

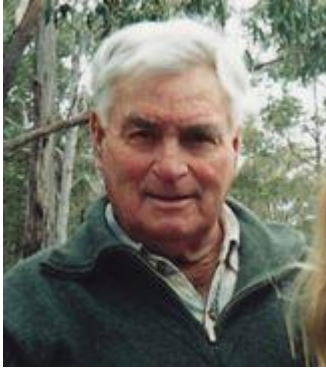
# Ross Denne, Eulogy

**St Peter's Church, Barnes Bay, 16 April 2009**

(Delivered by Alan Bottomley)

Family and friends of Ross, we're honoured to see so many of you here today.

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Ross lived a long life, most of it on Bruny Island. He was born in 1914, the same year that World War I started. He went to school at Barnes Bay, not very far from here, from 1920 to 1928. The first part of his schooling was in the old cricket hall because the new school hadn't yet been built. (It was built while he was at the school.) He enlisted in the army in 1941 at the age of 27, and subsequently served in Borneo. He was discharged in 1946, aged 32. (Recently he gave me his war medals for safekeeping.) After the war he worked at several jobs on Bruny Island, including wood cutting and land clearing.

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In 1952 he married Josephine, my mother, following the death of our father from cancer, and thus took on the three of us young boys as well!

From 1952 until the present he worked the Lauriston farm continuously. The farming activity of course declined somewhat in later years, but he continued to maintain an interest in the farm and as recently as last spring, I helped him plant what was to be his last crop of potatoes (we called them 'spuds').

It was a mixed farm, with sheep and cattle, and other crops. I can remember boasting to my high school mates about how we grew almost all our own requirements on the farm. We milked our own cows, and separated the milk. Mum churned the cream and made butter, we had hens (we called them chooks), all kinds of vegetables, jam, fruit, and we also killed our own meat. I was proud of our independence but on later reflection we probably needed to be because we didn't have much money!

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What was Ross like?

Ross always struck me as having a personality which commanded respect; everybody respected Ross, and no-one ever insulted him. He was knowledgeable, had a fine sense of humour, and was a very good teller of yarns. He cared well for his farm animals and he had a love of nature.

He was particularly knowledgeable about birds.

This reminds me of a time when we were quite young: I remember one day finding a bird's egg and showing it to Ross. We were amazed to find that Ross was able to deduce, just from seeing the egg, what kind of bird laid it, how far above the ground the nest would have been, what the nest was made out of, and what the bird's song sounded like! This engendered in us an interest in birds and Ross fostered this interest. We were allowed to collect birds' eggs on the understanding that we were not to take more than one egg from any nest, and were not to disturb the birds. We built up substantial collections, particularly Ralph, who had a magnificent collection. (Here Geoff interjected that Ralph was also the one who took the most risks to collect eggs!).

While on the subject of birds:

It was discovered in 1989, that there was a significant colony of Forty-Spotted Pardalotes on Denne's Hill. This species is endangered, and Parks and Wildlife were very happy that a healthy colony existed there. Further negotiations and discussions between my parents and Parks and Wildlife over the next three years lead to my parents gifting a 200 acre parcel of land to form the core of the Denne's Hill Nature Reserve. I think that is a very nice legacy to have left behind.

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Sporting-wise, Ross was quite talented.

This was exhibited most notably in the game of **cricket**. And I found out only recently that his early interest in the game was fostered by my gran, Kate Bottomley, who was Ross' teacher at Barnes Bay school for the last two years of his schooling there.

My Gran's encouragement had ramifications for I understand that during the 1930s, North Bruny was able to field two A-grade cricket teams, and that it would have been possible to have made a whole team just out of Dennes!

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Ross didn't join in many of our kid's games, but occasionally when we set up cricket in the front yard, he would join in. I didn't have any experience of spin bowling from the cricket that I had played at school, but Ross introduced me to the art with a ball equivalent to "That Ball" of Shane Warne's that bowled Mike Gatting. Ross' first delivery to me turned so sharply that I missed it altogether and I was clean bowled! (I have never forgotten that!)

When we made bows and arrows Ross gave us tips on what sort of trees to use that would make the best bows and showed us some young bull oaks that were ideal for the job.

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Ross was very knowledgeable, particularly about Bruny Island history. He joined the Bruny Island Historical Society soon after it was formed, and attended many of their excursions. He was often consulted on where the excursions should go, and on what to look for at the various historical sites.

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Well, Ross had a long life, as I mentioned at the start, and we could contemplate on the reasons for this. I think it was the peaceful, stress-free life on the Lauriston farm, and it may also have had something to do with mum's cooking! (Anyone who knows mum will know that she cooks superb meals). But the long life was also due to mum's devotion and care for Ross, through thick and through thin.

Mum was a rock for Ross, (and mum was a rock for us too).

Thanks mum.

And thanks, Ross, for your life.

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