



Ebenezer Church
Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Churches

Newsletter

No.3

September 2007

Ebenezer Church (1809) – first Presbyterian Church – oldest existing church - in Australia

Thank you!

It is pleasing to see the response to our church newsletters. Addresses currently amount to 367 postal and 180 email and many recipients are forwarding the newsletter to family members and family associations.

Interest in the approaching church bicentenary and support for our efforts to have church buildings and grounds fully restored by 2009 are being shown in several ways.

There have been donations towards the restoration appeal and newsletter costs. Geoff, a Turnbull descendant in Victoria, is setting up an Ebenezer Church website and will host it for two years at no cost to the church. Ray, a Johnston descendant who lives an hour's drive away, is assisting with working bees on church grounds. There have also been offers to update our records of weddings, baptisms and burials and to assist with archival material.

Family re-unions have been revived. The Grono family met in May 2007 and plan to meet again in May 2009. A Johnston family re-union will be held in September 2008. The Stubbs have met annually for many years, their next re-union being on 27 October 2007.

Also, the book 'A Colonial Churchyard' has sold well and comments have been positive.

Thank you, everyone, for your support – it is most encouraging.

Ted Brill

For Ebenezer Pitt Town Congregation

A Message from the Minister

In an earlier edition of the church booklet on the history of Ebenezer Church, Rev. George Reid wrote about the character of the church pioneers.

He found them to be 'no mere adventurers... they were honest, virile, brave, God-fearing folk, small farmers, sailors, artisans or shopkeepers, mostly comparatively poor, none of them reared in the lap of luxury or idleness. They were frugal, hard-working,

They brought with them their religious principles, their desire for education and their love of good government. Several of them were afterwards entrusted with public duties of considerable responsibility.'

The fact that Ebenezer Church has functioned continuously for such a long period of time and that so many pioneer descendants have excelled in their private and public lives is evidence that these fine qualities of the pioneers have been passed on to church members and descendants.

T.S. Elliott once said, 'The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness, but also of its presence.' As we move towards the bicentenary of Ebenezer Church we are reminded then of the impact that the church pioneers had on the development of the Hawkesbury district and the infant colony of New South Wales, an impact which serves as an inspiration to all people today.

Rev. Grant Bilbey

EBENEZER CHURCH HERITAGE DAY

On the second Sunday in May 2008 – that's 11 May - we will be holding a day when you can learn more about the historic Ebenezer Church site. Throughout the day there will be opportunities to listen to talks on the history of the church.

For the energetic there will follow walk-and-talks through the colonial graveyard and ...for the more energetic ... to the quarry from which the stone was cut to build the church and to the beach into which the pioneers pulled their rowing boats when coming to church.....and if you still wish to walk further the Hawkesbury Council has recently renovated a walk along the riverbank to a lookout from which you can look along two reaches of the Hawkesbury River.

The church barbecue will be fired up and the usual devonshire teas will be in full swing. Starts at 10.30am. Our Sunday morning church service commences at 8.30am should you wish to come earlier and be part of our congregation.



Ebenezer Church
Australia's oldest

Bicentenary of Ebenezer Church

The date chosen for the major day of celebration of the bicentenary of Ebenezer Church is

Saturday 20 June 2009

Other events may be held leading up to 20 June 2009. Our Church Council is seeking assistance in planning and staging this historic event. A bicentenary committee is being formed. Ideas for displays, re-enactments, activities ... names of people/associations that you feel would make a contribution... are welcome.

Ebenezer Church 'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal

Progress of our church appeal to fund full restoration of all church buildings by 2009 has slowed considerably but is still growing.

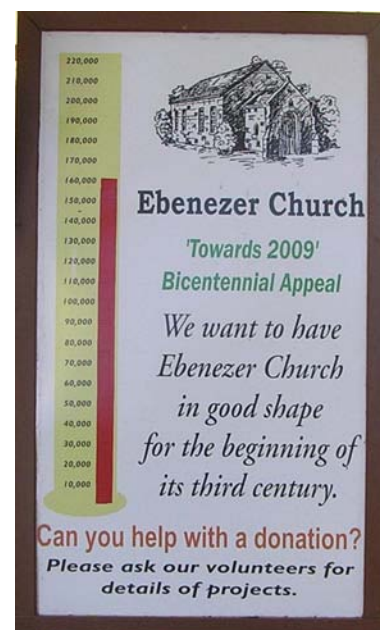
When the appeal was launched in June 2005 it was envisaged that \$220,000 was needed. The appeal has now reached \$161,000. Donations have come from several directions...from descendants of church pioneers and past ministers, past members, a government grant, fund raising by the current congregation and visitors to Ebenezer Church. We are grateful to the Ebenezer Craft Group who have now raised over \$2000.

Still some way to reach our goal but with continuing support it appears achievable.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has made a donation.

Donations for the 'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal may be ...

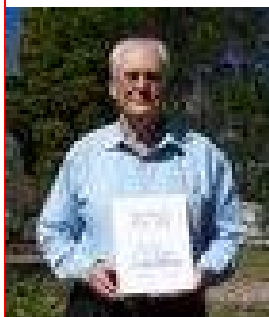
- Handed to our volunteers in the Ebenezer Church Shop
 - Posted to: Debbie Logue, Treasurer, EPT Uniting Church,
 - 78 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW, 2756.
- (Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Pitt Town UCA)
- Enclosed with book orders.



Grono Family Association Reunion

On Sunday 6th May 2007 the Grono Family Association held a Reunion at Ebenezer Uniting Church.

Attendance was high with all but one branch of the Grono Family represented. One hundred and fifty people gathered to celebrate the 208th anniversary of the arrival of John and Elizabeth Grono and family to Australia on the *HMS Buffalo* and the 200th anniversary of the arrival of David Hartley to Australia on the *Duke of Portland* in 1807.



The day commenced with registration at 10.00am, followed by the Official Welcome and Book Launch of 'John Grono 1767 – 1847: Our Old Colonial Neptune', written by Robert Taylor (Photo left) and edited by Karen Mills. The Grono Family Association presented Robert Taylor with an Honorary Life Membership recognising Robert's research on John Grono and his efforts in establishing the Grono Family Association. At 2.00pm Reverend Grant Bilby, Minister of Ebenezer & Pitt Town Uniting Churches, conducted a

Blessing Service.

Through out the day maps were available for self-guided tours of Ebenezer Church and grounds, and a display of Grono Family information was set out in the hall. We were blessed with a clear, sunny day giving the descendents of this large family a wonderful opportunity to catch up with each other. The Grono Family Association plans another Reunion to be held on the first Sunday in May in 2009.

Mandy Waller
Secretary

Looking for all descendants of Andrew Johnston...

In the lead up to the bicentenary of Ebenezer Church I am checking. Verifying and updating the records of the Johnston Family Tree. If you are a descendant or think that you might be, would you please contact me so that I can check yours and your family's details. My name is Robyn Sanday (nee Johnston). You can contact me as follows:

02 4392 8264

rsanday@exemail.com.au

3 Dorriga Street,
Woongarra, NSW, 2259.



The three buildings of the historic precinct of Ebenezer Church



**Ebenezer Church
1809**



**Schoolmaster's House
1817**



**The Vestry
1965**

Stage 2 of Renovations

The second stage of our renovation program has commenced with the installation of new guttering and downpipes on all three buildings. The next focus will be the roofs of both the vestry and church. Also, the area around the Bread Oven has been cleared, levelled and made ready for paving and the erection of a protective fence and information board.

The Bread Oven

Just below the Schoolmaster's House are the remains of the bread oven. For many years the bread oven has been remembered as shown in the photograph on the right. It was basically a rectangular, sandstone structure with a single chamber on the side facing the river.

In the early years of the history of the church school several pupils actually resided at the school in the care of the teacher and his wife. They did this because of the distance they had to travel to school and because of their fear of the Aboriginal people. There was always the possibility too that, in skirting around the farms in their shortcuts to the school, they might cross the path of a cranky boar and be attacked. It is believed that bread was baked in this oven for the pupils of the church school.



The Bread Oven

However, the oven may have been formerly of a different structure. The photograph below suggests that it was originally the chimney of a timber slab building (centre of photograph). This building, one of several hardwood slab buildings on the church grounds at that time, may have been used for worship prior to 1809 or perhaps as an early residence for the teacher prior to the building of the Schoolmaster's House in c.1817. The building also may have been used as a kitchen by the occupants of the Schoolmaster's House in later times.



It appears that the sandstone chimney of the slab building in the centre of the above photograph later became the bread oven. The Schoolmaster's House is to the right and the church far right.

STUBBS FAMILY REUNION

Descendants of William & Sarah Stubbs are invited to attend a Family Reunion

WHEN: **Saturday 27 October 2007**

WHERE: Ebenezer Church, Coromandel Rd, Ebenezer, NSW.

TIME: From 9.30a.m.

BYO picnic lunch, folding chairs, etc...

Please direct inquiries to:

Coralie Hird
(02) 9401 0402

cdhird@optusnet.com.au

Lillyan MacDonald.
42/95 Stanhope Road,
Killara NSW 2071.

JOHNSTON FAMILY REUNION

Saturday 13 September 2008

Please direct inquiries to:

Valmai Tuckerman
244 Sackville Road
Wilberforce, 2756.
02 4575 1403

Robyn Sanday,
3 Dorriga Street,
Woongarra, 2259.
02 4392 8264

rsanday@exemail.com.au

GRONO FAMILY REUNION

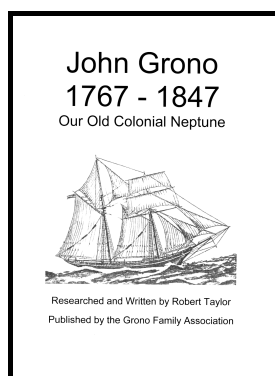
Sunday 3 May 2009

Please direct inquiries to:

Mandy Waller,
1 Johnston Street,
Pitt Town, NSW, 2756.

gronofamily@gmail.com

GRONO FAMILY PUBLICATION



Released in May 2007, this book is researched and written by Robert Taylor.

For copies, please direct enquiries to:

Email: gronofamily@gmail.com

Postal Address: Mandy Waller,
1 Johnston Street,
Pitt Town, NSW, 2756.

A Colonial Churchyard

*Ebenezer Church, Ebenezer,
New South Wales*



Compiled by
Ebenezer Church Cemetery Trust

A Colonial Churchyard

**Ebenezer Church,
Ebenezer,
New South Wales**

Compiled by Ebenezer
Church Cemetery Trust

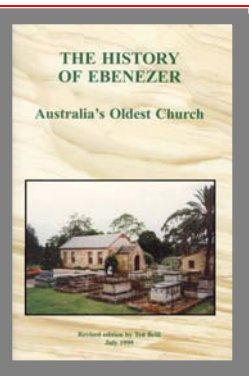
This book contains all inscriptions on memorials in the Ebenezer Church Cemetery plus historical information. Available from the church shop.

Cost: Book - \$33 per copy CD - \$20 per copy
Book + postage - \$38 CD + postage - \$25
(Prices include GST)

Orders may be placed with:

Ted Brill, 59 Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, NSW, 2756.

Payment is required with each order. Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Church Shop.



THE HISTORY OF EBENEZER

Australia's Oldest Church

This 1999 edition of the church booklet includes information on the fifteen church pioneer families and the building of the church and school.

It provides an answer to the frequently asked question...

'How did Ebenezer Church become Australia's oldest church?'

Cost: \$4.40 per copy or \$6.00 posted

Orders: As per 'A Colonial Churchyard' above.

Bicentenary - This Newsletter

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59 Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, 2756
02 4579 9235
tedbrill@bigpond.com

Church Contacts

Minister
Rev Grant Bilbey 02 4572 3153
Uniting Church,
Bathurst Street, Pitt Town, NSW, 2756
ebenpittuca@optusnet.com.au

Ebenezer Church Shop

Bookings & Inquiries: 02 4579 9350
Church Treasurer
Debbie Logue,
78 Coromandel Road,
Ebenezer, NSW, 2756