



Hello Everyone,

Ebenezer is a district that tangibly lacks a central focus. It doesn't have a shopping centre, a town square or a village green. But what it doesn't lack is a sense of community.

For the last two hundred years it has been a community that has faced up to its problems. Once Ebenezer's pioneers had cleared their land and built their homes, they then built a church and started a school for their children. And this was without government assistance.

The same community spirit prevailed years later in 1952 when local residents banded together to form the Ebenezer Bush Fire Brigade. Within a few years they had bought a fire tanker and had built a fire shed. Their first brigade captain was Harold Hall, a direct descendant of church pioneers George & Mary Hall. The progress continued and in 1990, through community fund raising and support, a new double-bay fire shed was built in Kolora Road, Ebenezer. In 2001 a training room was added and officially opened. How good it was to have seven of the brigade foundation members present on that occasion!

This newsletter includes a report on a book launch, an interesting newspaper article on teacher John Anderson, a visit to Ebenezer Church by Methodist minister Rev. Samuel Leigh in 1816, an article on bush fires over the years in Ebenezer and the restoration project of pioneer Paul Bushell's grave.

We hope all is well in your patch and wish you a blessed and happy Christmas.

Ted Brill

On behalf of the Ebenezer Congregation



Stubbs Family Reunion

63 people turned up - double the number that attended last year – for the reunion of the descendants of *Ebenezer Church pioneers Sarah & William Stubbs*.

Registration was at 9.30am followed by a short service in Ebenezer Church that was led by Rev. Rodel Palma. A meeting of the Stubbs Family Association followed. Displays were available in the pavilion for people to peruse.

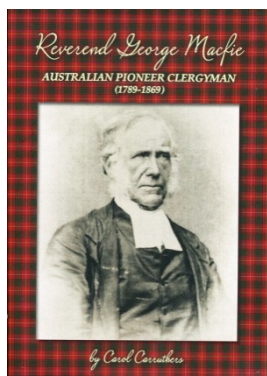
Everyone seemed to have a great time meeting relatives and catching up on Stubbs family history. The next reunion will be on Saturday 31st October 2015.

Christmas Services

Our Christmas services are being held as follows:

14 Dec	7.00pm Carols on the Riverbank	Ebenezer Church
19 Dec	6.00pm Carols on the Corner	Scots Church Pitt Town
24 Dec	7.00pm Candlelight Service	Scots Church Pitt Town
	11.00pm Vigil & Communion	Scots Church Pitt Town
25 Dec	8.30am Christmas Service	Ebenezer Church

***For those of you who are not too far away,
you're welcome to join us.***



- New release -

**Rev. George Macfie,
Australian Pioneer Clergyman (1789-1869)
by Carol Carruthers**

George Macfie was the third ordained minister of Ebenezer Church

\$25 plus \$5 posted. Order with payment to ...

Ebenezer Church Shop
PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, 2756



Written by Carol Carruthers with participation from the Macfie family, this book documents how Rev Macfie found himself in Australia, thousands of miles from his native Scotland, stories of his first church which was a travelling church on the New South Wales south coast and the years he spent at Ebenezer and Pitt Town. It was launched at a gathering of Macfie descendants and associated people at Ebenezer Church on 1st November 2014.

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----- Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Church – sharing our Christian faith and heritage -----

The Scotch Settlers, Upper Portland Head and Ebenezer

W&R Gazette, 8 February 1902

by Hon. William Walker

During the administration of Governor King, successor to Hunter (1802), as appears by Lang's History, about a dozen families of free emigrant settlers, chiefly from the Scottish border, arrived in the colony, having been induced to emigrate on receiving a free passage and the promise of a grant of 100 acres of land each; also rations for a certain period from the Government stores. The Meins, Halls, Johnstons, and Turnbells, are the descendants of these emigrants. They were mostly Presbyterians, and settled on some patches of alluvial land near Portland Head.

In 1809, they erected a small church, which they designated Ebenezer, and, without any regular minister for many years, assembled regularly for worship — one of their number, Mr. James Mein, a venerable old man, reading a sermon and presiding in the religious exercises. This was the first Presbyterian church erected in the colony, and the first of any kind built by means entirely of voluntary contributions.

Dr. Lang visited it in the year 1824, when for the first time in Australia, the Holy Communion was administered according to the Presbyterian form. The Doctor interestingly states,

'There were twenty communicants, and the very peculiar circumstances in which the Ordinance was solemnised in the little church, situated on a rising ground on the edge of the forest, and overlooking a beautiful and romantic reach of the noble river, rendered the whole scene the most interesting and affecting I had ever witnessed.'

The church has been enlarged and improved of late, and for a long time a school has been attached to it, at which a good plain English education has been imparted to many of the youths born on the river. No tourist to the Hawkesbury, if he can manage it, misses a visit to this classic spot.

Ebenezer had for one of its earliest schoolmasters a remarkable character named John Anderson. He was the 'burning and shining light' of scholarship on the Hawkesbury for many years, and some of his pupils, now filling important positions in the Civil Service of this and adjoining colonies, received the rudiments of their education at his hands.

Johnny, as he was familiarly called by his countrymen, held advanced democratic principles in his young days, and had been expatriated for being concerned in the radical rising at Bonnymuir, near Stirling (of which he was a native), in the year 1820, during the Liverpool and Castlereagh administrations in the reign of George IV. He was implicated with two others, and all three were sentenced to death for sedition. His two fellow culprits suffered the extreme penalty; but his sentence was, through the intervention of the Riddell family, commuted to banishment for life to Botany Bay. It seemed that Anderson's mother had nursed C. D. Riddell, Esq., the Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales in his infancy; hence the interest taken in him by that influential family.

Anderson had had a fair education as imparted at one of the renowned parish schools of his native country; he could write very well, and pretended to some knowledge of music. He was therefore in addition to his teaching duties, selected to act as precentor at the Ebenezer church; but the old fashioned skirls that he gave, always in a very high key, would never be tolerated in the present day; although they no doubt sounded beautifully in those early ages in the ears of the rustics of the Hawkesbury, unaccustomed as they were to the organs,

harmoniums, and choirs of later and more favoured times; and who relished his shrill notes probably as much as the Highlanders of Caledonia prefer their national bagpipes to the most melodious music of Italian masters.

In his secluded academic abode, living a frugal, honest life, and being nearly all his life a bachelor, he amassed a considerable amount of money. On the advice of his friend and patron, Rev. Dr. McGarvie, he was induced to invest it in Sydney. He avoided Hawkesbury securities for one reason, not wishing anyone to suppose him a moneyed man; and it seems he lent a well-known aristocratic club in Sydney the sum of £400. In course of time the club desired to pay off the loan, and Johnny proceeded to Sydney for the purpose of receiving the cash in person, as he would not trust anyone to act for him.

A cheque was given to him for the amount and he went to the bank for payment. The teller asked him in the usual way how he would have it, innocently supposing that he would prefer large notes. He replied, laconically, "In gold."

The coins were then to the great astonishment of Johnny weighed out to him. He could not conceive how the man could give him the exact amount without counting. So he spent considerable time at the counter in going over the several coins, and to his great amazement found they were quite correct.

Off he set to Windsor, weighed to the ground nearly with 400 sovs. in his pockets; and some time in the night he arrived at the Wilberforce Inn, where he met a highland countryman who was to escort him home after a jorum of spirits. At the hotel, before starting, they had some lively discussions, in which they took opposite views; and on the road John Hielandman thought he would pay off Anderson, for the sceptical views he had enunciated by a practical joke. When at a very lonesome part of the road between Wilberforce and Ebenezer, the Hielandman, who was driving, stopped the vehicle suddenly, and addressed him somewhat thus: Now, Anderson, you say you do not believe in God nor devil; I shall therefore kill you and take that money from you; it is no use to you.'

Anderson trembled, and with tears almost in his eyes begged of his friend to forgive him all that he had said at the inn — not to touch him or his money, and he would never more offend him! John Hielandman, who only wanted to give him a fright, then pretended to relent, forgave him as he desired, and they went on their way again rejoicing. Anderson, arriving home, deposited the 400 sovereigns under the hearth of his fireplace without delay, as there was no bank in the colony he would trust with his money; and there it remained until he found a safe investment in the purchase suburbs of Sydney.

In his advanced years he married a young girl, whom he had reared from her childhood, and died on the 10th day of July 1858, in the sixty fifth year of his age without leaving issue, having been 'Dominie' of the Ebenezer school for the long period of 34 years. A neat tombstone has been erected over his grave, far from the land of his sires, at Ebenezer.

Rev. Samuel Leigh preaching at Ebenezer Church in 1816...

Samuel Leigh (1785-1852), a Methodist missionary, arrived in Sydney in 1815 and presented his credentials next day. At first Governor Lachlan Macquarie gave Leigh scant encouragement, but the Leigh's sincerity and singlemindedness gradually won his respect and support. The Anglican chaplains helped him from the time of his arrival.

His first service was held in a cottage in the Rocks area where a Wesleyan Society had been meeting since 1812, but he soon turned his attention to the country and went to Castlereagh. He made contact with a farmer, John Lees, who was responsible for building there the first Methodist church in Australia. Leigh opened it on 7 October 1817. With other church openings, including a chapel in Windsor, Leigh established the first Methodist circuit with some fourteen preaching places which involved him in 150 miles (241 km) of travel every three weeks.

The indefatigable labours, apostolic zeal and quiet courage that characterized all his undertakings give Leigh an honoured place in the

history of Methodism. His memory is perpetuated by the Leigh Memorial Centenary Church, Parramatta, and the Leigh Theological College, Enfield.

It was in 1816, a time when the congregation at Portland Head did not have a full time minister and was not aligned to any one denomination, that Samuel Leigh was invited to preach in Ebenezer Church. It was reported ...

'When he reached the meeting house, he found several persons who had travelled 30 miles to hear the word of God. They had crossed two rivers, and travelled along roads scarcely passable.

'It was truly animating,' he observed, 'to see those distant settlers approaching this retired spot, in their one-horse carts, and arranging their vehicles around the house of prayer.' The service brought the land of their fathers and early times to their recollection; and many a tear fell that day.

Bush Fires in Ebenezer

In 1803 eight families, who had travelled together on the Coromandel to the colony to the colony of New South Wales, settled on their 100-acre grants of land on the banks of the Hawkesbury River in an area that is now known as Ebenezer but in those times as Portland Head. Other families joined them in this new community.

These immigrants had not been farmers in England but they were to become successful farmers in their new land. But on the way to this success, besides the hard work of clearing their land and building their homes, there was much to contend with. There were the poor relations between settlers and the Aborigines that were brought about by atrocities and by the more complex clash of cultures. Unfair trading practices by the military officers were to make it difficult for these pioneers to profit from their hard work. There also were floods that devastated their farms and bushrangers were active in the area.

And they had to face the threat of bushfires. There were occasions when their wheat crops, haystacks, homes and barns were completely destroyed by fire. How heart-breaking it must have been to see their hard work go up in smoke.

This engraving shows people running toward a bush fire, one man carrying fire-fighting implements of an axe and a leafy branch and another a bucket and sack.
Engraving: National Library of Victoria



A sad incident took place in 1874. It was reported in the Windsor & Richmond Gazette: 'Several reports of houses being burnt through being swept across by bush fires have reached us, the occurrence being at Wilberforce, in which case the premises destroyed were the well-known farm-house and spacious barn and yards owned and occupied by Mr. John Fleming, at Fleming's Hill, Wilberforce, some five miles from Windsor. The premises and outbuildings were razed to the ground.'



Horse and Buggy on Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, c. 1910

At this time Abraham Johnston and his wife Henrietta were driving in their buggy along Sackville Road. They had only recently travelled down from their property on the Namoi River to share Christmas with Hawkesbury relatives. 'The bush was on fire on both sides of the road and some sparks falling on Mrs. Johnston's dress, it ignited, and she became almost immediately enveloped in flames. Her injuries from burns were so severe that she soon afterwards died.'

A school began in the church in 1810 with John Youl as the teacher. It ceased to be held in the church when in 1887 a public school commenced not far from the church. Fourteen years later, 18th December 1901, Walter King the schoolmaster reported to the Department of Public Instruction ...

Dear Sir,
I am sorry to report, that Ebenezer Public School has been completely destroyed by a bush fire. It was burnt somewhere about dinner time yesterday the 17th Dec.
The day was a most trying one. A hot wind was blowing most fiercely at the time which brought the flames broadside on to the building and being built of pine ...was an easy prey for the flames. Nothing could stay the progress of the fire,... it seemed to fly over the ground where there was nothing to burn.
It was very fortunate no children were at school as I would have hard work to have kept them from running into danger ...
I have the honour to be Your obedient servant
Walter King

DEVASTATING FIRE OF 1913 - Windsor & Richmond Gazette, 1 Feb 1913

'... the bush fire which devastated the country around Sackville on Saturday last ... The people who suffered reside at Currency, Sackville, Ebenezer and Wilberforce, and the estimated total value of the property destroyed is close on £3000....The country through which the fire passed presents a desolate appearance. Happily no human lives were lost, though there were some narrow escapes ...'

THE OLD 'HAWKESBURY' BURNT W & R Gazette, 1 Dec 1916

Hawkesbury River people generally will be sorry to learn that disaster has overtaken the Hawkesbury Steam Navigation Company, by the destruction of their well-known steamer 'Hawkesbury', a favourite boat on the river.

..... The origin of the fire is a mystery. There was a stack of timber on the deck, for use in the furnaces, owing to the difficulty in obtaining coal while the strike is on, and it is surmised, that a spark may have found its way to this heap of wood. it will mean a big loss to the orchardists. The railway authorities refuse to carry empty fruit cases, but growers right along the river from Ebenezer down would have been alright but for this mishap, for the Hawkesbury could have kept them supplied with cases....'



THOUSANDS BATTLE AS NEW FIRES START W & R Gazette, Sunday 16 December 1951

'... Extensive fires were still burning fiercely last night in the Windsor district, near Wilberforce and Ebenezer.
Homes Endangered Windsor fire fighters said last night the Ebenezer fire had endangered several homes, including a farm property owned by Mr. J. T. Lang, former Premier of New South Wales. ... Reports from the scene of the fires say that stock losses, mainly poultry and a few sheep, will total thousands of pounds.'
The December 1951 bush fire was one of the worst fires in the district's history.

TIZZANA WINERY DESTROYED BY FIRE W & R Gazette, Wednesday 12 October 1955



The Tizzana Winery. It is believed that the truck with the knapsacks on the back belonged to local fruit-grower Pros Turnbull.
Image: Tizzana Winery Collection

'A spectacular fire, accompanied by fierce flames and dense clouds of smoke billowing hundreds of feet into the air, destroyed Fiaschi's picturesque old sandstone property at Tizzana on Sunday afternoon.... Huge vats of wine burst, the wine running down the water-tables inches deep.'
Thankfully Tizzana Winery was restored in the 1970's. Thankfully also in 2014 Ebenezer still has an active Rural Fire Brigade, a modern tanker and the support of other district brigades. *Ted Brill*

Ebenezer Church & Brown Bushell Grave Project

The impressive Second Fleet convict Paul Bushell had a long involvement with Ebenezer Church and is listed as one of its founding members, along with his first wife Jane Sharp. She'd formed a friendship with Charlotte Stroud when both were convicts aboard *Kitty* in 1792, and Charlotte's daughter Jane married Ebenezer Church preacher Rev John Youl in 1810. Paul's later brother-in-law John Brown and some of John's family members are buried at Ebenezer.

However Paul and Jane were long term residents of Wilberforce from around 1798. Paul remained firmly settled there after Jane's death in 1820 and his second marriage to Isabella Brown in 1822. It meant that all are buried in the Wilberforce Cemetery. Jane's grave is unmarked but Paul and Isabella were buried with Isabella's parents and six other family members under two altar monuments.

Their once-impressive gravesite had fallen into ruins by the 1990s, due to weathering, erosion and vandalism, but the difficulties and cost of restoration was beyond the family at that time. The publication of Louise Wilson's book *Paul Bushell, Second Fleeter* in 2010 saw a resurgence of interest in the task.

It has proved much easier to overcome all the obstacles since the advent of the internet. Email connections facilitated the formation of an Australia-wide committee and a Community Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/BushellBrownGraveProject> was set up. The real breakthrough came with crowd funding, which the committee is using to raise the substantial sum of money needed to restore the gravesite. Crowdfunding overcomes all the legal impediments to, and costs of,

soliciting for funds beyond one state's jurisdiction. We have also overcome the obligations of running a Trust fund by paying donations into the account of the Hawkesbury City Council, the management authority for the Wilberforce Cemetery.

Organisers are hoping for a great response because the project has broad community value. Wilberforce Cemetery is the burial site for 34 people who arrived on the First, Second and Third Fleets and its highly significant history means that the Cemetery has Heritage listing. All funds raised in excess of requirements for the *Bushell Brown Grave Project* will remain with the Council for future grave restoration projects.

The fundraising campaign is now open - see <http://www.pozible.com/project/177971>. Watch the short video - it tells the story. All help with donations and spreading the word before the campaign closes on 9 September will be much appreciated.



GRONO FAMILY REUNION

When: Sunday 3rd May 2015
Where: Ebenezer Church Grounds
95 Coromandel Rd, Ebenezer, NSW
Time: From 10:00 am
More details in the next newsletter
Mandy Waller, 1 Johnston Street, Pitt Town, NSW, 2756.
gronofamily@gmail.com

37th ANNUAL STUBBS REUNION

Saturday 31 October 2015
Ebenezer Church, 95 Coromandel Road,
Ebenezer, NSW.
Please direct inquiries to:
Coralie Hird (02) 8084 3808
cdhird@optusnet.com.au
Stubbs Family Website:
Stubbs email: stubbs1802@gmail.com

CAVANOUGH FAMILY REUNION

Saturday 17 October 2015
Ebenezer Church, 95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW.
Inquiries to Pat Holdorf, 85 James Street, Punchbowl, NSW, 2196 patholdorf@bigpond.com
Sandra & Alan Woods alan.woods1@bigpond.com
More details in the next newsletter

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