

## Scots Church Pitt Town celebrates 150 years!

Our newsletter this time focuses on the approaching anniversary of the second church to be built in our parish, Scots Church Pitt Town, in 1862.

A large part of the historical focus is on the Hall family, in particular William, the third child of church pioneers George & Mary Hall, who made a major contribution in the building of Scots Church.

Some details are provided of the celebrations that are to be held on 25-27 May 2012, with more information being available later in the year from [www.ebenezerchurch.org.au](http://www.ebenezerchurch.org.au) and from the April 2012 edition of this newsletter.

For all of this year our parish has been well-served by the ministry of Rev. Helenna Anderson. It has been 'business as usual' as Rev. Anderson has conducted weekly services, baptisms, weddings, funerals and an annual pilgrimage to Ebenezer Church. Although this is a part-time arrangement, it will continue into the new year while our congregation undertakes a Mission & Property Reflection.

In 2011 we have continued to share the story of Ebenezer Church with many visitors. The church shop has been open daily but will be closed in the period 19-26 December 2012 while our volunteers have a well-deserved break.

Ted Brill,  
Church Secretary

## Visits by Car & Motorcycle Clubs

Ebenezer Church continues to be a popular venue for rallies and visits by car and motorcycle clubs. After a recent visit by The Hills Branch of the Ulysses Club, President John Hickey wrote:

'On behalf of the club I just wanted to extend our appreciation for your hospitality on the weekend. Could you please let Sue and the girls know that the scones were delicious and the warmth with which we were greeted was wonderful.'

Should you wish to be informed by email when such interesting visits are approaching (*Who could forget last year's Model T Ford rally!*), please let us know by the email address is below.



MG Car Club at Ebenezer Church

### Church Contacts

**Minister**

As we do not currently have a full-time minister, all inquiries should be made to the secretary.

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# Scots Church Pitt Town 1862 – 2012

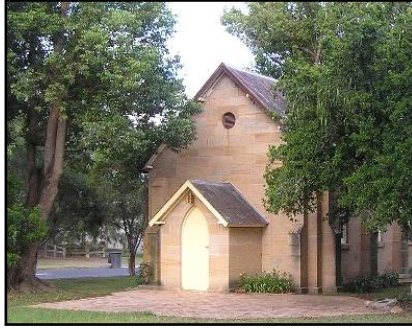
Scots Church Pitt Town celebrates 150 years on 25-27 May 2012

## Scots Church, Pitt Town

Prior to the building of Scots Church in 1862, the Presbyterian families living on the Pitt Town side of the Hawkesbury River worshipped at Ebenezer Church. Transport was mainly by rowboat, but those fortunate enough to possess a horse, or horse and sulky or buggy, could cross the river by the punt at the foot of Bathurst Street, Pitt Town, and from there a track wound its way to Ebenezer Church.

**William Hall** of 'Percy Place' saw the need for a place of worship in Pitt Town and made it possible for Scots Church to be built free of debt.

The church was built of solid blocks of Hawkesbury sandstone fourteen inches (350mm) thick that was quarried 5km from Pitt Town at Longneck. The huge hardwood trusses supporting the steeply-pitched slate roof were fashioned with axe and adze. All the furnishings were made of cedar.



Scots Church Pitt Town was dedicated on 25 May 1862, the congregation *'very numerous'* and the Reverend Craig of Parramatta preaching a *'very edifying and impressive sermon'* on the occasion. The parish minister at the time was the Reverend George MacFie.

In 2011 weekly Sunday services are held in Scots Church Pitt Town, commencing at 10.00am. The church has been popular for weddings and baptisms and as a venue for the filming of television productions such as Country Practice and Home and Away.

## Ebenezer & Pitt Town

While today Ebenezer and Pitt Town are seen as two separate communities, historically they have much to share. By 1815 Ebenezer Church pioneers Mary & George Hall had moved from Portland Head to Percy Place, Pitt Town. In 1827 the first ordained minister to be appointed to Ebenezer Church, Rev. John McGarvie, took up residence in a sandstone building on a 30-acre farm at Pitt Town that was to become known as the Old Manse. The punt across the Hawkesbury River was just below this building.

The link between Ebenezer Church and Scots Church remains today, the churches being in the Uniting Church Parish of Ebenezer-Pitt Town. The parish has two churches but one congregation. They share the same minister who lives in the manse beside Scots Church, and the churches are administered by the one church council.

## William Hall

Those of us who knew family historian Jeannie Scott knew of her passion to record the story of Ebenezer Church pioneers Mary & George Hall. It was Jeannie who gathered Hall descendants at Ebenezer Church in 1980, this family reunion leading to the publication *'Over-Halling the Colony'*, an excellent book that unfortunately is out of print.

In the introduction to the book Jeannie wrote of her research: 'One thing that became apparent, that even though the different branches of the family had had little or no contact ..., there was a surprisingly similarity of interests and love of history displayed by them all. I could not help feeling that "blood is thicker than water" and that something of George and Mary still survives ...'

A marble tablet in Scots Church in memory of William Hall states: **'He was distinguished through life for his integrity and uprightness. He was a kind friend to the poor, and contributed largely to the erection and permanent endowment of this church.'**

In bringing forward information on William Hall, the third child of Mary & George Hall who would have turned 6 years of age during the voyage of the *Coromandel*, I could do no better than to provide extracts from Jeannie's chapter from *'Over-Halling the Colony'*.

Following the death of his father George in 1840, William managed the Hall estate which included properties stretching to Northern NSW and Queensland.

William, who did not marry, resided at Percy Place in Pitt Town. For most of his life he 'suffered badly from bronchitis and rheumatism, both of which he blamed on the number of times, when setting up new outstations, he had been unable to dry his clothes ...'.

William 'adopted' James Butler, a relative of his housekeeper, and trained him to be a future manager of the Hall estate. James was very successful in carrying out William's orders and became known as Hall's 'General'.

William 'carried on many of his business dealings from the back of a dray. Apart from organising the estate's affairs, he had capital of his own and was a well-known financier and money lender. He was regarded as reputable and respected for his fairness in business dealings. James Butler recalled that ... he had seen business men in frock coats and top hats in the back of the dray with William, drawing up and signing papers. William's most frequent advice to the young James was: "be a long-headed fellow, Jimmy, be a long-headed fellow."

'It was some time before James understood that William was not referring to a physical attribute. The first time he saw some city business men, wearing their top hats, arrive to negotiate with William, he rushed in to tell him that "the long-headed men" had arrived.

'William continued to dress in the same serviceable clothes that he had always worn, and the same, simple wholesome food was served to all at Percy Place: convicts, servants and master. No visitors however grand, persuaded him to change his life style.

'James had several stories to illustrate William's character. When Mr Moses and his associates arrived to endeavour to borrow money to develop their property, which was in the vicinity of Wynyard Station, Sydney, they arrived in top hats and morning coats. William, although in great pain from arthritis, went out to greet his important visitors, but was mistaken for one of his workmen, and he was asked to tell "his master" that Moses and associates had arrived.

Nevertheless, the loan was successfully negotiated, but ... repayments were not made, and the property became William's. He looked on it as his most valuable piece of real estate ...

'For the astute business man that he was, William's compassion was noteworthy.' When elderly convict servant Cooper was caught stealing from the storehouse, William turned Copper loose unpunished, to return to his work as a charge would have meant Cooper being flogged or assigned to a chain gang, either of which would have killed him because of his age.

'At the time of the 1867 flood everyone, except William and James, had left Percy Place to attend the wedding of the minister's daughter at the Pitt Town manse. No great increase in water level was expected, nevertheless James remained at Percy Place, to look after the infirm William.

'When the water rose unexpectedly, the wedding guests were trapped on the top floor of the Presbyterian manse. James carried William out of Percy Place to the safety of the loft in the barn. ... It was many hours before they were rescued by boat. As they were rowed away they led, behind the boat, a valuable blood stallion, and two other horses were left to follow behind as best they could. One drowned, but the other, a draught horse, swam the three miles the boat had to be rowed before they reached safety.'

After James Butler married Martha Smith 'they lived at Percy Place for the next three years, until William's death, Martha taking on the housekeeping role. James recalled ... that the Governor was to dine at Percy Place, and for days everyone was busy scrubbing, cleaning and cooking in preparation for the great event. Martha asked William to consider buying some white sugar to place on the Governor's table, instead of the "black" sugar that they habitually used. William refused because, he said, it would give the Governor a false idea of how they normally lived.'



When William died in 1871 he was buried with his parents in the Hall vault near the entrance to Ebenezer Church.



## Pilgrimage to Ebenezer Church 2011



Moderators Rev. Niall Reid and Mr Peter Graham OAM

We planned to hold the 202nd anniversary of Ebenezer Church in the church, not outside, and we were hoping for a full church.

But ten minutes before the service started the church was only half full. It wasn't a good look - we had invited the state moderators of the Uniting and Presbyterian Churches to this celebration - and only 40 people in attendance! But in the last 10 minutes the church filled! Hardly room for one more - the Church Secretary had to look hard to find a seat!

Representatives of the families of past ministers were present. One was Jim Ayling, grandson of Rev. John Ayling (minister in 1885-1896). Rev. John Ayling was an incredibly energetic minister, educator, agriculturist... and amongst his many other interests was beekeeping - he was president of the Australian Beekeepers Society.

Chas Wannan, son of the Rev. Rowland Wannan, was also present. Rev. Wannan was the minister in 1942-1949. It was largely due to the Rev. Wannan's initiative and drive in building up the finances of the parish as a whole that the extensive building program at Pitt Town in later years was possible. In 1942 he established a popular fellowship for young people.

## New Pergola

The loquat tree in the area beside the vestry at Ebenezer Church was declared unsafe and had to be removed.

To provide shade a pergola of the same design as the existing pergola has been constructed. Shade cloth will cover the new pergola until newly planted grape vines cover the area.

## Home and Away



Scots Church at Pitt Town has been the location for filming Home and Away on four occasions over the last two years.

### SCOTS CHURCH PITT TOWN

#### 150th Anniversary

25-27 May 2012

Including ...

**Friday 25 May: Bush Dance**

**Saturday 26 May: Car tour of historic sites significant to Rev. George McFie, George & Mary Hall and son William Hall**

**Sunday 27 May: Anniversary Service, Plaque unveiling, Historical Displays, ...**

Details soon on .... [www.ebenezerchurch.org.au](http://www.ebenezerchurch.org.au) and in the April 2012 issue of this newsletter.

### STUBBS FAMILY 33rd ANNUAL REUNION Saturday 29 October 2011

Ebenezer Church, 95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW.  
From 9.30am

BYO picnic lunch as well as any family details, photographs or items of interest.

**Please direct inquiries to:**

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Lillyan MacDonald.  
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**Stubbs Family Website:**

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~stubb s1802/>

**Stubbs email:** [stubbs1802@gmail.com](mailto:stubbs1802@gmail.com)

**Please note .... Stubbs Family History VOLUME 6** (Published Oct 2011) will be available for purchase.

### EBENEZER CHURCH PIONEER FAMILY CONTACTS

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