

FROM ARDROSSAN



— The True Story of —
Alex & Annie Shearer

THE FAMILY HISTORY STUDIO

From Ardrossan

*The True Story of Alex &
Annie Shearer*

A true story. Every important thing in this book really happened, and comes from real records and from Alex and Annie's youngest daughter, Lex, who told her memories in 2004. A few small moments (like exactly what Alex was thinking) are gentle storytelling, never invented facts.

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1 • A Town by the Sea

On the west coast of Scotland stood a busy harbour town called Ardrossan, where the cold grey water of the Firth of Clyde was never far away. Ships were built and mended along its docks, cranes swung over the wharves, and the ring of hammers carried up the streets before sunrise.

Here, on a December day in 1887, a boy named Alexander Shearer was born, in a house on Harbour Place close to the slipways. From his earliest days he loved to sit on his step and watch the boats work in and out, and the sea shining beyond the breakwater.

ARDROSSAN, SCOTLAND – 1887

A town built on
ships and salt water.



ONE DAY
I'LL SAIL OUT
THERE.

SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIRS
KEPT THE TOWN BUSY.
EVERY SOUND HAD A PURPOSE.



THE FIRTH OF CLYDE –
A GATEWAY TO THE WIDER
WORLD.

2 • Two Streets, Two Families

Alex lived on Harbour Place among the shipyard families, and his father worked as a ship's carpenter, shaping timber just as his own father had before him. It was a trade Alex would one day carry to the far side of the world.

One street uphill lived a girl named Annie Tyre, whose parents kept a well-stocked draper's shop full of buttons, cloth and ribbon. The Shearers worked with their hands and the Tyres were a little better off - but in a town that small, the two families had known one another for years, their back gardens almost touching.

THE **SHEARERS**
BUILT SHIPS.

THE **TYRES**
KEPT A SHOP.

SHEARER & SONS
SHIP CARPENTERS
HARBOUR PLACE

ANNIE TYRE—
A DRAPER'S
DAUGHTER.

SHE'S ALWAYS
AT THAT WINDOW...



3 • His Father's Tools

While Alex was still a schoolboy his father died, and it was a hard and sorrowful time. His mother kept the family respectable and fed by running the local Post Office on Glasgow Street.

Alex took up his father's tools and taught himself the carpenter's trade, until before long he could build almost anything out of wood. He carried something else, too - a deep, fine singing voice that turned heads whenever he sang with the town's musical society.



HIS FATHER GONE,
ALEX TOOK UP
THE TOOLS.

HIS MOTHER RAN
THE POST OFFICE.

I'LL MAKE
MY OWN WAY
NOW.

WOOD CAN TAKE
ANY SHAPE YOU
GIVE IT...

...AND SO CAN
A LIFE.

4 • Off to Sea

Restless and eager to see the world, Alex went to sea as a sailor aboard a tall ship of the Loch Line. She had soaring masts and wide white sails, and she carried wool and wheat between Scotland and the far side of the world.

He began as an ordinary seaman, hauling ropes and standing his watch through long, hard days. The voyage would take him right around the globe, all the way to faraway Australia.



HE SIGNED ON
WITH THE
LOCH LINE.



AN ORDINARY
SEAMAN, BOUND
FOR AUSTRALIA.

THE WHOLE WORLD,
JUST OVER THAT
HORIZON.

LOCH LINE

→ GLASGOW ←

— EST. 1871 —



5 • The Great Storm

In 1910, off the coast of New South Wales, a fierce gale caught his ship, the Loch Katrine. The wind howled and the waves rose up like hills, and with a sickening crack her tall masts broke and crashed down to the deck.

For days and nights the crew fought to keep her afloat, swinging axes to cut away the wreckage while the sea heaved beneath them. Alex was just twenty-two years old - and through it all, he held on.



The LOCH KATRINE, 1910.

(shout)
Hold on –
here it comes!

The Southern Ocean
can turn in minutes.
⚓ These ships were strong –
but the storms were stronger.



For days they fought
just to stay afloat.

6 • Safe in a New Land

A small boat was rowed many miles to find help, and at last a tug came and towed the broken ship into Sydney Harbour. And so Alex's very first sight of Australia was from the deck of a battered vessel being dragged to safety.

He had never meant to stay. But the warm, dry, sunlit country won him over completely, and he thought to himself that he liked it here.

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, stands on the wooden railing of a ship, looking out at the water. In the background, a large, rusted, and damaged ship is being towed by a smaller tugboat. The Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney city skyline are visible in the distance under a bright, cloudy sky. The water is blue with whitecaps.

TOWED AT LAST
INTO SYDNEY HARBOUR.

HIS FIRST SIGHT
OF AUSTRALIA:
FROM A BROKEN SHIP.

I LIKE
IT HERE.

A NEW LAND.
SUNLIT, WARM,
AND FULL OF
POSSIBILITY.

7 • The Wide Flat Plains

Alex travelled inland to the wide wheat-and-wool plains of the Castlereagh River, where he worked as a carpenter - building sheds, fences and houses under an enormous sky. The sun was hot and the country huge.

And he never stopped singing. In 1912 he won a gold medal for the best bass solo at the Coonamble competition, and the news travelled all the way back to his old Scottish newspaper. He was a young man getting on in the world.



The Castlereagh plains - wheat and wool.



COONAMBLE, 1912: gold for best bass solo.



The news reached his old Scottish paper.



(thought)
Getting on in the world.



8 • Sailing Back for Annie

But Alex had never forgotten Annie Tyre, the draper's daughter from home. In 1913 he did a remarkable thing for a working man: he sailed all the way back to Scotland - six long weeks at sea - for one purpose only.

“Annie, will you marry me?” he asked. She smiled and said yes. Then he sailed back to Australia to work and wait, while she made ready to follow him across the world.

1913:
SIX WEEKS BACK
TO SCOTLAND.

ANNIE,
WILL YOU
MARRY ME?

ALL THIS WAY
FOR ONE
QUESTION.

SIX LONG WEEKS
ACROSS THE OCEAN--
1,200 MILES OF SEA
AND HOPE.

FROM FREMANTLE
TO FIFE--
NOT FOR WORK,
BUT FOR **LOVE**.



9 • The Ship Comes In

Annie packed her things and sailed across the whole world to be with him. Alex waited at the busy Sydney wharf and watched her great steamship come in, and the moment she stepped down the gangway he knew her at once.

Just two days later, in July 1914, they were married in a church at Neutral Bay above the harbour. And only five days after that, far away in Europe, the First World War began.

A large illustration of a woman, Annie, in a blue dress and a wide-brimmed hat with white feathers, walking down a ship's stairs. She is carrying a brown suitcase. A man, Jack, in a brown suit and tie, is looking up at her. In the background, a large ship with two orange funnels is docked at a pier. A sign on the pier reads "SYDNEY HARBOUR JULY 1914".

ANNIE CROSSED
THE WORLD
TO HIM.

MARRIED AT
NEUTRAL BAY,
JULY 1914.

FIVE DAYS LATER:
THE GREAT
WAR BEGAN.

ALL THIS WAY...
AND AT LAST—
SHE'S HERE.



10 • A Home Named Ardrossan

Alex and Annie took up a farm near the town of Mendooran, and there Alex built, planed and lettered a wooden sign with his father's old tools. On it he painted a single word: Ardrossan - the name of the cold grey town on the other side of the world where it had all begun.

He had carried his home across the ocean and planted it in a sunny paddock. Before long their first daughter, Margaret - little Maggie - was born.

A farm near
Mendooran.



ARDROSSAN

One word
on the gate:
ARDROSSAN.

Before long,
little *Maggie*
came into
their world.

He carried his
home across
the world.



11 • Happy and Busy Years

Life on the farm was happy and busy. Alex built houses all over the district, turned out for the local cricket team, and sang for his neighbours at every concert and gathering.

Another daughter, Catherine, was born, and a third was on the way. The whole district knew and loved the cheerful, hard-working Shearer family, and it seemed there was a long, full life ahead of them.

HOUSES, CRICKET,
AND SINGING.



ANOTHER DAUGHTER:
CATHERINE.

A LONG,
FULL LIFE
AHEAD.

12 · Goodbye to Alex

Then, in December 1921, Alex caught pneumonia, and in those days there was no medicine that could cure it. His chest grew worse and worse, and sadly he died while still a young man of just thirty-three.

The whole district came to say goodbye, for everyone had known and loved him. Just sixteen days later his youngest daughter, Alexandra - always called Lex - was born, and never met her father.

DECEMBER 1921.
HE WAS JUST
THIRTY-THREE.

A good man,
hardworking
and generous.
He left a mark
on many hearts.

THE WHOLE
DISTRICT CAME
TO SAY GOODBYE.



A REMOTE PLACE,
BUT KINDNESS
TRAVELS FAR.

SIXTEEN DAYS LATER,
BABY LEX
WAS BORN.



ALEX.
LOVED HUSBAND.
DEVOTED FATHER.
RESPECTED BY ALL.



SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW
HER FATHER'S VOICE,
BUT SHE WOULD CARRY
HIS NAME, AND HIS STORY.

13 · Brave Annie

Annie was very brave. Left with three little girls to raise on her own, she even took them back to Scotland once to see whether it might be home again - and found that Australia was home now.

So she returned, opened a little shop in Mendooran, brought fresh fruit and vegetables up from the city, and sewed clothes to earn money. Through every hard time, Annie kept walking forward.



THREE GIRLS
TO RAISE
ALONE.



A SHOP IN
MENDOORAN;
SEWING BY
NIGHT.

KEEP
WALKING
FORWARD.

A. McRAE
FRUIT &
VEGETABLES
MENDOORAN

FRESH
FROM THE
CITY

FRESH
FRUIT
&
VEG
DELIVERED
WEEKLY



14 · A Piece of Scotland

In time Annie married again - a kind farmer and returned soldier named George Colley - and together they grew apples and oranges on an orchard near Sydney. She raised her daughters with patience and care, and lived a long, full life, all the way to the age of eighty-nine.

And on the plains near Mendooran, the little farm still keeps its special name to this day: Ardrossan - a piece of Scotland under the wide blue Australian sky.



ARDROSSAN



ANNIE REMARRIED;
SHE LIVED TO
EIGHTY-NINE.



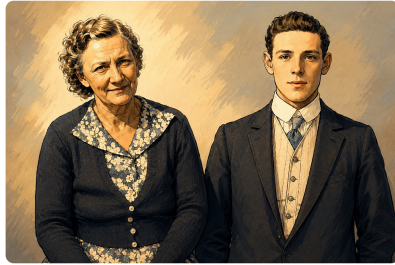
THE FARM STILL
BEARS THE NAME
TODAY.



ARDROSSAN -
A PIECE OF SCOTLAND
UNDER A WIDE SKY.



The End. *Alexander Shearer was born in Ardrossan, Scotland, in 1887 and died in Mendooran, New South Wales, in 1921. Annie Barclay Tyre was born in Ardrossan in 1889 and lived until 1979. They married in Sydney in 1914. Their three daughters were Margaret, Catherine and Alexandra ("Lex"). This story was made for their family by The Family History Studio.*



*From a grey Scottish harbour to
a sunny Australian farm: the
true story of Alexander Shearer,
who survived a shipwreck, won
a singing medal and sailed the
world for love - and of Annie,
who carried their family through
every storm, and the name they
planted halfway across the
earth.*

THE FAMILY HISTORY STUDIO