

FEWSTER Family History

Where it all began... In 1898 John Fewster left the Newcastle coal mines in England to join his brother Robert in Australia. John's wife Sarah and three (3) daughters, arrived one year later in 1899. They lived in Kalgoorlie until 1902 when the family moved to Muchea.

John, Sarah and family moved to Muchea and lived in an old tin shed near a swamp on Roberts property. John Fewster purchased land about a mile inland from Robert's property along the Midland Railway line. This property was called "Greenside". Life was very tough for the Fewster Family, and the struggle to survive began, with an additional six (6) boys and two (2) girls equalling eleven (11) children in total.

Land was cleared and a few acres of vines, citrus, mixed stone fruit and fig trees were planted. Kangaroo meat, wild ducks, wild turkey, rabbits and birds were plentiful in those days and the family was self sufficient and in later days, cows were bought and milked for cream which was sent to Perth for butter making. For the family to survive John worked on the Midland Railway with a gang of four men, maintaining the line from Muchea to Gingin.

Robert Fewster (1st Generation Beekeeper - Uncle Robert) found himself in financial difficulties and acquired a job working at "Cheriton" in Gingin. Planting some 10 acres of irrigated orange trees.

"Cheriton" is now known for its two storey historical house and wine. Robert later moved on to Harvey, at the request of the State Government of the day to plant Apple trees in the region and while in Harvey he became very interested in bees. This was the beginning of very long association of the Fewster Family with the Bee Keeping industry of WA.

Uncle Robert had about 50 hives and the Fewster boys (Vince, Jim and Nelson - aged 13yrs) would help their uncle with his bees. When he died in 1919 he left his bees to his eldest nephew Vince.

The Fewster Boys were all good market gardeners and worked on the land by growing fresh vegetables for the Perth markets and in later years as they acquired land went into wheat farming, citrus, sheep and beef and Apiculture.

Bee keeping, till this day continues to dominate through the generations of Fewster Families.

Nelson Fewster (2nd Generation) left school at 13 in 1922 to work on the bees. He was a beekeeper for 67 years of his life (b: 9.3.1908 - d: 26.10.1999). Nelson married Olive McGlew (one of 9 children) on 22 September 1934 and moved to GINGIN with 2/6 (two shillings and six pence) in their pocket. Olive generously gave the 2/6 to the church collection on Sunday. They had 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls.

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The original business name was NH Fewster & Sons which commenced in 1966 with all the boys, Colin David & John, as part of the business. John left school at the age of thirteen to work in the business. John and his wife Kerry, over time, bought out Colin and David and renamed the business Kuyan Apiaries in 1994 to become the largest apiary in Western Australia. The name “Kuyan” derives from the aboriginal name for “Honey Bee”. It was felt at the time, when John and Kerry took on the beekeeping business, that it was a way to acknowledge and appreciate the original landholders care of our beautiful natural resources. The two boys, Stephen and Paul are the 4th Generation Beekeepers. The two daughters have been involved in the business from time to time.

West Coast Honey, *Heaven from a Hive*, opened its doors in 2003 and welcomes tourists, locally, intrastate, interstate and from overseas to experience the honey tasting and viewing the process of extraction.

Nelson Fewster kept diaries from 1936 to 1999, where he recorded the location and production of his bee hives and recorded weather conditions and rain measurements. Rainfall records show that the Gingin area would record an annual rainfall about 40 inches every 10 years, but that hasn't happened for 40 years. In 1994 diary entries were a little infrequent for a time, after losing his wife, after 60 years of marriage. Nelson's diary entries were used recently to provide useful data for the Department of Agriculture on matters such as bush regeneration after fires and for a submission for the Regional Forest Agreement.

In the early days a good day's work would have been a dozen or so 60-pound tins. During the war Nelson was “manpowered” because the defence forces needed beeswax in big quantities for ordnance shells. Every shell was coated with wax to minimise wear on the inside of the barrel. In 1975 the business experienced its highest honey producing year with 16 (sixteen) 44 gallon drums of honey extracted.

Hives have been taken to many forest reserves throughout the state, depending on the seasons. From as far north as Jurien Bay, east to Coolgardie and as far south as Pemberton for the “Karri” flow.