



Hello Everyone,

In July 2015 the Uniting Church Hawkesbury Zone came into being. Richmond Uniting Church has its own full-time minister while Ebenezer, Pitt Town, Windsor, Riverstone and Kurrajong Heights will be sharing the support of two ministers – Rev. Geoff Stevenson and Rev. Rodel Palma. To an outsider, it will be business as usual; the services and outreach we have provided in the past will continue. But at the same time there will be changes as we seek to maintain our church as a living church. In 2014 we welcomed Rodel Palma and this year we welcome Geoff Stevenson to the Hawkesbury and thank him for his contribution to this newsletter.

2015 has been a year of reunions for the Grono, Cavanough, Stubbs and Cross-Flood family associations and there are reports of some of these reunions in this newsletter. An article on the establishment of the 1st Ebenezer Girl Guides and the building of a meeting place that took place in the early 1930's is also included. This was the period of the Great Depression, a time of extreme hardship for people in Australia. The commencement of a guide company in 1931 and the construction of the gunyah in 1933 is evidence of the strong community spirit in Ebenezer that has been persistent since settlement by our church pioneers in 1803.

We occasionally hear reports of descendants of our church pioneers who have excelled in their chosen spheres of endeavour. On this occasion we wish to congratulate Malcolm Turnbull, a descendant of Ebenezer Church pioneers Ann & John Turnbull, upon election as leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Australia.

Ted Brill

*On behalf of the Ebenezer – Pitt Town Congregation*

## From the Minister

I have only just commenced working with several Uniting Churches in the Hawkesbury region, including Ebenezer Church.

I can still remember my first visit and the deep sense of awe and wonder as I walked through the church and across the grounds.

I looked down to the river and felt a deep sense of God's presence in this place. I have since discovered that this is the experience of most people who come to Ebenezer Church. Some discover a sense of the Sacred but can't give name to this experience. It touches them deeply and the sense remains and they return. Others have a vocabulary and tradition that they connect with through prayer and reflection as they sit quietly in God's presence.

My mind goes back to those early settlers and pioneers who forged new lives in what must have been an extraordinarily different and difficult environment. The faith they brought provided a profound foundation for their new lives. Like the solid sandstone of the church buildings or the large and strong tree under which they originally met and worshipped, their faith and spiritual disciplines gave them strength through the harshest moments in this new world.

When I visit Ebenezer Church I feel connected into this faith and spiritual depth. I breathe deeply of God's grace and strength and find myself filled with peace and hope. As a community of people across this nation, we are all connected into this deeply spiritual place where God is close and grace imbues our lives.

May this grace and peace of God be with you.

Geoff Stevenson



### **John Grono, sailor, settler, sealer, ship-builder and celebrity: a new evaluation**

Peter Proctor's book - provides a new perspective on John Grono's life and complements the earlier work done by the late Robert Taylor. The book provides a broad historical context to the decisions Grono made and the life that he led and also takes a closer look at John Grono's

business dealings, land holdings and the role of partnerships in his enterprises.

The book is 169 pages long, illustrated in colour and indexed. The cost is \$35 per book plus \$15 postage.

***This newsletter, now in its 10th year of distribution, is sent to 270 postal and 348 email addresses across Australia and to New Zealand and the United Kingdom.***

***Donations to meet the costs of production and postage are appreciated and may be forwarded to the church secretary at the address as below.***

***Should you receive the newsletter by post but now have access to email, please let us know.***

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## 1st EBENEZER COMPANY OF GIRL GUIDES

From as early as 1909 guiding groups were being formed in Australia and in August 1920, Lady Davidson, the wife of Sir Walter Edward Davidson, the Governor of NSW, presided over a meeting to inaugurate the State branch of the Girl Guides' Association.

Guiding came to Ebenezer in 1931 following the arrival of Arthur Blanchard and his family, Arthur Blanchard being appointed as headmaster of Ebenezer Public School. A proposal to form an Ebenezer Girl Guide company that was put forward by Mrs Jessie Blanchard soon gathered much local support. No doubt the values promoted by the Girl Guide movement, that of being trustworthy, helpful, polite, considerate, friendly, respectful to all living things, self-controlled, courageous and cheerful in all difficulties, were appreciated by parents.

A strong local guide association was formed with Mrs. G. Brown (President), Mesdames Sinclair and Young (Vice Presidents), Mrs. Hendren (Hon. Secretary) and Mrs. Bonus (Hon. Treasurer).

The 1st Ebenezer Girl Guides came into being on 12th December 1931 with Mrs Blanchard as captain and Miss Hilda Wilson as lieutenant. Guides at that time included Jean Brown, Rona Blanchard, Joan Myers, Jean Sargent, Doris Davison, Thelma Sheen and Phyllis Stephens.

The site chosen for the enrolment ceremony was under the spreading branches of the historic tree at Ebenezer Church, the same tree that in 1803 the pioneers of the Ebenezer district first met for public worship.

On that occasion fourteen Ebenezer guides were enrolled by the State Commissioner of the NSW Girl Guides Association Lady David, wife of academic and explorer Sir Edgeworth David. Some 70 guides from Blacktown, led by Captain Bromfield, and Windsor, led by Captain Paine, also attended, the gathering attracting approximately 400 people in all. Following the ceremony refreshments were served, the proceeds going to the association's funds.

There being no community hall in Ebenezer initially the guides met at Ebenezer Public School in Sackville Road. Needing their own meeting place, Guide leader Mrs Blanchard put forward the idea of a shelter – a gunyah – situated in the bush and made with local timber and a

stringy bark roof.

Once again the small community of Ebenezer responded. Local farmer Edgar Lowe suggested that the gunyah be constructed on his land in Tizzana Road and the Davison brothers were to supply the materials for construction. Activities such as tennis afternoons and euchre parties were held to raise the £20 needed to meet costs. The building was designed by William Thompson and was built by Messrs Cross and Turnbull.

What was described by the Windsor & Richmond Gazette as 'the biggest crowd in the history of Ebenezer' gathered on Saturday 9 December 1933 for **the official opening** and dedication of the Guide's Gunyah. Guides and Brownies were present from every part of the Division, there being big contingents from Castle Hill, Parramatta, Granville, Fairfield, Girraween, Blacktown and Windsor. Scouts and Cubs also attended from Richmond, Windsor and Wilberforce.

Mrs R. Sinclair, president of the Ebenezer guides association, presided over the ceremony, Ald. J. J. McLeod, Mayor of Windsor, addressed the crowd and the official opening was made

by State Commissioner Lady David who commented favourably on the 'unique structure of bush timber ... that would be an inspiration to other companies requiring a home.'

An interesting dedication of the building followed. Corn was scattered as a symbol of growth and plenty, salt was strewn as the age-old symbol of truth and friendship, and finally oil was sprinkled, typifying peace and goodwill. Led by Rev. John Carter, minister of Ebenezer Church, a dedication prayer was offered, the local Guides and Brownies placing their hands upon the building.

Once the ceremony was completed the crowd moved to the grounds of John Davison that adjoined Ebenezer Church for refreshments and activities.



Left: A crowd of 400 people gathered across Tizzana Road for the official opening of the gunyah. The danger of passing traffic was not a concern at that time. Old Ebenezer identities in the 1980's could recall only two cars travelling along the road in the 1930's, one being owned by the family of Dr Fiaschi of Tizzana Winery and the other by Jack Lang, Premier of NSW, who had purchased church pioneer John Howe's property for a retreat from politics.

The Ebenezer Guides, assembled on the right, on the day of the official opening which was held on 9th December 1932. The gentleman on the left is Jack Lang, Member for Granville, who would have been attending the function as an Ebenezer resident as on 13th May he had been dismissed as Premier of New South Wales by Governor Philip Game.







Attending the opening of the gunyah were Guides and Brownies from Castle Hill, Parramatta, Granville, Fairfield, Girraween, Blacktown and Windsor. Here they are seated under the Historic Tree at Ebenezer Church. Mrs Parkinson, Lady David and Mrs Blanchard are seated in the centre. The gentlemen standing are local, state and federal politicians with Rev. Carter, minister of Ebenezer Church in the centre.

## EBENEZER CHURCH PEWS

When you look at the pews in Ebenezer Church you can see that there are two styles. You may feel that there are actually three styles but some of the second style have been modified.

The church was initially used as a school and a church. There was a cedar partition across the centre and the current pulpit end of the building was the church and the schoolroom was towards the porch. With the school commencing in 1810, within one year of the church being built, pews were required to fill only half of the church building.

The church school closed at the end of 1886 and an Ebenezer Public School commenced in Coromandel Road at the beginning of the next year. So in 1887 the congregation needed to fill the other half of the church with pews and this explains the two styles.

But are the ones at the front of the church, the ones with the bookrests, the original pews? Are they more than 200 years old? Photographs provide some evidence of their age but not beyond 1879.



The restored church pew

By 2015 the pews at the front of the church were in need of maintenance and restoration. They were loose in their joints, one end so loose that it could be easily removed. That was the one we recently sent away for restoration and when it was returned it was reported that the pew had been completely dismantled before regluing.

And what was found in the pew in the process of dismantling – a convict-made nail!

We thank the Stubbs Family Association for their recent donation of \$2000 for further pew restoration.

## GRONO FAMILY REUNION

While the weather started out a little wet, approximately 127 of the Grono Family Association members still gathered on Sunday 3rd May at Ebenezer Church to celebrate the 216th anniversary of the arrival of John and Elizabeth Grono and family to Australia on the *HMS Buffalo*.





## CAVANOUGH FAMILY REUNION

Descendants of Ebenezer Church pioneers Margaret & Owen Cavanough met at Ebenezer Church in October.

An attractive display of family history was arranged in the pavilion and free lookups were available to find linkage to the Cavanough family tree.

Secretary of the Cavanough Family Association Alan Woods reported:

'The Cavanough Family reunion was held at Ebenezer on Saturday 17 October on a nice sunny day. A good turnout of approximately 80 descendants of Owen & Margaret Cavanough enjoyed the day.

They travelled from country NSW, Queensland and we were very glad to see new faces from Victoria who were able to fill in some "gaps" for us. The nice weather was taken advantage of with many picnics in the grounds.

A special thank you to Ted Brill and the ladies in the tea room. The scones were excellent as always. Ted's talk in the church was a highlight for all who went to listen. Hope to see you again next year.'



## STUBBS FAMILY REUNION. *Contributed by Karen Mills*



Stubbs family members attending the reunion for the first time introduced themselves to the gathering. Margaret Bass from Nan Glen, NSW, is doing that above.

This year we also commemorated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Thomas Yarwood (aka Thomas Woods) to Australia. Thomas was tried for burglary at the Chester Assizes in 1814 and sentenced to transportation for life, arriving on the "Indefatigable" in April 1815. Thomas went on to marry Sarah Mary Stubbs (daughter of William Stubbs and Sarah Wingate) in 1822 at St Matthew's Church of England in Windsor. They subsequently had a large family of 12 children.

A great day was had by all meeting family members, swapping family stories, perusing displays of family information in the pavilion and enjoying a sausage sandwich lunch. The Stubbs Family would like to express their thanks to the Ebenezer Church volunteers for organising and running the BBQ for us.

The next Stubbs Family Reunion will be held on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

Over 100 descendants of William Stubbs and Sarah Wingate gathered at Ebenezer on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October for the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Stubbs Family Reunion. At the Official Welcome Meeting a number of new attendees introduced themselves. Family members had travelled from as far as North Queensland, South Australia and Victoria to attend this year's reunion. The oldest family member present was "Wandering" Bob Stubbs, aged 93 years, from Runaway Bay, Queensland (shown below right with Ruben Viscara).



## What goes around ...

Several of the Coromandel settlers worshipped at Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden, before sailing to New South Wales in 1802. Earlier this year a lady by the name of Sheila visited Ebenezer Church. Born in 1923, Sheila believes that she must be in the running for being the oldest living descendant of Ebenezer Church pioneers Andrew & Mary Johnston who left England in 1802. In 2015 Sheila, a resident of Mowll Village at Castle Hill, NSW, now has a grandson living in the UK and a great grandson attending a Sunday School. And to which church does the Sunday School belong? It's hard to believe ... but .... *Crown Court Church of Scotland, Covent Garden!*

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