

# THE FAMILY OF JOHN WYNN

**J**ohn William Wynn was born in Wickham Newcastle 25<sup>th</sup> May 1888 the first child of Thomas Wynn and Annie Annise Evans. He was always known as Will.

He went to school in Lambton but left school to go to work in 1902/03 at Arnott's Biscuits in Derby St Newcastle. He played cricket for Lambton up to the age of 18 when the family moved to Dora Creek. He also worked as a miner with his father at Bullock Island Colliery prior to moving to Dora Creek.

By 1906 the family had moved to Gradwells Rd Dora Creek and Thomas Snr and Will worked at Pelawmain Colliery during the week. They rode the

20 miles to the mine by bicycle.

Will began working at Wallarah Colliery at Nords

Wharf for a while. He camped

there during the week and travelled home at the weekends. He met his future wife Ethel Baxter while working at Wallarah. At this time Will was 5' 8-9" tall of medium build with light blue eyes and black hair and fair skin.

By 1910 Will had started to work as a fisherman on Lake Macquarie. He also began to play cricket locally for the Morisset Hospital side. In his first season with the team he won the batting average trophy but his prize (a bat) was awarded



John, "Will" or Billie Wynn circa 1912



Ethel Baxter c1912

to a Mr John Porter because Will had been caught fishing the Hospital's beach area without permission. He continued to play cricket for Lambton.

Ethel Mary Baxter was born at Blackneds Bay Swansea on 8 August 1890. Her father was from Cornwall and her mother was born in Newcastle of Welsh parents. She was one of fourteen children, her mother dying after a fall while carrying her 14<sup>th</sup> child. Ethel was then only 11 years old. Little is known of the Baxter family but they were known as a quiet genteel family.

Ethel went to school at Catherine Hill Bay which was a walk of some four miles from her home at Crangan Bay (Nords Wharf). She walked the distance again on Sundays to attend Sunday School. Ethel is remembered for talking about Margaret, the last of the Awabakal aborigines who lived in a hut in the bush near their home. The children would see her when they walked to school. Ethel's grandfather was Moses Rees and he was given a land grant of 80 acres at South Beach Nords Wharf. He gave 20 acres to each of his four children and a section of this acreage is now called Baxters Park. Ethel worked as a domestic servant in Belmont in the years after school.

John was married to Ethel Mary Baxter in 1912 and lived in Brown's house in Dora St, Dora Creek. At this time he was working for Healy's timber mill on the site of the current Workers Club for 8/- per day. They had 9 children between 1913 and 1938.

Gladys Mary Wynn was born at Dora Creek on 7 February 1913. William Wynn was born at Dora Creek on 2 March 1915.



**Ethel Wynn nee Baxter c1920**

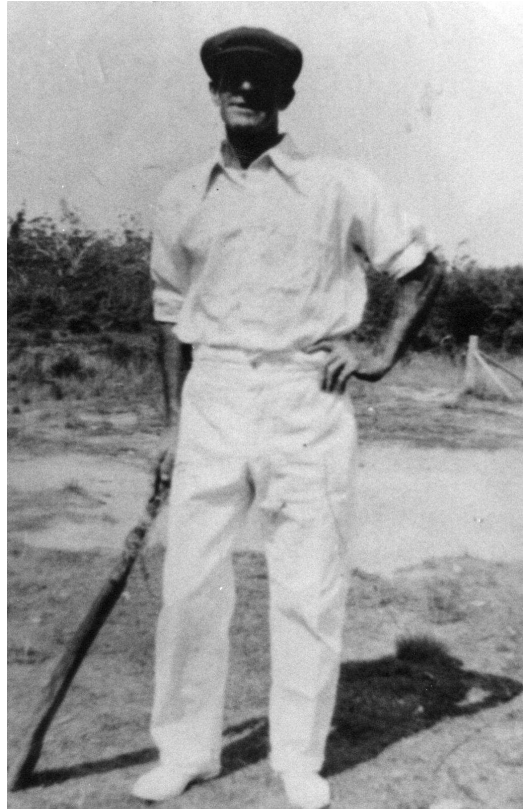


**l to r: John Wynn, Ethel Wynn nee Baxter, Richard Wynn,? Baxter, Ern White, Bess Wynn 1912**

They moved to Catherine Hill Bay in 1917 with 2 children to go back to mining. They lived 4 doors down from the hotel. Two more children were born here by 1919. Clarence Wynn was born 20 March 1917 and Ailsa Annis Wynn was born 5 July 1919. In 1919 an outbreak of Bubonic Plague caused many deaths. Everyone had to wear cotton masks while outdoors. Some of the children remember Ethel taking in some children who had their parents die from the flu. They also remember her burning sulphur on saucers around the house to try to drive away the infection. After this the family moved with 4 children up to the Clarence River and Maclean area. They travelled by the small coastal steamer "Pulganbar".

They didn't stay very long and returned to Dora Creek to go fishing and timber getting around the end of 1919. Leslie Victor Wynn was born at Dora Creek on 5 December 1921. Thelma Ethel Wynn was born at Dora Creek on 1 June 1923. Vera Elaine Wynn was born at Dora Creek on 14 April 1926.

They lived just a mile from the creek. Declining fish prices in 1927 made things too hard for the family. Will had an opportunity to work for a wage at the Belangalo State Forest at Moss Vale. The labouring job was to plant new pine trees in the forestry lots. An important requirement for the job was to have at least 4 school age children so that the local school would be kept open. Will had seven children at this time ranging from Gladys at 14 to Vera just one year old.



**Will – the cricketer – 1930 Belangalo**



**Wyong District cricket 1925/26 William Wynn 3<sup>rd</sup> from left in back row**

The work was hard but with some degree of variety. A 48 hour week required working on Saturday for 4 pounds 2/6 per week.

The Depression years saw this wage reduced to 3 pounds 15/- plus endowment for the 2nd and subsequent children of 5/- each per week. He also had to reduce his working week for a time by working only three weeks in four. A vegetable garden and selling rabbit skins made life bearable. They still managed to buy a wireless set and in 1929 a second hand car for 110 pounds. Esther Muriel Wynn was born at Belangalo on 30 May 1929.



**John Wynn c1940**

At this time he was playing cricket with Sutton Forest at age of 41 and was known for his spin bowling. This team moved from the second division to first division but he was just one year too late to play against the future greats Don Bradman and Bill O'Reilly who had moved on to Sydney and State sides that year.

An increased price for fish by early 1934 gave him the opportunity to return to Dora Creek. Still living a mile from the creek made travel to the boats tedious so in June 1934 they bought a 66' block of land on the water at the James Vale estate (now known as Mannering Park). They paid 1 pound per foot for this block and later bought another adjacent block for 15/- per foot.

They shifted from Dora Creek and a six-room house was bought from the Baxter estate at Nords Wharf for 50 pounds and erected on the land at Mannering Park in June 1935.

Will was a very good gardener and this provided most of the food the family needed other than the fish caught in the Lake. One paddock was full with every kind of fruit trees and a large grape trellis.

Another paddock was always used for vegetables. Water was drawn from the well to keep the vegetables growing. Manure was collected from all around for the garden. Apart from cats and dogs, chickens, ducks and cows were also kept to provide food for the family. The car he had bought at Moss Vale had by this time been cut down into a utility and continued to serve well until about 1940.

Edna May Wynn was born at Wyong on 1 May 1938. The children were transported to primary school by boat from Mannering Park to Morisset Hospital at this time, returning in the afternoon to pick them up again. He continued to play cricket of one sort or another until he was 59 years old.

Up until the later 40's the fishing that he was doing in Lake Macquarie involved hand winching the nets into shore after they had been laid. This was a difficult and tiring job.

He operated from the Mannering Park land and is still the base for the Wynn fishing businesses today. The first streets to be cleared and formed were done in 1946. Up until then only the main road to the area had been graded three times per year. 1946 also saw the formation of the Progress Assoc, which was then known as East Wye. In January 1947 the Post Office was established with John W Wynn as the Postmaster. His daughter Esther ran the day to day activities. The telephone was first connected to the area in January 1948.

There were no licensed hotels or places to drink in the area and the nearest ones were at Catherine Hill Bay, Wyong or Morisset. It was while on a trip to the hotel at Morisset on 19/12/1947 that John William Wynn met his death. He had travelled to Morisset Hospital wharf by boat and then to Morisset by taxi. Upon returning to the boat it is believed that he either collapsed or slipped while releasing the boat to begin the return trip. He must have hit his head and subsequently drowned. His boat was found drifting in the Lake with the oars laid and his shoes placed in the boat. His body was found late the next day not far from the Hospital Wharf. Drowning was the Coroners verdict. He was 59 years old. He is buried at Morisset Cemetery.

The children of John William Wynn and Ethel Mary Baxter continue to this day to be involved in the fishing of Lake Macquarie from the Mannering Park area.

Gladys remembers of her mother - quiet and lovely - I must be a Wynn. She always wanted to be a Nurse but never got the opportunity. Ethel was 12 when her mother died after 14 babies at age 42 in 1902. Her Gran was also young having died at age 38 in 1869 Mum just lived for us; just work and more work but never complained. She was the poorest of her family and with the largest family. Edna coming when she almost 48 was her delight.



**The children of John and Ethyl Wynn. L-R Clarence, Edna, William, Gladys, Thelma, Ailsa and Leslie – missing Esther and Vera**