



Ebenezer Church
Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Churches

Newsletter

No. 4 April 2008

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

2009...That's.... next year!

But we are not panicking...well, not yet! So how are we progressing?

The message that Australia's oldest existing church, Ebenezer Church, is celebrating its bicentenary in 2009 is spreading. Our newsletters now reach an area extending from Perth in the west to Lower Hutt in the North Island of New Zealand in the east. Our local community leaders are also aware, Mayor Rex Stubbs announcing this coming event at the 2008 Hawkesbury Historical Society's Australia Day Dinner. And our website is up and running! You will find it at www.ebenezerchurch.org.au. It has information on church history, baptisms, weddings, pioneer family associations, bicentenary, visits to Ebenezer Church, maps, how to contact us, ...

The Cavanoughs held an enjoyable and successful reunion on a perfect day in March at Ebenezer and are planning to hold another one in 2009. Other reunions ahead are the Johnstons (Now 20 Sept) and Stubbs in 2008 and the Gronos and Armdells in 2009.

After an overload of paper work and approvals for restoration projects, we are now seeing some pleasing progress. A report is found later in this newsletter.

Our Bicentenary Committee has now met on two occasions and planning for the celebrations has commenced. Ideas being explored include:

- a national celebration that extends across denominations
- activities/re-enactments that highlight the importance of the river to the early settlers
- static historical displays being open for two or three days around 20 June 2009.

Ted Brill

For Ebenezer Pitt Town Congregation

A Message from the Minister

As the Minister of the Ebenezer and Pitt Town Uniting Churches, I am fascinated by the history around me. During restoration work and even looking at the grounds, there are always new things to learn and discover especially on how and sometime also why things were done as they were.

While history looks at and seeks to understand the past, it is also a discipline that helps us to understand ourselves and to move forward in life as individuals and a society. Edmund Burke said, "History is a pact between the dead, the living and the yet unborn" The Bicentenary of the Ebenezer Church is also a celebration of our past, present and future.

Interacting with the family associations as they gather to meet in the church grounds for reunions and association meetings, I am also reminded of the importance of knowing where we come from and the history that has shaped who we are. As each group meets, relationships of common heritage are enhanced, new found information shared and collaborated, and a sense of belonging to a family much greater than that of close relations is affirmed.

George Santayana once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." When much of what we are like is shaped by our past, the history of our families and how we have interacted with and learnt from the experiences of life, learning of our history can expand who we are and our ability to move forward in life in positive and constructive ways.

As we prepare for the bicentenary of the Ebenezer church, it is a time to explore our history and the lessons that have been learnt through the centuries. Through these lessons, we can grow and be empowered to move forward together as individuals, as a community and as a society and nation.

Rev. Grant Bilbey

EBENEZER CHURCH HERITAGE DAY



On the second Sunday in May 2008 – that's 11 May - we are 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.

.....Whoops!...11 May...that's.... Mother's Day!

...Ebenezer Churcha great outing for Mother's Day!

Bicentenary of Ebenezer Church

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

Saturday 20 June 2009

Ebenezer Church

'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal

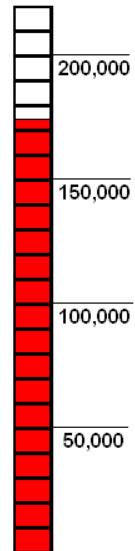
This appeal to fund full restoration of all church buildings by 2009 is still growing. The \$161,000 that we had at the time of the last newsletter in September 2007 has now grown to \$ 175,000.

A total of \$220,000 is needed. Still some way to reach our goal but with continuing support the end is in sight. 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: The Secretary,
EPT Uniting Church,
PO Box 7048,
Wilberforce, NSW, 2756.

(Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Pitt Town UCA)



Historic Tree at Ebenezer Church

Ebenezer Church is 200 years old in 2009 but across the road from the church stands something much older still - the Historic Tree. It is believed that under the shade of this tree the pioneers of Ebenezer Church held their first services in 1803.

It is recorded on one occasion that the rebels who deposed Governor Bligh, believing that the settlers were friendly to the deposed Governor, issued instructions to the Military Commandant at Windsor, Lt Archibald Bell, to disperse or arrest the Ebenezer worshippers.

Accordingly, one Sunday morning Lieutenant Bell, with a detachment of troops, marched out of Windsor and proceeded to Ebenezer Mount at Portland Head. Arriving there he found the congregation gathered near the tree and engaged in worship led by James Mein. However the officer waited until the close of the service and then shook hands with Mein and with each member of the congregation in turn, and declared that he was satisfied with the orderly nature of the gathering and that he would neither disperse nor interfere with them in

any way.

Photographs taken in the 1950's show the tree at its greatest size. But by the 1980's several limbs had fallen, leaving a large opening in the trunk. Advice was sought on the tree's preservation and in keeping with the practices of the time the hole was plugged with foam. There followed a period of development of a new canopy and the tree appeared to be in a healthy state.

However, on 16 December 2005 a brief storm of cyclone intensity swept in a narrow band through Ebenezer. It snapped the entire canopy from the tree and dropped it across the roadway. Was this the end of this historic icon?

The historic tree is still alive! A branch low down on the main trunk had been developing vertically for some time and now its canopy is flourishing!

Isaiah Chapter 4 comes to mind: *'In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory....'*

Like the tree, the life of Ebenezer Church will continue into its third century.



PROGRESS ON RESTORATION

Church & Vestry

The roofs on the church and vestry were the focus of restoration work in January 2008. Broken slates were replaced and new lead flashing was installed. The slates on the porch roof were completely replaced. This work was followed up by volunteer builders Bob Cross and Bob Palmer who replaced or repaired the barge boards on both buildings. The roof of the passageway between the church and vestry has also been renewed. All work has been approved by the Hawkesbury City Council's Heritage Advisor.



River Paddock Project



For some years now visitors to Ebenezer Church have not been able to enjoy the splendid view of the Hawkesbury River that the church site offers. This has been due to the infestation of weeds along the riverbank and the condition of the church river paddock. In January 2008 work commenced on the riverbank using funds obtained from a grant in 2006. At the same time, after obtaining approvals, many loads of validated fill were being brought in to make the area below the church a safer and more

attractive area for visitors. This has been achieved at little cost to the church.

The next task was to turf the area. After two weeks of postponement, the weather cleared and 31 volunteers swung into action. Starting at 8.00am, the goal was to lay 1800 square metres of turf by lunchtime. This was achieved – and a barbecue lunch was served – at 11 o'clock! A great team effort! And what a great result!



STUBBS FAMILY 29th ANNUAL REUNION

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

WHEN: **Saturday 25 October 2008**

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) 8084 3808
cdhird@optusnet.com.au

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

JOHNSTON FAMILY REUNION

Saturday 20 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,

gronofamily@gmail.com

1 Johnston Street,
Pitt Town, NSW, 2756.

Same addresses for inquiries re the book

'John Grono, 1767-1847, Our Old Colonial Neptune'

OTHER CHURCH PIONEER FAMILY CONTACTS

Arndell

The Secretary
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31 Clarinda Street
Hornsby NSW 2077
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Hallfamilyd@aol.com

Bushell

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becturnbull@hotmail.com

Cavanough

Pat Holdorf
85 James Street
Punchbowl, NSW, 2196
p1234@tadaust.org.au

BOOKS FOR SALE from the Ebenezer Church Shop

THE HISTORY OF EBENEZER, Australia's Oldest Church (1999 edition). \$4.40 per copy or \$6.00 posted
A COLONIAL CHURCHYARD, Ebenezer Church, NSW. (2006 Edition) - \$33.00 or \$38.00 posted
- CD - \$20.00 or \$25.00 posted

THE TURNBULLS ON THE COROMANDEL by Roy & Dorothy Turnbull \$45 or \$50 posted
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JOHN TURNBULL, The Turnbolls of Ebenezer c.1950 by Marie Turnbull
\$35 or \$40 posted

Orders via post may be placed with:

Sue Brill, PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, NSW, 2756.

Payment is required with each order.

Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Church Shop.



An Interesting connection....

Marie Larnach knew for some time that through her father she was a descendant of John Turnbull who came out on the Coromandel in 1802. Her father, Harry Turnbull, could trace his ancestry back to William Bligh Turnbull, son of John Turnbull.

Marie knew too that her mother was a descendant of a convict, John Bevan. It wasn't until Marie was researching her mother's family tree that she found out that John Bevan was on the same ship, the Coromandel! **That was in 1802...**but it wasn't until the marriage of Marie's father and mother - **in 1936** - that the two family lines, Turnbull and Bevan, connected!

Church Contacts

Bicentenary - This Newsletter

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Ebenezer Church Shop

Bookings & Inquiries:
02 4579 9350

Ebenezer Church Shop,

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