


## Desmond William Fenton and Margery Jean Grylls

*Margery Jean Fenton (née Grylls, 1921)*



We were married on 27.5.1944 at St John's Anglican Church Kerang by Rev. Jack Lee. I heard after that the choir paid the compliment to this soldier by singing at the service. There was only a fortnight to arrange everything – Special Licence, the Ladies' Guild did their first catering job for about 96. Pays Stores were most helpful with bridal and bridesmaids' gowns. I arranged to have Iris Morris' veil. I could have any ring I liked as long as it fitted finger and purse – there was only one. None of my friends could come, none of my relations, and only 4 close neighbours from Dingee. There was no official photographer available but photos aplenty. Much excitement when the guests saw us off on the plane.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AIRWAYS PTY. LTD.	
FLIGHT LOG CARD	
R.M.A. Trip	MUNGANA V4-AEM
Position	KERANG to MELBOURNE
Altitude	5 EAST Over BENDIGO at 5.02 P.M. A.M.
Speed	Air 160 M.P.H. Ground 163 M.P.H.
Temperature	50 °F. at 5000 feet
Will Arrive	MELBOURNE at 5.35 P.M. A.M.
Remarks	
Date	27-5-44
CAPTAIN	

PLEASE PASS TO NEXT PASSENGER.

**MARRIED AT KERANG.  
BRIDE FROM DINGEE.**

Hyacinth blue frocks were worn by the two 'maids who waited upon Margery Jean, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Grylls, Tang Tang, Dingee, when she was married to Desmond William, eldest son of Mr and Mrs. J. W. Fenton, Normanville, Kerang. Rev. J. H. Lee performed the ceremony in St. John's Church, Kerang, and the bride was given away by her father. Her charming gown of white cloque was made on classic lines, with a long-sleeved bodice, cut with a high neck line, and the fulness drawn to the centre. The full skirt graduated to a graceful train, which was misted with the folds of her filmy white tulle veil, held in place with white nerines. A single touch of pink was introduced into her pretty semi-sheaf bouquet of nerines, gladioli, and carnations. Misses Marcia Fenton, sister of the bridegroom, and Gwenyth Grylls, sister of the bride, were the 'maids, and their attractive frocks of hyacinth blue cloque had V-necklined bodices, allied to full picture skirts. Deep pink camellias. were worn with their short blue tulle veils, and they carried bouquets of pink nerines, blue delphiniums, and feathery, mauve chrysanthemums. Best man was Mr. Tom McKerrow, and Mr. Laurie Fenton was groomsman. Wedding breakfast was held in St. John's Hall. With her turquoise blue frock, which was worn with black accessories, the bride's mother wore a shoulder spray of gold roses, and the bridegroom's mother, who assisted her at the reception, wore with her navy ensemble rust accessories and a posy of carnations and autumn leaves. A grey-green tailored suit with brown accessories was worn by the bride for travelling. The couple left by 'plane for their honeymoon, which was spent at Kalorama.

**WEDDING.**

FENTON – GRYLLS.

St. John's Church of England, Kerang, was the scene of the full bridal wedding of Margery Jean, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs John Grylls, of Dingee, and Sgt. Desmond William (A.I.F.), eldest son of Mr and Mrs John W. Fenton, of Normanville, which took place at 1 o'clock, on May 27th. The officiating clergyman was the Rev. J. H. Lee.

As the bride entered the church, which was prettily decorated by cousins of the bridegroom, Mrs A. S. Adams played the Bridal March.

The bride, who was given away by her father, made a graceful figure in her entrained gown of white cloque, cut on classic lines, with long sleeves ending in points over the wrists, a high neck-line and a front fullness featuring the bodice. The beautiful full length veil was held in place by a topnot of white nerines, and a semi-sheaf of white nerines, gladioli and carnations with a touch of pink, was carried.

The bride was attended by her sister, Miss Gwenyth Grylls, and Miss Marcia Fenton (sister of the bridegroom), who looked charming in their hyacinth blue cloque frocks featuring V necks, with very full skirts. Short blue tulle veils were held in place by topnots of deep pink camellias and they carried bouquets of pink nerines, blue sweet, peas, and feathery mauve chrysanthemums.

The bridegroom was supported by Mr Torn McKerrow, as bestman, and Mr Laurie Fenton as groomsman.

After the ceremony the guests were entertained at a reception held at St. John's Parish Hall, where Mrs Grylls and Mrs Fenton received them. Mrs Grylls looked very smart in her turquoise blue frock to which she pinned a shoulder spray of gold roses, and wore black accessories; whilst Mrs Fenton favored a navy ensemble, with rust hat and navy accessories, and she pinned an autumn posy of carnations and autumn leaves to her coat.

The young couple left for their honey-moon to be spent at Kalorama, by plane, midst cheers and good wishes, the bride wearing a green tailored suit, with brown accessories.

We stayed the first night at the Federal Hotel in Bourke St. We were very embarrassed by having to prove we were married as my identity card was in my maiden name; when Des produced the Marriage lines confetti came with it. Accommodation was difficult, but an army friend Bernie Watson had organised a house for us at "Red Robin", Ridge Rd, Kalorama (Mt Dandenong). We carried our cases from the bus stop at the picturesque church there. Considering that Des had had 4 years in the Tropics, Mt Dandenong at the end of the day was possibly not the best idea. After 5 days we returned to Normanville until Des had to rejoin his unit in Brisbane before moving to the Atherton Tableland. The brilliant brains in the Education Department ruled that, once married, women had to resign. It was wartime and a shortage of teachers!!!! So, Normanville School with its 7 students, was closed and I found I was pregnant and we had to repay the bond £45 (\$90) a year. I alternated staying at my home at Dingee because Des wanted me to stay with his parents.

John Desmond Fenton was born in the Kerang Hospital 28.2.1945. I didn't know much about the actual birth. I remember seeing the doctor arrive, in evening dress, and the next thing waking in the morning and being told I had a son, 5lb 11oz, too weak for me to see him for 24 hours. I was alone, no husband, no mother or even mother-in-law. I felt very alone. Des couldn't get leave.

They moved to Morotai 11.7.1945 on the "D. L. Moody" – Des was very impressed with US rations. This Unit did Litho printing and had splendid equipment on these big trucks. Des was in charge of them all (photograph in the War Memorial Canberra). They printed all sorts, from their own stationery, "Table Tops", the Army newspaper, maps, AND all the surrender leaflets to be air-dropped over all the islands and photos of the surrender with General Blamey.

Des had had only two lots of leave in the 4½ years, so had acquired a lot (94 days), after he came back and before his official discharge on 28.11.1945. He returned to Australia on the SS Kanimbla and then by train to Kerang and saw his 8-month old son for the first time. John cried. I suppose I was so excited. The Demob Officer suggested there were better wheatgrowing areas, e.g. the NE, but after 5 years away there was only one thought: HOME.

We had some time at my parents' home at Dingee. Des' first job was helping my father stook hay with particularly heavy sheaves. He weighed only 10½ stone (67kg) and was yellow with Atebrin (anti-malarial), and unsettled after 4½ years in the army.

Back at Normanville we lived with Fentons and had a bedroom. With the cot also in it, it was a bit cramped. Des was soon driving the header. He had rigged a device that the header could be driven with a long bar onto the tractor. No more horses!! It was a very poor crop.

We had £35 (\$70) in the bank, but a lot of deferred pay, so he negotiated to buy a neighbouring farm through the Soldier Settlement Commission. In June/July 1946 with £581-17-9 (\$1163-80) we bought a farm. John and Ellen Mahar settled Allotments No 71 and 72, Parish of Koorangie, in 1892 and later divided the farm between their two sons Ern and Vic, Allotments No 71A and 72A going to Vic. Two rooms were taken from the large family home and two skillion rooms and a hip and valley roof were built by A. G Adams. A detached kitchen and cellar made this home for Vic and Mabel.

Later the farm was share-farmed by Claude English and Ron Leerson. In the early 1940s a local butcher agisted sheep on it and because of droughts as well as over-stocking it became badly eroded, with bare patches on the higher paddocks, and a lunette of drift sand around the unoccupied house and driftsand over the sheepyards and adjoining roads. These were impassable until opened by the Shire grader in 1945 or 1946.

It was wonderful to be on our own at last, and a campaign was immediately begun to restore the farm's 922 acres. Des was working very hard – helping his father as well as doing his own farm work. A tractor and scoop carted the sand away and back to the paddocks, stubbles were retained, and the land ploughed in ridges against the destructive West winds – even on one Christmas morning. Des tried new techniques and planted the new wheat variety Insignia – 3 bags were allocated to each applicant. Bill Eskrick was carting for us and he had a contraption that tipped the wheat into the body of the truck and returned the empty bag to the ground. Bill stayed with us; there were some very hot days and nights. No dam water, no refrigerator or ice chest. We made do with a Coolgardie Safe, and we bathed in a big tub in one of the bedrooms. I don't know who was the more uncomfortable, a 6' man or a pregnant woman.

The wash troughs sat on the edge of the verandah with the wash copper nearby. On very windy days it was impossible to get it to boil. When we bought a hand-operated washing machine it was a big help; then a wringer. I don't ever want to be as tired again. The days were long but we were glad to be together – working together. We had the same background so had no false ideas of what to expect.

Bronwyn was born 21.10.1947 and fortunately was a good baby although I had problems feeding her (no proper advice).

The house had 4 rooms and a detached kitchen, no bathroom as it had been burnt. Bare wooden floors, a wood-fired stove, a table and chairs. Later a bench and a store cupboard were built. We washed up in a tin dish but did have some mod cons – a rainwater tap came through into the kitchen and there was a hot water boiler attached to the stove.

With Les Harry the carpenter, the house was re-roofed in 1948 and in 1951 moved the kitchen into the main building, relined it, adding a bathroom and extra windows. Later still the verandahs were enclosed.



Detached kitchen and old house with wired-in verandah

We had a horse and cart – rubber-wheeled trailer – for transport until in 1950 I had to teach to open the school and we bought a Hillman. I can't remember when Des bought a wheat truck, a Bedford.

It was a very exciting day when a windmill was installed and a galvanized pipeline laid all the way to the house (I still don't take a water supply for granted) and I immediately started a garden. Mind you, I had to devise a fence around it myself.



In the Parish of Meering West in Allotment No 21 is an old battered and solitary Black Box tree. Because it was on the highest part of his farm, Jim Ryan used to climb it once a week to note how much of the Mallee was being cleared. He and his brother Bill had blocks on either side of Dear Rd. They exchanged some blocks and Bill had Allotments No 36, 37, and 40. Des redeemed his loan from the Soldier Settlement Commission to enable his brother Rex and himself to buy this farm from Mrs Ryan in August/September 1950. They built good sheepyards and a shearing and machinery shed. After harvest 1964

Des bought out his brother's share at an inflated price, dearer than the initial verbal agreement. It was a devastating blow to Des to whom his word was his bond. Rex also said that "if you won't pay, I have someone who will". Later the authorities issued Des with a gift tax notice, considering that this high price constituted a gift to Rex. Frank Lynch (lawyer) was able to get this waived. Rex also agisted out the feed in paddocks 11 and 12 so that when Des took possession there was no feed. We were continually moving sheep along Weir Rd to make the most of every blade of grass.

In 1947 Des installed a windmill and pipeline from the enlarged dam at the front gate (55 chains ~ 1km). Because the farm is on a slight hill, the stock and domestic channels only touch it at the corners, while Paddock 5 is serviced by the high rise channel. A high tank was built.

Most of the fencing was replaced by cement posts made by Des – on Saturday mornings.

In 1951 Kees Brobbel from the Netherlands came to work.

William Stephen Fenton was born on 16.1.1952. Karen Elizabeth Fenton was born on 26.6.1955.





John, 14 weeks, looking worried already



Bronwyn, 1yr 9m



Bill, 1954



Karen helping with the shearing at Baulch's, July 1958

Des later formed Merriwa Pastoral Company, with John, Bronwyn, Bill and Karen as shareholders. We lent them the money to buy their shares.



This aerial photo (c1965-6) shows the layout of the houseyard with some of the original buildings.

In the photograph the Mallee trees were in good condition as there had been no horses amongst them for many years – *Eucalyptus dumosa*, *Eucalyptus oleosa*, *Eucalyptus calycogona*, and *Eucalyptus behriana*, plus one damaged Sugar Gum in the shepyards. The trees on the north side of the house were planted in 1957 and those in line in front of the new house in 1958 and 1959, while the young trees on the south and west were planted in 1964. Items of note include:

- 1 The old stable and chaff shed had been blown down in a storm and rebuilt by Vic with the iron on the inside of the poles. There were galvanized iron feeding troughs. It was demolished and a large machinery shed and water tanks built in 1982.
- 2 Original barn with wires and kerosene tins strung across to store empty wheat bags away from mice.
- 3 Old timber home, 1917.
- 3A Winlite wind generator with garage and engine shed, 1952.
- 4 Machinery shed and workshop – a windstorm blew the roof intact right over the barn, so this was rebuilt and some cement floor added.
- 5 House dam: when Vic Mahar had to depend on this as his only water supply, rumour has it that he used to rake or sweep the houseyard to ensure maximum runoff.
- 6 Des and Margery planted the pepper trees along the west fence as soon as the sale was completed (July 1946) having dug up the seedlings from under Harry and Linda Shipp's trees at "Dunrobin".
- 7 Large shed built by Jim Muller 1956 and another one in 1974.
- 8 The first silo and hayshed were built in about 1954 and others added later.
- 9 Sheep yards about 1957 with shearing shed (Fred Cameron); Sheepdip.
- 10 New house – built in 1965 by Mr Jorgensen at the time when SEC electricity was connected.

Bronwyn, Geoff and Catherine came from England in 1977 and Margery and Des built the other house in 1979 (John Williams, builder).

Council, Community work, Tennis

Des died on 26.3.1981 after a sudden heart attack.