There was a blacksmith shop, numerous sheds, cow bails and horse stables. The brothers shared the blacksmith shop and worked there on wet days shoeing their horses. When we were older we loved to pump the bellows to get the coals alight and red hot. Each one had a team of beautiful horses. They helped one another.*

*The homestead, as it was called, was large. It had a raised iron roof, four chimneys, a white picket fence and verandahs all around, with post and rails around the verandah with gates for safety for children. There was a storeroom, pantry, laundry and large kitchen. The rooms were large as everything was bought in bulk. Large bags of flour, bran and pollard, potatoes, sugar, brown sugar, salt, honey and golden syrup in cans. The storeroom and pantry had shelves all around. Large tins of tea, large crock pots for flour etc, smaller crock pots were filled with homemade jams and pickles – all kinds. Each neighbour had a fruit orchard. They shared the fruit and vegetables and helped one another to make jam, preserve fruit, make pickles and tomato sauce. Part of the storeroom was for milk pails, separator, churn, butter pats and bowls for cream. In the pantry were cast iron saucepans – all sizes. Large baking dishes and four different sized boilers and three cast iron kettles and numerous jugs, large meat platters, English dinner sets and fine china tea sets. Some of the milk jugs were beautiful as Dad loved to collect them. Some were brown and white designs and old Willow blue china. Each had a meaning but I have forgotten them.*

*The kitchen was large with an oak dresser full of crockery and saucepans and a large kitchen table with eight chairs. It had a double fireplace with two mantle pieces. Across the front of one fire place was a rod and chains which had a large boiler for hot water. There was a large Metters stove on which were a large kettle, two small ones and a fountain. A fountain was a very large boiler type pan with a handle and down the bottom a tap which hung over from the top of the stove. There was always plenty of hot water for kitchen, laundry and bathroom.*

*On cold winter nights we older children loved to bathe in an iron tub in front of the kitchen fire as the bathroom was so cold. The laundry had a wooden washing machine, a mangle, a wash board and ironing table, two coal irons, two sets of Mrs. Potts' irons in two sizes, a sleeve board and ironing board. Mrs. Potts' irons were used on the fine lace, embroidery and tatting. Different girls did the laundry and ironing.*

*The dining room was large with a long cedar table, cedar dresser and six chairs and armchairs. Up some steps was a six-foot wide hall with a panelled fancy door leading out to the verandah. This was the front door. A brown and cream heavy linoleum was on the floor, which was washed and lightly polished, with scatter mats and small tasselled mats at each door. I wonder now why we never had any falls – guess we went quietly. Around the oak panelled walls were antelope heads and large pictures. Sir Isaac Newton as a child was one. 'Bringing in the Sheaves' another and 'Ruth at the Well.' On one wall of the hall was an old fashioned telephone. On one side of the front door was a parlour with double glass hand painted doors – French doors – with blue birds. The furniture was a red leather couch trimmed with red cedar, two leather armchairs with beautiful tapestry cushions and a red tablecloth with tassels on the table. When there was a thunderstorm, Mum used to put us under the table with the daygirl. We thought it was fun. The daygirl looking after us did not! Long white lace curtains and blinds with fancy tassels were on all the windows. A fireplace was in the room with a marble mantelpiece with beautiful ornaments and small pictures.*

*Next to the parlour was a double bedroom with double glass doors leading to the verandah. The glass doors were hand painted with ducks and geese swimming around on them. A double brass bed with rainbow coloured glass set into the foot of it and a canopy around the bed had beautiful floor length, embossed lace curtains and a mosquito net. The windows had floor length white curtains. All the canopy and window curtains were white, starched and tied back with long tassels. On the bed were a bolster, two pillows and two small bolsters. All the pillow and bolster cases were pure white linen and trimmed with hand crocheted and white embroidery. A large starched Marcella quilt was on the bed and a blue eiderdown.*

The furniture was dark oak. There was a wardrobe, coat cupboard, hat box cupboard, dressing table, leather chair and wash stand which held a large jug and bowl, tooth brush and soap bowl. Underneath was a chamber pot all in blue pattern. The deep carpet had brown and blue flowers.

The second bedroom was the same except the furniture was maple and the carpet scattered with brown and pink flowers. On the other side of the hall there were three bedrooms in which the children slept. A verandah ran right around the top part of the house with safety rails and gate as it was high off the ground. An office or spare room was one end of the verandah and the bathroom the other. All the water for the bathroom was heated in the kitchen and carried to the verandah bathroom which was very cold. As a treat the home help used to bath us in the kitchen in a big tub by the fire. All the towels were large white huckabuck, as were the hand and guest towels.

The home was lit with fancy kerosene lamps and lanterns. Later gas lamps with mantles were used. The roof was huge bungalow with four chimneys at the back and two in front.

The garden was divided into four. The front garden had a grape wire trellis each side from the verandah to the front gate. Beautiful grapes were picked from it. One side of the trellis, which led to large wooden gates with lamps and fancy gate posts, had sweet water grapes growing on it. Outside were posts for tying up your horse or horse and sulky. I can remember Cecile Poole the wandering poet, coming through the gate and reciting poetry to us. The back gate led to the clothesline and drying shed for wet weather. The other side was the kitchen and herb gardens. Passionfruit vines grew on the chimney. Large fig and plum trees led to a side gate to the wood heap and saw benches where Dad and his brothers chopped and sawed wood. They took it in turns. Right around the back was the drying shed. Next to it was a storeroom for chaff, oats, barley and corn to feed the horses and beside this, a stall and stable for workhorses, a feed room, a machinery shed and a large grain shed with a polished floor. Dad, his sisters and brothers and friends were all keen skaters. The ladies wore long gowns.

The next shed was for the sulky, buggy and harness which was beautifully polished and cared for. Dad had a beautiful sulky which was his pride and joy, with a fancy whip, lamps, mats and knee rugs. His horse Myrtle was well shod and groomed. Kelso was a large black horse with a temper. He would shy at his own shadow when he felt like it. He was used for the buggy which had a hood and dickie seat at the back for we three older ones. Woe betides us if we didn't sit quietly!

Behind the back of the sheds was a butcher's shop and grocery shop with all the fittings, shelves and scales. We loved to play shop. This was where the station hands came to do their shopping and collect their wages before the station was cut up into lots. It was called 'Coobang Station.'

Dad had hives of bees in the side garden who were looked after by Bill Swindle. Some were Italian bees, I think, which stung one severely. I remember the hawkers who ventured near the gate getting stung and going away yelling!

Mum and Dad had many friends. The Coobang All Religion Church was six miles away. A service and Sunday School was held every Sunday. Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of England, Non-Conformist, Baptist etc. Dad went every Sunday and Mum when she could as she left the smallest ones at home with whoever was minding them. I started Sunday School when I was two years old. We stayed for church after Sunday School. We had picnics and concerts. Mum always took us older ones in the sulky to the picnics.

Mum and Dad and their friends entertained one another in their homes with Bible Class, meetings and games. The hall meetings, Farmers & Settlers, School meetings and Polling Days were held at Mum and Dad's as they were more central. Bobs, table tennis and vigaro were popular as they were all young married couples. Uncle Phil was over forty. He did not attend but Aunty Ethel and Aunty Fanny did. Uncle Stan and Uncle Jack always had a huge bonfire for everyone. Grandfather Symonds and Mater and her daughter Drucy came to Coobang for a while in 1920. Grandfather was very bright and a wonderful Christian man.

Mum always had a girl to help with the children and mind us as there were eight children under ten years old, and a lady to do the housework. A friend came to help Mum with the sewing as all our clothes, undies, singlets, petticoats, nighties, frocks and jackets, bonnets and baby clothes were all made at home with beautiful beading, crotchet and embroidery. I still remember my brown velvet frock, jacket and bonnet and a blue frock with a bolero and all smocked and embroidered. The ones I remember – Doris Annisin, Thelda, Ruth Pearce, Harriet Turner (Mum's niece), Edna Blackstock, several before them – Floss Edwards and Mrs. Edwards. I remember Charlie Bain coming home from the war in 1919. He was wounded by one of his mates when the war ended and never received a penny pension although he tried for years.

Mrs. Nuisance was the housekeeper. Dad asked her to make him ginger beer and put it in a small beer keg, which she did and as Dad signed the pledge at a young age, he told her not to put corn in it, which she did. She and her husband (who worked for Uncle Phil) thought it was lovely. Dad told her to tip it out

right away, which she did, unbeknown to Dad, into his prize black pigs' trough. It made them drunk. They were squealing and rolling all over the place. Dad rushed and poured cold water over the pigs to sober them up. We three older ones thought it was funny to see drunken pigs, but Dad didn't. Needless to say, the pigs survived but the housekeeper was sacked!

Dad used to ride his horse 'Kelso' to play Australian Rules Football at the hall and recreation grounds on Saturday. He also played cricket.

A creek right down the side of our property used to be a roaring, whirling torrent when it was in flood. We were forbidden to go near it when it was in flood as we could be washed away. Needless to say we were too scared to go near as it roared on its way to the next farm. One day we were sent to Uncle Stan's who lived a mile away – his sister Fanny and brother Jack lived with him – to collect the mail. On the way home, Janet, Alf and I saw a motor car and we went and hid on the side of the creek as we were so scared. We had never seen a car before. Another day we were caught sliding down the creek bank. We were warned and sent home. We used to like to go to Mrs. Hughie MacGregor's, who lived past Uncle Stan's. He used to play his bagpipes for us. We were very afraid of his bulldog although he was harmless, we didn't like the look of him.

One and a half miles from our home was Coobang North Public School with one teacher and one room with a verandah. We walked to school and were joined by our cousins and friends along the way. As Mum watched us out of sight, we knew better than to dawdle. There were 30 pupils and one teacher who rode a horse to school. We were in awe of the inspector who came in a motor car. The inspector asked Alf what he wanted to be when he left school. He answered "Mr. Symonds, Sir." I went to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and Q.C. and left when we went to Trundle.

I started Sunday School when I was 2 years old in the infant class. Mr. Edwards Snr was the superintendent and his daughter Millie was my teacher, later as Mrs. L. Davey she was my senior teacher. Mr. Edwards Snr used to preach of when he was a boy in London he used to run around knocking on doors and when they opened, he would run away. Grandfather Symonds also preached when he was there.

Mum used to drive 'Myrtle' in the sulky to Parkes to shop. Along the way there were 2 gates to open as there were no fenced roads – they just drove through private property. Mum gave me the reins to hold while she opened the gates and led the horse through. She only took we three older ones with her, the others were left at home to be minded. Mum used to leave the horse and sulky at Tatts Hotel (it was burnt down in later years and is now the Coachman Motel). The horse was taken out of the sulky, brushed and groomed and a nosebag of chaff and oats put on her. Mum said she gave the boy a brand new two shilling piece, (this boy was a grown man known as Dan Oliver). Later Dad told her he was a man, not a boy, and she often had a laugh about it. She later decided to take us, Janet, Alf and myself, to the Parkes Show. She asked the hotel to call a taxi. When Alf saw the taxi he screamed and held on to the verandah post. It took a lot of persuasion to get him to let go of the post. Once the taxi driver put him in the front and showed him how the car worked and allowed him to pip the horn, he was happy. He was three years old.

There was great rejoicing by us in 1923 when we learned we had a new baby brother Edward. We always told Mum when she went to hospital we did not want any more girls! Alf was very proud of his new baby brother and told Dad he wasn't the baby boy any more, he was a little man.

In November 1924 Dad went down to Sydney and bought a new Buick car, red in colour. We older ones were thrilled and proud of our new car. It was a raging thunderstorm and pouring rain when Dad took Mum into Niola Hospital to await her new baby. Cora was born in 1924.

In 1926 we had to pack up everything and leave our home as a raging bush fire, started from a spark from a train engine at Alectown was racing towards us. Many men were fighting the fire and had it turned back when a stupid fire fighter threw a burning wheat sack into Dad's wheat crop. Dad was away at Trundle. The men panicked and trundled all Mum's large packed cases down to the garage, which was built of iron. Needless to say, they rolled the cases end over end and broke many beautiful vases and her crockery.

We were bundled into a car with Mum and taken to Dad's brother, Uncle Phillip and Auntie Ethel's property where we spent the night huddled on a double mattress on the front verandah. We were very frightened as there was smoke and flames all around. Alf had grabbed his 6 month old pup and would not be parted with him. Uncle Phil's house was 9 miles from Parkes and the centre where all the fire fighters came for cups of tea and sandwiches. The stores in Parkes sent out bread, cheese, tea etc as the fire fighters were out all night. Eventually the fire jumped the creek and continued south east for many miles. Dad had the car and raced home from Trundle when he heard the news. He was at Trundle preparing for us to move there. All his hard work and wheat went up in smoke – it was a big blow for him.

## MERLE SYMONDS



Merle Symonds

Merle sold the farm and retired to Parkes. She died on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2001 and was buried on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2001 at Parkes, N.S.W.

Merle Symonds was the eldest child of Phillip Henry and Ethel (nee Harper) Symonds. Merle Symonds married Norman Doust, son of George and Martha Ann (nee Lomas) Doust in the early 1950's. Norman had been born on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1904 at Canowindra N.S.W. and his sister Grace was married to Earl Symonds.

Norman worked for his father-in-law and they lived in a little house on the Peak Hill Road, Parkes. They didn't have any children of their own but they brought up Eric Symonds, son of Merle's sister Vera as their own child. Later they purchased a small place just out of Parkes and Merle had a few cows and chickens. She sold eggs, butter and milk and was an avid gardener. Merle was renowned for her beautiful knitting and crochet work and did many beautiful pieces for the family and for parish stalls. She was very involved with her local church activities and in later years, pensioner activities.

The family all very affectionately remember Aunty Merle and say she was charmingly old fashioned and kept in touch with them all as much as possible.

Eric was born in 1957 went to school in Parkes and later went to Sydney to study and work. He still lives in Sydney. Norman died in August 1963 so Merle raised Eric alone from the time he was six years old.



Merle & Norman Doust

## MILDRED FANNY SYMONDS

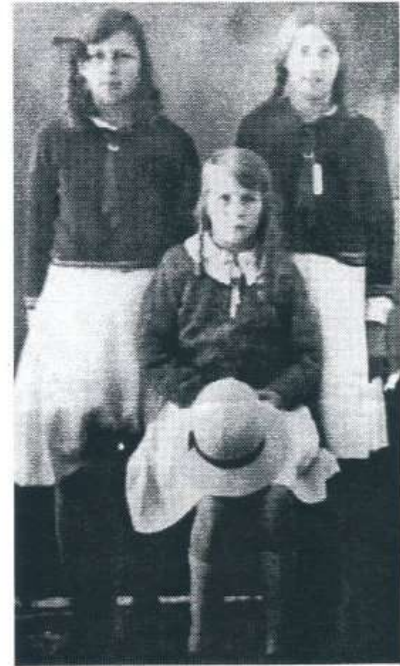
Mildred Fanny Symonds was the sixth child of Leslie Anderson and Alice Martha (nee Bowland) Symonds. She was born in Nurse Cock's Hospital, Parkes N.S.W. on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1921. She, like the rest of her siblings, attended Glenowra School.

When she left school, she joined her sisters with helping their mother with household duties. All the girls had to take a week about in the kitchen, housework, washing and mending, etc. In summer it was constant work just to keep the home clean after frequent dust storms. These seemed to occur every few days and when there were rabbit plagues, the dust was very bad. She also had to help to milk four house cows and do the separating. The girls had to feed the poddy calves with some of the separated milk and as the calves grew, their diet was augmented with hay or green wheat and oats cut with a scythe.

Millie played tennis and once a week the neighbours would gather at Wilga Ridge or one of the neighbourhood homes for tennis, followed by afternoon tea. Bobs, table tennis and playing the pianola were also popular pastimes.

Winter evenings at Wilga Ridge were spent knitting or reading in front of a fire. In summertime, when day temperatures would be well over forty degrees centigrade, the ladies would gather in the hallway which was the coolest place in the house to do fancy work or to read.

Millie was mainly at home helping her mother, though in 1940 she worked for a short time in Forbes and later for a neighbour. Because of sickness, she was frequently away in hospital but was able to spend the later years of her life at home with her parents until their death. She then lived in a retirement home until her death, which occurred in the Orange Base Hospital on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1983. Millie was interred in the Presbyterian section of the Parkes cemetery.



Dulcie, Cora & Mildred Symonds

## ROY SYMONDS



Roy Symonds

Roy, born on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1921, was the 4<sup>th</sup> child of Phillip and Ethel (nee Harper) Symonds. He attended the Coobang North Public School with his siblings. The school adjoined "The Gums." The children in this family had to do many chores for the household, both before and after school. He can recall some of the students going to school with no shoes. Roy did not complete his schooling but has a natural ability with calculations and was able to build some of his farm equipment as required over the years.

He married Clare Waser on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1960. Roy and his brother Keith were living on "The Gums" when their father died suddenly in 1962. Keith left this property soon afterwards. Roy and Clare continued to do mainly mixed farming and he did a bit of share farming in the area as well. They experienced a few hard years so Roy spent a considerable time away from the farm contracting with his bulldozer. He mainly worked in the Oberon area. Three children were born to Clare and Roy – Angela, Leila and Arthur.

Roy was not a tall man, being only about 5'6" but he possessed amazing strength and was able to lift items that were heavier than he was. His Uncle Leslie could also do this.

Clare and Roy retired from farming in 1984 and moved into Parkes and semi-retirement, but Roy still does a lot of farm duties for



friends in "The Gums" area. He built a mobile saw bench and does a lot of woodcutting. He will take his saw bench to a property where he will fell, cut, split and prepare wood to be sold privately by the tonne. Though he has some health problems, brought about by age onset diabetes, he is still a very competent woodcutter and is strong and active for his age – 82 years. Though he has slowed down a bit lately, he still goes out woodcutting or helping on a farm three or four times a week.



Merle & Roy Symonds at 'The Gums'



Roy Symonds

#### VERA SYMONDS



Vera Symonds was the fifth child of Phillip and Ethel (nee Harper) Symonds. She was born at Parkes on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1925. She married Phillip John Cross on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1963. Phillip (Jack) was born at Narrabri on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1916 and was the son of Henry Burydine and Mary Anne (nee Mahaffey) Cross.

Mary Ethel Cross was their only child. Vera and Jack lived for many years at Cullen Bullen, near Lithgow and had a mixed farm including running goats. She too enjoyed handicrafts.

Phillip died on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1989 and Vera moved to Wellington N.S.W., where she died during 2001.

Vera Symonds