



Hi Folks,

Although a small in size, Ebenezer is moving forward as a congregation, revitalising what we have done in the past and also seeking fresh expressions that invite us to move outside the current forms of church as a missional community.

In August this year church elder Jennifer Turnbull led the response to a call from the Baradine CWA – more food was needed for the Baradine Drought Aid Pantry. Donated food from church members and Hawkesbury residents was delivered by the end of the month.

Church members Rebecca Andrews and Christine Offord organised a Massive Market Day at Pitt Town and Rebecca a Twilight of Jazz evening at Ebenezer. The events made

\$10,000 for clean water wells for West Papua. That's four more villages to have clean water for the next 30 years.

The most frequently spoken word at Ebenezer Church is 'peaceful'. Visitors are drawn by the simple beauty of the landscape and stillness, a place to which they can withdraw from their everyday lives and take time to contemplate, reflect and pray. How good it is that our volunteers keep the church open daily for such people! And of course there is the bonus of old-fashioned hospitality and a devonshire tea of homemade scones, jam and cream.

I hope you find this newsletter of interest. *Ted Brill*

Schoolmaster's House Roof

Good news! We reached our goal of \$40,000 and the slate roof has been completed.



An \$18,000 state government grant, a John Sanday bequest of \$5000 plus \$17,000 in donations from church members, from pioneer family descendants and from the visiting public helped us realise our total of \$40,000.

Our efforts to maintain Ebenezer Church property in a high standard of restoration has been greatly supported by casual visitors for devonshire teas, "Keep the change for the roof" donations amounting to \$5000 over 18 months. The work was completed in October. We thank everyone who was able to support this project.

Designed by Andrew Johnston, we believe that the Schoolmaster's House could have been built as early as 1817. It was occupied by teachers and their families, the last teacher being Walter King. Mr King saw the closure of the church school in 1886 and moved with the students to a new public school not more than a kilometre from the church. At the same time he had his own stone house built on Sackville Road.



When the old corrugated iron roof was removed large stones were revealed in the roof. Apparently this was a common practice with early buildings to deter rodents.



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This newsletter is sent to 210 postal and 402 email addresses across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Should you receive the newsletter by post but now have access to email, please let us know.

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From Hutchinson, Iron in our Blood: A History of the Presbyterian Church in NSW, 1788-2001 In this book Mark Hutchinson presents some interesting insights into the church pioneers and early settlement.

'With the arrival of the *Coromandel* settlers, Presbyterianism began to play an important role in colonial community formation. The core of the Hawkesbury group were Church of Scotland members, ... In 1801, seven couples and two single men made a contract to emigrate to Australia, under a standing Government offer. In all, there were 37 who set out for Australia in 1802....

'Under this contract, the Government would support their fares and board, supply them 100 acres of agricultural land, tools, clothes and food from the public store for twelve months. Their leaders were suitably balanced between the spiritual (James Mein) and temporal (George Hall). Mein was set aside as a catechist, and authorised to baptise, bury and marry members of the group as required. In later years, many would eulogise him as a great man of faith, an assessment usually based on John Dunmore Lang's description of the then venerable Mein when he visited Portland Head in 1823. It seems to have been the pragmatic Hall, however, who introduced the idea of emigration, and to whom the authorities resorted when trouble arose during their journey...

'They were a good match - Mein was to keep services going, with outside help, at the little settlement for some seven years, after which more regular assistance was obtained. Hall, on the other hand, not only arranged the contractual end of the trip, but demonstrates the curious mixture of Christian sensitivity and Northumbrian bluntness which is the best fruit of a Calvinist outlook on life: tough, enduring, energetic, effective...

'The *Coromandel* had left Deptford on 12 February 1802 - it was a rough journey, with two of the party dying on the way out (young Alexander, and James Mein's brother, Andrew), theft among the passengers and depredations from among the soldiers and convicts, threatened mutiny from convicts; and several wild storms in which it appeared the ship would founder...

'The group arrived on 13 July 1802 and was given temporary allotments in Toongabbie. A week after their arrival they gathered together under the ministry of Rowland Hassall, a former missionary of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and now a businessman with interests ranging around Parramatta. Hassall would provide regular ministry to the group after they moved

'Among these latter were a number of Congregationalists who had belonged to Alex Waugh's congregation in London. This was important, because what was planted at Portland Head among the little community could not be, because of the constituency of the area, a 'Presbyterian' church. Both of the ministers sharing the ministry with Mein, Rowland Hassall

and John Youl were Independents (ie. Congregationalist). It is clear from Hassall's correspondence, and the petition for to Portland Head, from 1808 covering the area in cooperation with another former LMS missionary, John Youl (1773-1827), at least once a month...

'Their allotments of 100 acres per family on the Hawkesbury came through in April 1803 after Hall had surveyed land in an area 'possessing a particular attraction for the better class of settlers, such as retired military men and free immigrants.' To a less hopeful eye, it was also primeval bush, the scene of sharp conflict with the indigenous peoples, and attended by the normal hazards of fire, bushrangers, snakes, insect plagues and flood. Nevertheless, they called it 'Ebenezer', for heretofore the Lord had been good to them.

'Thus they joined the more than 800 settlers settled along the Hawkesbury River, with the Windsor area its economic hub, and the Scot, Andrew Thompson, its leading merchant. The forces which had driven the Coromandelers from their homes on the Border had also ensured that Andrew Thompson got to the Hawkesbury before them. Thompson's father had been a weaver, a trade which came increasingly under pressure from industrialisation in Scotland, and drove the Thompson family into poverty. Transported for stealing £10 worth of cloth, by 1803 Thompson's conduct was such that he had been pardoned, made chief constable of Windsor, and was well on his way to building a fortune that saw him, in 1810, leave an estate worth some £20,000. He was a vital figure in trading with all the Coromandelers (John Howe was one of the executors of Thompson's estate and a key figure in his business), and though his name does not appear as an important one in the life of the church itself, his Scots background made him an obvious patron and partner...

'A number of others received allotments in the same area as the Coromandelers around the same time, including Owen Cavanaugh, who had arrived in Australia as a seaman on the *Sirius*. Thomas Arndell, assistant surgeon on the *Friendship*, who (after a stint as the colony's leading medical officer) branched out into farming and business; the emancipated convicts-turned-farmers, Paul Bushell, John Suddis and William Jacklin; and the merchant sailor/explorer, John Grono. In later years, the stonemason, Lewis Jones, received two grants of land (1809, 1810) in the area, and took part in the community life which developed there...

'Among these latter were a number of Congregationalists who had belonged to Alex Waugh's congregation in London. This was important, because what was planted at Portland Head among the little community could not be, because of the constituency of the area, a 'Presbyterian' church. Both of the ministers sharing the ministry with Mein, Rowland Hassall and John Youl were Independents (ie. Congregationalist). It is clear from Hassall's correspondence, and the petition for a minister which the church sent back to England in 1817, that there was at least some support for calling someone 'to be set apart and sent

their long neglected little Chaple (sic) on Ebenezer Mount, out to carry on the ordinances and services of the Lord in after the Independent plan ...

'While Russell is not incorrect in calling the group 'ecumenical', Piggis is closer to the mark in calling this the period of 'Common Christianity', in which necessity became the mother of invention (not to mention cooperation) between the various Protestant groups in the bush. It was a pattern which would always mark the edges of settlement in NSW, even when that settlement was in regional twentieth century city suburbs. They should, by rights, have become Congregationalists as this 'Common Christianity' broke down with the increasing number of denominational ministers in the colony. How it became a Presbyterian church instead is testimony to the power of religious community life. To understand this it is important to note who the Coromandelers were.

'The core of the group that gathered at Portland Head, the Coromandelers, have been called variously 'Scots Presbyterians', 'English Presbyterians', and 'Scots Borderers'. The latter is probably the closest description, though the question as to how John Howe (a Lincolnshire

man) or George Hall (from Northumberland) would have reacted to the title 'Scots' must remain unanswered. The Border area had long been an area apart, a sphere of complicated politics and cross-border reeving which had bred a hardy people, Scots and English by citizenship but their 'ain folk' by attachment. They were mobile, adaptable and tough...

'In terms of their skills alone, they were a boon to a colony which had been surviving on the bush architecture of former convicts many of whom were urban types, unsuited for agricultural work. Mein had *some* farming background, Hall quite a lot, and while John Howe was working as a grocer and shopkeeper in London, and aimed to teach in the new colony, his self-identified expertise was in husbandry. Most of them had more than one skill - Hall's carpentry was a mainstay for the group, for instance, Stubbs was a tailor, Johnston an 'architect-carpenter'. Howe gained some renown for two exploration trips which opened up the Hunter region for the expansion of farming activities by descendants of the Coromandelers. In short, they were self-reliant survivors of the Agricultural Revolution...



The Corn Stack

This building was in church grounds until it fell down in the late 1970's. Historian R.M. Arndell recorded the pioneer practice of sowing corn: 'After preparing the ground by several times ploughing and harrowing during the winter months, the farmer then drilled it by ploughing a single furrow at intervals of three or four feet lengthways across the field. No farmer worth his salt would allow even a kink to remain in that furrow, so that each green ribbon of young maize was as straight as a die. As the farmer drilled each furrow, the young members of his family followed with a bag slung from the neck which contained the carefully topped and tailed seed maize. Topping and tailing was the shelling and discarding of the small grains at the top and base of each cob. The youngsters walked the furrow dropping one or five seeds at

every second step, which were then covered by the older members of the family with hoes. If the seed in falling from the dropper's hand, struck a clod and scattered, it must be gathered together in one.'

An interesting return

NSW Australia Returns of the Colony 1849 - Denominational Schools Presbyterian District of Sydney

Under the Windsor District it shows Windsor, Portland Head, Wilberforce and Pitt Town schools, noting teachers' names, salary and student numbers. It shows that in 1849 the teacher at Ebenezer Church (Portland Head) was John Anderson and his annual salary was £30. There were 19 boys and 17 girls in the church school. That's 36 students in all ... quite a crowded classroom in an area half the size of the church. However, considering the need for children to assist with farming pursuits it is unlikely that all children would be at school on the one day.

| Name of the Parish, and in what County or District. | Public or Free School, and where situated. | Name of the Schoolmaster or School-mistress, and Salary. | Number of Scholars. | | | Mode of Instruction. | |
|---|--|--|---------------------|---------|--------|----------------------|--|
| | | | Male. | Female. | Total. | | |
| D. of Windsor | Windsor | George Walker | 35 | 30 | 15 | 45 | |
| | Portland Head | John Anderson | 30 | 19 | 17 | 36 | |
| | Wilberforce | Matthew L. & W. Sedgwick | 30 | 17 | 18 | 35 | |
| | Pitt Town | Peter. & N. Middleton | 25 | 24 | 14 | 38 | |



No respect for heritage!

You would be aware from earlier newsletters that the historic tree at Ebenezer Church – the one under which the first service was held in 1803 – was severely damaged in storms in 1978 and in 2005.

We did not expect it to survive the second storm but it developed a new crown and is currently in good health, that is, until the recent discovery of the presence of white ants!

Six bait stations have now been installed at the foot of the tree. Over time white ants will be taking back the bait to their colony and slowly the colony will be wiped out. The process, with three-monthly renewals of bait, will take up to 12 months.

Annual Pilgrimage

Past and present Ebenezer Church ministers at the 210th celebration included Rev. Grant Bilbey, Rev. Helenna Anderson, Rev. Alan Russell, Rev. Rodel Palma and Rev. Sharon Cutts.



Also present was the Sargent Family, descendants of church pioneers John & Ann Turnbull

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