

Ben & Priscilla (Bridge) Bryce & Family

Alex & Isabella (nee Watt) came from Scotland in 1851 to Coombes Estate, (Albion Park) NSW sponsored by Uncle Ebenezer Russell with Brother William (both newly weds). They bought Erowol, 1,000 acres on St Georges Basin and sold butter and vegetables to Sydney (via coastal clippers). Alex & Isabella had 12 children and William had 8. They all lived together (24 in total) until a disagreement and the farm was split into "Cockrow" & "Erowol". (Here a While).

John moved first to the Northern Rivers (Bryce Lane) then Charles came (also by boat) and stayed over with John. John then bought 120 acres in Maleny (Thynnes or Burgess's selection).

Charles then went back to get his horse. He was followed by Ben in 1905, Bob, William, Alex. When Alex (Snr, NSW) died, old Isabella moved to Maleny with her 2 grandchildren, Alex & Isabella (Bella) Fleming, their mother Marion had deceased.

Charles swapped his flat farm with blind Ben's steep one in North Maleny. In 1910, Charles married the pioneer daughter of William & Jane (Auld) Simpson, Heaps Simpson. Bob settled at Wootha, William at Witta, Alex at Reesville, Alex Fleming, Belle (Thomason (nee Fleming) & Charles all at North Maleny. On old Isabella's death she was returned to the Nowra cemetery and buried beside her husband Alex and brother William & Mary.

Ben Bryce purchased part of Portion 98 from Isaac Burgess, who had selected land here in 1878. After felling many acres of standing scrub, Ben commenced supplying milk to the Maleny Co-Operative Dairy Company Ltd in 1906. In 1913, Ben married Priscilla Bridge, a Brisbane resident. Isabelle was born on 8th November in 1914, Phyllis in 1916 and Marjorie in 1922. The three girls were involved with dairy farming as soon as they were old enough. The Bryce family installed the first milking machines in the district, powered by a Lister diesel. Milk was carted to the factory by pack horse, along the road which now services the new Maleny High School. Ben suffered from blindness from the age of 21 and from the age of 4 years, Isabelle used to steer the horse up front of the saddle for her blind Dad, taking a 40L can of cream to the Factory.

Ben Bryce & his brothers were involved in building the First Union Non-Denominational church on land donated by the Dunlops and the first organ in that church was donated by Charles and returned to the Historical Society by Ian Bryce.

Isabelle started school in Maleny when she was 6. She rode her pony, as did her sisters. When Isabelle was 14 she left school, after completion of a music scholarship in piano. This in turn led in tuition in the organ. Isabelle played both instruments for the rest of her life. She played at the Uniting Church services, at weddings and various social events. Family entertainment when the Bryce girls were young was a gathering in the home with songs around the piano. Ben purchased his first car in 1923. Ben passed away in 1944, Priscilla in 1971 and only 6 years later, Marjorie too passed away aged 55 years.

By means of hard work and frugal living, Isabelle & Phyllis Bryce, with the help of Bob Pointing were able to add to the family land holdings. They had large acreages at Mt Mellum, Baroon Pocket and on the eastern side of the range at Montville. They held over 2,000 acres which they attended to regularly by travelling on horseback, taking a packed lunch and returning late at night.

In addition to their farming commitments, the Bryce sisters were involved in many local organisations over many years. When Isabelle was presented with a Rotary Paul Harris Award, she had been involved in the Red Cross for 50 years, Girl Guides 26 years, Endeavour Foundation 23 years, Scouts 21 years, Beaver Masters 21 years, QCWA 17 years, Committee for the Ageing 13 years, Senior Citizens 13 years, Maleny Retirement Living Board 17 years, Riding for the Disabled 10 years, Hospital Auxiliary 6 years, Meals on Wheels 3 years, had been the church's organist for over 50 years and for most of the other churches in Maleny at some time. Guides Tea Stall at Boxsells Cattle & calf Sales for 21 years. She received an MBE, OBE, the 4NA Community

Service Award and was named the Shire Citizen of the Year. The MBE was awarded by the Governor, Sir John Ramsay in 1984 for her contribution to the community. At the time of receiving this award, Phyllis was in hospital and able to share it, but was unable to attend her investiture.

Phyllis was awarded the British Empire Medal for her community work in 1984 and a 4NA Community Service Award in 1977. She too had been involved with a long list of community organisations, including 45 years with the Red Cross, including war service. Phyllis passed away in 1985 aged 68 years. Isabelle & Phyllis donated their farm to the community, for the Erowol Retirement Village in 1978.

After Phyllis's death, Isabelle continued to raise money to purchase a bus with wheel chair access to enable Erowol residents to enjoy mobility. The Retirement Village was extended to include a Nursing Home and Isabelle was the first occupant. From her room, she could see her home, "Priscilla Cottage" being moved to the Historical Village and attended the opening day. Nothing was thrown away over almost a century and Isabelle donated everything from her home to fit out "Priscilla Cottage" as a heritage landmark to Maleny Pioneers. The oak tree planted at the Pioneer Village was from an acorn brought from Erowal, Nowra NSW. The tree is thriving and many Bryce descendants have planted trees from this original tree from Scotland.

In Isabelle's later years, she married Mord Wright and they enjoyed a short marriage before she suffered a stroke. Isabelle passed away peacefully on March 15, 2000 aged 86.

Desley Malone



Phyllis, Marjorie, Isabelle
Ben & Priscilla
c 1930s



Ben, Priscilla, Marjorie, Phyllis
& Isabelle
c 1930s



Phyllis, Marjorie, Isabelle
c 1930s



Bryce farm "Erowol" from Landsborough Rd c 1930s