



**Ebenezer Church**  
Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Churches

# Newsletter

No.2

April 2007

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

## Thank you!

*Thank you for spreading the news of the approaching bicentenary of Ebenezer Church. Our mailing list has grown to 243 names and addresses. As some of these are contacts for family associations, this newsletter is being received by over 650 people.*

*Several correspondents, having been involved in production of newsletters, have asked if donations are needed to meet costs of production and distribution. Yes, donations would be appreciated and can be forwarded to our church treasurer.*

*Over the last eight months our church members have noticed an increase in interest and visitation to Ebenezer Church. We expect this momentum to increase as further restoration work is completed and bicentenary celebrations draw near.*

*During this year we have been completing the ground work for the restoration of the church and vestry. Quotes are now being obtained and we hope to see work commence to the church roof, guttering and walls in the months ahead.*

*I am pleased to be able to inform you that Rev Grant Bilbey's period of ministry has been extended until after bicentenary celebrations in 2009.*

*Ted Brill  
For Ebenezer Pitt Town Congregation*

## A Message from the Minister

I am excited to be part of the planning for the events to mark the Bicentenary of the Ebenezer church. With your support, we are working hard to make sure that the historic buildings and grounds are in excellent condition.

The buildings and grounds are only part of the celebration. It is the people of the Ebenezer Church that are the real focus, from the early pioneers to the current church community and thousands of people whose lives have been linked to the Ebenezer Church community.

There is much that we can learn from and be inspired by from the history of the Ebenezer Church, from the first community through to the present.

Ted & Sue Brill's visit to Crown Court Church of Scotland in London (shared in this issue), reminds me of the community that built the church. While a large portion of the pioneers were from Crown Court and Presbyterian, the Ebenezer community gathered a community of people with wide denominational backgrounds together at a time of great discrimination between churches. The Ebenezer church and community then was a symbol for how we can all live together in diversity with mutual respect.

As we move towards 2009, it promises to be a wonderful coming together of people from all over our nation, more diverse than the early pioneering community. This too can be a symbol of how we now can also live with mutual respect and understanding in our society as we celebrate our past and are inspired for our future.

*Rev. Grant Bilbey*

## Bicentenary of Ebenezer Church

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

**Saturday 20 June 2009**

Other events may be held leading up to 20 June 2009. Our Church Council is seeking assistance in planning and staging this historic event. A bicentenary committee is being formed. Ideas for displays, re-enactments, activities ... names of people/associations that you feel are capable of making a contribution... are welcome.

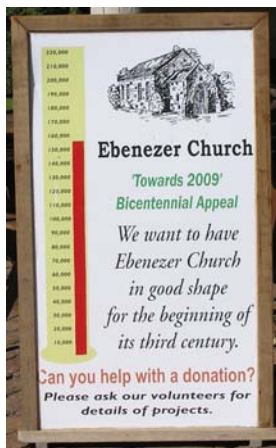
## THE SCHOOLMASTER'S HOUSE

Volunteers keep the shop in the Schoolmaster's House beside Ebenezer Church open daily, except for Good Friday and a few days near Christmas. Visitors may enjoy devonshire teas and purchase locally made jams, craft, souvenirs and family history books. Coach groups need to make bookings for teas, lunches and historical talks. In June 2006 the church site was upgraded by completing new toilet facilities and landscaping church grounds. In the six month period following there was a noticeable increase in visitors and coach groups. When compared to the same period of the previous year, shop takings increased by 38%!



**Schoolmaster's House (c.1817)**

# Ebenezer Church 'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal



An appeal to fund full restoration of all church buildings by 2009 was launched in June 2005. It was envisaged that \$220,000 was needed.

At the time of our first newsletter in August 2006 a total of \$114,000 had been received. Since then another \$44,000 has been donated, bringing the total to \$158,000. While the greater part of this increase has been made by Malcolm Turnbull, a descendant of Ann & John Turnbull, smaller donations have certainly accumulated to bring about this excellent progress. *Still some way to reach our goal* but with continuing support it appears achievable.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has made a donation – your action has certainly given encouragement to our congregation who are daily involved in fund raising through catering and sales from the church shop.

## Donations for the 'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal may be ...

- Handed to our volunteers in the Ebenezer Church Shop
- Posted to: Debbie Logue, Treasurer, EPT Uniting Church, 78 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW, 2756. (*Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Pitt Town UCA*)
- Enclosed with book orders.

Hawkesbury Gazette, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

## MP's Ebenezer Pilgrimage

By Louise McMahon

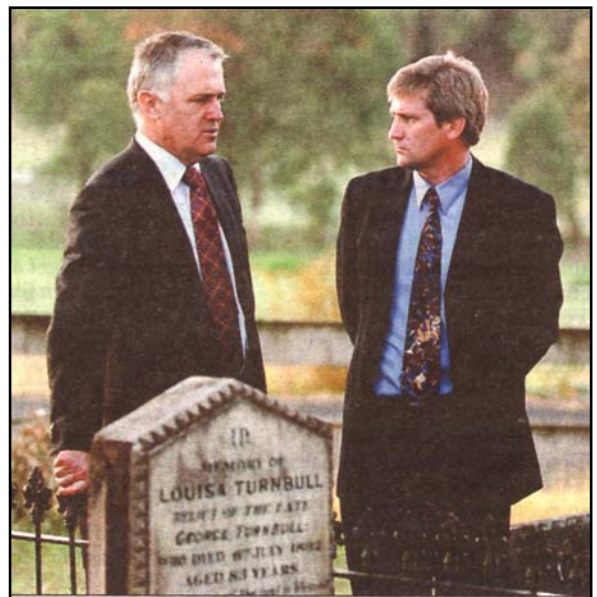
Ebenezer is a world away from the eastern suburbs of Sydney, but for visiting Wentworth MP Malcolm Turnbull it's a home of sorts.

Mr Turnbull made a special visit on Monday afternoon to the graveyard of Ebenezer Church where many of his colonial forebears have been laid to rest.

However this visit, one of many over the years, was marked by a generous personal contribution of \$35,000 to the Ebenezer Church 'Towards 2009' Bicentennial Appeal.

"It's impressive to see the work that has been achieved at the church as part of the restoration for the 2009 bicentenary," Mr Turnbull told The Gazette.

Mr Turnbull is a descendant of Coromandel pioneer John Turnbull, who settled at Swallow Rock Reach on the Hawkesbury River in 1803.



**Malcolm Turnbull with Grant Bilbey**

John and his wife Ann migrated on the ship 'Coromandel' in 1802. The Turnbells were one of eight families that had worshipped in the same church in London and had applied to be settled together in Australia.

Mr Turnbull recalls visiting Ebenezer Church as a child and is well versed in both the history of the church and his family's affiliations with it for more than two centuries.

When Governor Bligh was deposed by the military in January 1808, John Turnbull joined other Portland Head settlers in signing a petition to have Bligh re-instated. When his wife Ann gave birth to a son in June the same year, he was named William Bligh Turnbull in memory of the governor, a practice that has been continued with generations of Turnbells.

"This keeps our family history alive. The Turnbells were strong supporters of Governor William Bligh," Mr Turnbull said.

With his visit of a personal nature, he casually side-stepped questions of about politics, instead engrossing himself in a cup of tea and a scone while chatting about Hawkesbury colonial history with Ebenezer Church volunteers.

Mr Turnbull went on to inspect the church and to discuss the conservation of church buildings with Rev. Grant Bilbey. The church is hoping to raise \$220,000 to fund its restoration program in the lead-up to the 2009 bicentenary.

## Crown Court Church of Scotland Covent Garden, London

The Ebenezer Church pioneers who came to the colony on the ship the Coromandel were members of the congregation of Crown Court Church of Scotland in Covent Garden, London, when they decided in 1801 to migrate to New South Wales.

In our recent trip to the UK, Sue and I had three days between tours to explore London and one of our goals was to visit the Crown Court Church.

It was a Sunday when we took a bus to Covent Garden. The area had a real buzz about it – markets, outdoor entertainment, a noisy excited gathering of young adults waiting to gain entrance to a theatre (*which turned out to be the English version of the Australian church Hillsong!*),...

It was not easy to find the church as it is tucked away in a block of buildings. The two church entrances are inconspicuous as they are doorways set amongst shop fronts, one in Russell Street and the other a side entrance from a lane called Crown Court.

The Russell Street entrance was locked but we were invited in via the side entrance by a Korean group who were preparing for a service.

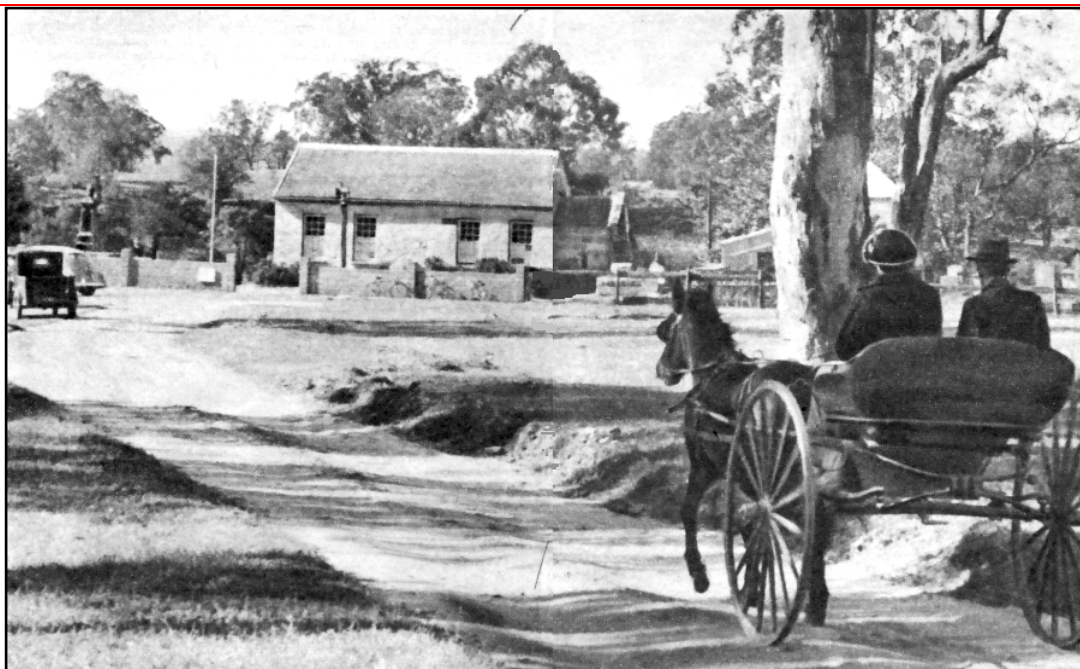
Although the church has changed considerably since 1801 it was a moving experience to sit quietly in the pews and reflect on the hardships that faced these pioneers and the building of Ebenezer Church that was to take place so many thousands of kilometres away.

On the back wall Sue found a plaque which read:

*'In recollection of the Elder James Mein, Seat Holder of Crown Court Church ...,  
Founding Pastor of Ebenezer Church...the first Presbyterian Church in Australia.'*

In 2006 Crown Court Church had 350 members and a thriving crèche and Sunday School. Dating from 1711, it is the longest established Presbyterian Church south of the Scottish border.

Ted Brill



### Photographs of Ebenezer Church

We are always on the lookout for photographs for church archives of Ebenezer Church and its activities.

With today's computers and scanners, photographs can be copied easily and enhanced.

This photograph was found in a 1953 Pix magazine.

The caption read...

'By 1953 most Ebenezer worshippers travelled to church by car, but not Mr & Mrs Joe McKenzie. Their 32 year-old pony had been going to Ebenezer Church every Sunday for 30 years. The pony was previously owned by Mr George Johnston, a descendant of pioneers Andrew & Mary Johnston. Joe McKenzie was a descendant of Robert McKenzie, a sealer who was marooned on Secretary Island, New Zealand, and rescued by Captain John Grono.'

***Do you have any church photos in your family collection?***

## GRONO FAMILY REUNION

Descendants of John Grono & Elizabeth Bristow are invited to attend a Family Reunion

WHEN: **Sunday 6th May, 2007**

WHERE: Ebenezer Church, Coromandel Rd, Ebenezer, NSW.

TIME: from 10:00a.m.

BYO picnic lunch and rugs etc...

Please direct enquiries to:

Email: [gronofamily@gmail.com](mailto:gronofamily@gmail.com)

Postal Address: Mandy Waller,  
1 Johnston Street, Pitt Town 2756

## STUBBS FAMILY REUNION

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

WHEN: **Saturday 27 October, 2007**

WHERE: Ebenezer Church, Coromandel Rd, Ebenezer, NSW.

TIME: from 9.30a.m.

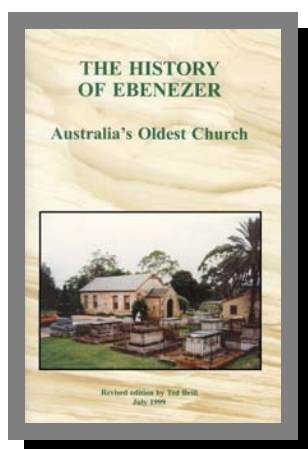
BYO picnic lunch, folding chairs, etc...

Please direct enquiries to:

Coralie Hird  
(02) 9401 0402

[cdhird@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cdhird@optusnet.com.au)

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



### THE HISTORY OF EBENEZER Australia's Oldest Church

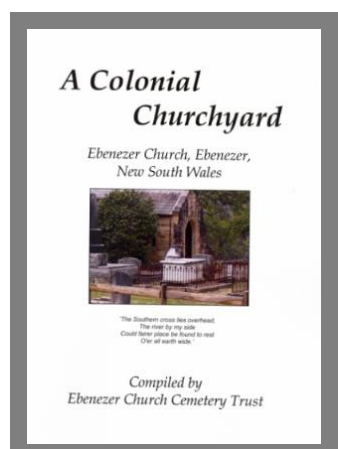
This 1999 edition of the church booklet includes information on the fifteen church pioneer families and the building of the church and school.

It provides an answer to the frequently asked question...

*'How did Ebenezer Church become Australia's oldest church?'*

**Cost:** \$4.40 per copy or \$6.00 posted

**Orders:** As per 'A Colonial Churchyard' ➔



### A Colonial Churchyard Ebenezer Church, Ebenezer, New South Wales

Compiled by Ebenezer  
Church Cemetery Trust

This book contains all inscriptions on memorials in the Ebenezer Church Cemetery plus historical information. Available from the church shop.

**Cost:** Book - \$33 per copy CD - \$20 per copy  
Book + postage - \$38 CD + postage - \$25  
(Prices include GST)

**Orders** may be placed with:

Ted Brill, 59 Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, NSW, 2756.

**Payment** is required with each order. Please make cheques payable to Ebenezer Church Shop.

## Two interesting connections...

➔ **A lady registering to receive this newsletter** told us that her son and his fiancée were looking for a church for their approaching marriage. Of all the churches in the districts around St Marys (NSW) they chose Ebenezer Church, a church with which they believed they had no connection. That was before the groom's mother started researching her family tree – only to find that she was a descendant of Ebenezer Church pioneers William & Sarah Stubbs!

➔ **The wife of a country Rotarian** on an inter-club visit to the Hawkesbury wished that the three-day visit was on another weekend as it clashed with a course on researching family history. During a talk in Ebenezer on the history of the church she became particularly interested when church school teacher Matthew McFetridge was mentioned, McFetridge being a family name. Some frantic research followed on the internet, resulting in Matthew McFetridge being a direct ancestor and, by the next weekend, a return to Ebenezer and three generations of the family having photos taken beside the McFetridge tombstones.

## Church Contacts

### Bicentenary - This Newsletter

Ted Brill,  
59 Tizzana Road, Ebenezer, 2756  
02 4579 9235  
[tedbrill@bigpond.com](mailto:tedbrill@bigpond.com)

### Minister

Rev Grant Bilbey 02 4572 3153  
Uniting Church,  
Bathurst Street, Pitt Town, NSW, 2756  
[ebenpittuca@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ebenpittuca@optusnet.com.au)

### Ebenezer Church Shop

Bookings & Inquiries: 02 4579 9350  
**Church Treasurer**  
Debbie Logue,  
78 Coromandel Road,  
Ebenezer, NSW, 2756