



Hi Folks,

It is 10 years this month since four and a half thousand people gathered on the Ebenezer Church property and celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ebenezer Church. Our congregation realised at an early stage that we were too small to run the event on our own and many other Hawkesbury volunteer organisations responded to a call for help. The Ebenezer Fire Brigade did the parking, the Rotary Club of Windsor a barbecue, the Richmond Players a re-enactment, ... in all, 14 volunteer groups. Added to that was the response by descendants of church pioneer families in organising marquees of family history and memorabilia. It was a wonderful celebration that created a lot of memories and goodwill.

Although the 2010<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be a quieter celebration, you will, as always, be welcome. On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June there will be an 11.30am service in the church at

which Rev. Bronwyn Murphy, Associate Secretary for the Synod of NSW & ACT, will be the speaker. Bronwyn Murphy in recent years has been a passionate voice and advocate for our rural and remote ministries. A light lunch will follow the service.

This issue of the newsletter includes a reflection by our former and now Presbytery Minister Rev. Geoff Stevenson, a summary of pioneer farming methods as recorded by historian Ronald Macquarie Arndell, the unique practice in early pioneer days of having a funeral procession along the river and reports on the appeal for a slate roof for the Schoolmaster's House and on the Ebenezer Church Cemetery.

Regards to you all,

Ted Brill

Secretary, Ebenezer Church

### Thoughts from Geoff

I recently heard it explained that our brains are wired so that negative thoughts and feelings are like Velcro. They cling to the parts of our brain where they materialise and stay there. They are hard to remove and tie us in knots of frustration and often leave us in despair and with poor self-image.

Positive thoughts and images are more like Teflon and slide through our minds like a hot knife through butter. We can see or hear something that is wonderful or beautiful and forget it as soon as it passes. That is, unless we spend 15 seconds or more focussing on it – contemplating it. If we spend 15 seconds on something lovely it implants itself in our mind and influences us in a variety of ways. Our mood may brighten. We may feel drawn into the beauty and wonder of life more deeply. We may sense a deeper awareness of grace or love or God in the world.

The point here is that contemplation (or meditation, reflection, prayer...) is required for something positive and beautiful to implant itself into our being and influence us positively.

I recall how I all too often rush past the simple beauty in the world as I walk our dogs. I don't always notice the infinite beauty and wonder in the small and gentle flowers along the way. These days I usually miss the wonderful cloud formations that as a child I spent many hours watching as they floated past. I don't always take time to listen, really listen to music in a way that allows it to imprint itself upon my mind and in my being.

I suppose it is the same way for most of us with the food we eat and other things we do. We don't take the time to sit with and in the experience of living miss the deeper experiences of beauty and wonder all around us.

I think that many of those who come to Ebenezer Church are drawn by the simple beauty of the landscape and the stillness of the place. They sit and attend to the beauty and peacefulness. They take time to look at the river, the trees, the sky, the buildings and listen to birds or insects or even boats on the river. They take time to sit and 'be' and in that contemplation, reflection or prayer, the rich beauty implants itself into their being.

It is during such contemplation that we encounter God in the midst of ordinary life. We experience raw and deep beauty in the simple, ordinary moments and things of life and they touch our being with the grace and wonder of God.

I have been trying to take the time (15 seconds or more) to contemplate simple and beautiful things, to hold them in my mind and allow them to change. I am trying to learn to let God come to me through moments of awe and wonder, both simple and profound.

I encourage you to stop and ponder or contemplate the beautiful and wonderful, sacred and holy experiences of life. Savour them, taste them, enter into them and find communion with God in the midst of life and the world of beauty that is all around us. Allow this contemplation to imprint the awe and mystery into your being and transform your experience and fill you with wonder.

May God's grace, love and peace fill you, sustain you and surround you.

Geoff

*Rev. Geoff Stevenson is the Chairperson of the Uniting Church Parramatta Nepean Presbytery*

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*This newsletter is sent to 226 postal and 399 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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## EARLY FARMING AT PORTLAND HEAD

Eight families who arrived in the colony on the *Coromandel* in June 1802 took up their land grants in 1803 in an isolated area of the Hawkesbury River, a district then known as Portland Head and later as Ebenezer.

With the exception of George Hall and perhaps John Johnstone, these settlers, although literate and skilled, were not experienced in farming. So how successful were these people, who were formerly tailors, storekeepers, builders and carpenters, along with the seven families that joined them in this community, in becoming farmers? What food did they produce and what do we know about their farming practices?

R. M. Arndell, a farmer at Cattai and for 30 years Session Clerk at Ebenezer – Pitt Town Presbyterian Church, was also president of the Hawkesbury Historical Society. Many of the answers to the questions above are found in his book 'Pioneers of Portland Head' and this information has been reproduced below.

The first extracts tell of the animals of these new farmers, the crops that they grew and the methods they used.

### Pigs

'It was an economic necessity for each family to have its own hogs. The females mature early, and are prolific breeders. Their great assets were that they were foragers and required a minimum of husbandry, but they were often a source of friction between neighbours. Children were often given the chore of minding the hogs, but they often strayed into adjoining farms whose irate owners felt justified in the summary execution of the offenders.

So to restrain their hogs the settlers had to build substantial post and rail fences with small gaps between the rails. For this type of fence the big trees in the nearby bush had to be felled, and the post and rails split with maul and wedge from the log which had been cut into lengths. Then began the tedious task of mortising the posts into which the rails were carefully fitted so that the fence would not be pulled out of line.'

### Harvesting Wheat

'All the early settlers had with which to prepare their land were axe, mattock, hoe and a rake to cover the seed. When harvesting, it would take several days for Surgeon Arndell and his four convicts to cut his four acres with sickle and scythe, and to tie the wheat up in sheaves. A cradle was attached to the back of the scythe which gathered the wheat at each stroke and laid it in a neat windrow. It was then tied up in sheaves and stooked to dry. The ties were made from two handfuls of straw expertly knotted and whipped around a bundle of wheat, with the ends neatly tucked under the band to hold the sheath securely. These, when dry, were carried to the stack nearby, from which they would be taken and thrashed as required.'

### Ploughing

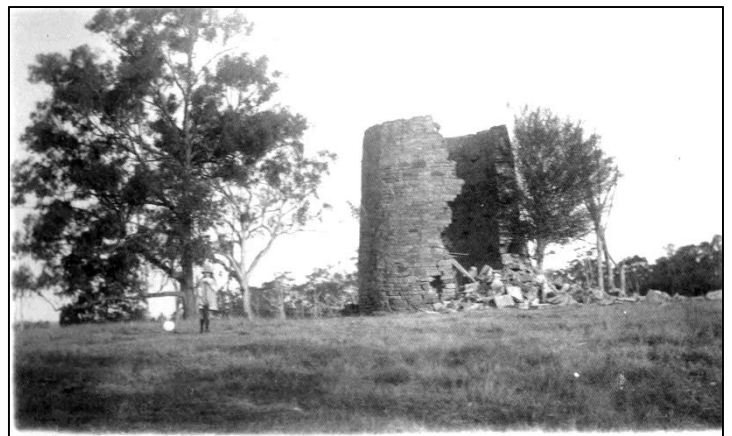
'The Rev. Samuel Marsden recommended the use of the plough to prepare the ground for crops, but ploughs were in very short supply. A special appeal was sent to England at one time for the supply of six. Indeed the shortage of tools hampered the settlers more than anything else. Governor King reported in 1802 that the only tools in store for clearing the land were a few spades and felling axes; there were hundreds of worn-out files and at least 1500 were required. Even if the settler had the money to purchase a plough, he probably did not own a horse or bullock to draw it, and neither his convicts nor himself were likely to be experienced in its use. Nor could a plough be used among a maze of stumps and roots. To do so would bring disaster to both

plough and ploughman. Many a ploughman has had a bruised, if not broken rib from the swiftly-rising plough handle when the share struck a root.'

Further evidence of the types of produce from the farms of the Portland Head settlers is found in their method of paying the stonemasons and carpenters for their part in the construction of Ebenezer Church in 1809. Each family had pledged the sum of £10 and for those paying by the produce of their farms, prices were determined. Wheat was 10 shillings a bushel, salted pork was one shilling and threepence a pound, fresh pork one shilling a pound and live pigs were nine pence a pound.

### Fishing

'Though the country provided no natural supply of meat, save kangaroo and wallaby, there was a plentiful supply of fish in the river. Several of the settlers would have a seine [fishing net] between them, and have no trouble in pulling a hundred or more perch and mullet into their boat on a calm night.... Seine fishing had to cease momentarily when Governor King ordered that all boats on the river after dark were to be confiscated. This was to deprive the convicts of the means of escaping, and thieves a handy getaway. Maybe this had little effect on the forthright settler working his seine, and though net fishing is still prohibited in the Upper Hawkesbury, farmers continued to net fish which they considered theirs by right. This attitude has persisted perhaps because in the early surveys the centre of the stream was the boundary between grants, so that opposite farmers each owned half the river along their boundary and therefore, half the fish.'



**Arndell's Mill:** Thomas Arndell was the first man in the Hawkesbury to build a windmill to grind flour, the rocky remains of which can still be seen on the hill across the river from Ebenezer Church, an area that is now part of Cattai National Park. It was built prior to 1807. 'Before Arndell built his windmill .... each settler had to grind his porridge meal from maize in a little grist mill turned by hand, and flour in the same way from wheat.'

### How successful were the farming pursuits of the Portland Head pioneers?

The 1806 muster (3 years after settlement at Portland Head) shows ...

**Settler John Turnbull**, his wife Anne, six children and two convicts all off stores. Of Turnbull's 100 acres - 13 acres under wheat, 1 acre of barley, ½ acre of potatoes, ½ acre as orchard, 78 acres of pasture, 7 acres under fallow and 1½ bushels of maize in hand. Livestock included 6 male sheep, 6 female sheep, 3 male goats, 5 female goats, 6 male hogs, 6 female hogs. This was a short time in which to accomplish

so much clearing and was typical of the achievements of the settlers by 1806.

**Settler George Hall** had increased his original holding by 26 acres and that he had 27 acres under wheat, 12 of maize, 7 of barley, 1 of orchard and ½ of potatoes. On his pasture land he was running 100 sheep, 25 goats and 30 hogs. Neither he, nor his wife and 6 children, nor 3 convict servants were victualled from government stores. This was a remarkable effort after a period of only three years, despite a calamitous flood in March 1806.

Further evidence of farming success is found in the journals of Governor Lachlan Macquarie. It was in December 1810 the Governor travelled with Mrs Macquarie to Windsor and from there made several excursions within the area. From his journals we learn that on Tuesday 4 December 1810 Governor Macquarie...

*'set out this morning between 5 and 6 o'clock, accompanied by Mrs. Macquarie, Mrs. Cartwright, Mr. Cartwright, Mr. Cox,*

*Mr. Hassall, and the gentlemen of our family, in the late Mr. Thompson's barge and another smaller boat, on our excursion to Portland Head...' After having breakfast at Ebenezer Church the party proceeded downstream. Governor Macquarie was impressed with the development of the pioneers' farms during the seven years since settlement: 'The farms on both banks, especially those on the left bank, are rich and well cultivated, and make a pretty appearance from the water, being generally interspersed with extensive orchards of peaches and other fruits.'*

When the Coromandel settlers arrived at Sydney Cove on 13 June 1802 they were met on board by Governor Gidley King. Initially King must have been delighted to find that these people were educated and skilled as the colony lacked such settlers. By the end of his term of office as governor in 1806 Governor King must have also been pleased with his decision to allow them to settle together as the Portland Head farmers proved to be successful food producers.

## FUNERAL PROCESSIONS ALONG THE RIVER



In an earlier booklet on Ebenezer Church George Reid, historian and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, described funeral processions that were conducted along the Hawkesbury River at Ebenezer:

'A funeral procession of boats along the Hawkesbury River to the graveyard at Ebenezer Church was once a common event. It was a most impressive and unusual ceremony. The leading boat, manned by four stalwart rowers with muffled oars, towed a second boat containing the coffin, and mourning craft of all descriptions followed in order. The small sandy beach close to the church made a landing place, and strong men waded waist-deep to carry the remains of the silent sleeper to the church for a memorial service. There was a strange solemnity about these proceedings and the hushed

gentleness of these strong men of the bush left abiding memories in the minds of all spectators.'

Imagine standing alone on that beach beside the river, nothing in front of you but water, the opposite riverbank and sky. You hear a sound ... was it a paddling sound? ... and into view comes the funeral procession ... heading towards you on the sandy beach ...

The last funeral to be conducted in this manner was for William Alexander Grono (1860 – 1937). That was in 1937 and a nephew of William remembers the occasion.

William Grono was buried in the first row to the right as you enter the church grounds but he did not have a headstone or any marker to indicate his grave. That was until May 2019 when the Cemetery Trust erected a plinth with a bronze plaque that records William's name and life span, the cost of the plaque being met in part by donated funds.

The plaque also records George Reid's description of the funeral procession and that William Grono, who no doubt would have been passionate about the pioneer history of Ebenezer Church, was the last person to have a funeral conducted in that way.

## SCHOOLMASTER'S HOUSE APPEAL

In 2018 we started an appeal to raise \$40,000 to meet the costs of a slate roof for the Schoolmaster's roof. We thank those who have responded with a donation.

It is pleasing to observe that Ebenezer Church visitors have also been generous towards this appeal. Small donations (*"Keep the change for the roof."*) have sometimes amounted to one or two hundred dollars a week and a recent visitor, who greatly appreciates what we do at Ebenezer, donated \$4,000.

When we add the \$18,000 state government grant our total is now \$34,575 towards a goal of \$40,000. So we are almost there.

***If you wish to make a donation ...***

***Direct Deposit ...*** BSB: 634634, Account No: 100028399

Account Name: Ebenezer Church Maintenance

Please use SMH and your surname as a reference and email [tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au](mailto:tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au) informing us of the donation.

***By cheque ...*** post to Ebenezer Church, PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, NSW, 2756



## EBENEZER CHURCH CEMETERY

An inscription on a plaque in the church cemetery states:

*'The Southern Cross lies overhead,  
The river by my side  
Could fairer place be found to rest  
O'er all Earth wide.*

The cemetery has also been described as one of the most important cemeteries in Australia; it has an association with six generations of Coromandel settlers.

As it is not proposed to extend the cemetery, and plots for burials are no longer available for purchase, in 2009 four columbaria were built with 416 niches for the placement of ashes. They have been available for sale to the general public and to date 321 have been sold.



***A note about the spreading of ashes ...***

While it is not illegal in NSW to spread ashes it is illegal to do so on private property without permission.

We believe that a person's remains should be interred with respect and dignity. Permission will not be granted to spread ashes on the Ebenezer Church property.



## At Ebenezer Church in 2019 we ... Celebrated Mothers' Day...



Matilda, who was baptised during the Mothers' Day service, with her mother Emma and her grandmother Margaret

... Are raising funds for clean water wells in villages in West Papua through a **MASSIVE MARKET DAY** at Pitt Town Uniting Church on Saturday 29 June.

For \$2,500 we can install a well in a village that will give the village people clean water for 30 years.

We're also going to have a **JAZZ EVENING** on the riverbank at Ebenezer Church – that will be on Sunday 13 October. Please save the date.

Tea Coffee & Cakes Stall  
Sausages, Sandwiches, Eggs & Bacon Rolls  
Books & Plants  
HUGE FRUIT & VEG STALL

### PITT TOWN'S MASSIVE

MARKET DAY / GARAGE SALE  
**SATURDAY JUNE 29**  
AT THE UNITING CHURCH, BATHURST ST  
**9AM - 2PM**

**LIVE MUSIC + SINGING**  
KI DANCERS & MORE!  
ALSO LEVI THE BLACKSMITH

**FREE STALLS**  
Book a spot & sell your garage items, books, clothes, old wares etc.  
"Your stall, your money"  
Take home what profit you make!

Our mission is to raise funds for clean water wells in West Papua!  
All enquiries call 0439 309 303 or for stall bookings call 4572 3518

## GRONO FAMILY REUNION Sunday 5th May 2019

Almost 100 descendants of church pioneers John & Elizabeth Grono attended a reunion at Ebenezer Church



## EBENEZER CHURCH PILGRIMAGE

The 210th Anniversary of Ebenezer Church  
**Sunday 16th June 2019**  
11.30am Service  
Followed by a light lunch  
**Everyone welcome**

## STUBBS FAMILY REUNION

The next Stubbs Family Reunion will be on  
**Saturday 26th October 2019**  
More details in the next newsletter or from  
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