

Ebenezer Church, a ‘living’ church for 200 years. But what about the future?

On a recent Sunday as the minister approached Ebenezer Church she noticed that parked amongst the usual cars was a caravan. The van belonged to descendants of church pioneers Owen & Margaret Cavanough; these descendants were travelling through, had visited Ebenezer Church the day before, enjoyed a devonshire tea and before moving on were attending a service in the church of their ancestors.

What makes a visit to Ebenezer Church a special event for such people is for them to find that after 200 years Ebenezer Church is still a *living* church and that they are able to connect with the current congregation, be it over a devonshire tea or at a service.

But we wonder how much longer we can remain a living church. Our congregation is aware that decreasing church attendance is a national trend; many churches no longer can financially support a minister and have been forced to close or amalgamate. Lately we have been thinking a lot about the future of Ebenezer Church.

Our current situation

There are two churches in our parish – Ebenezer Church and Scots Church in Pitt Town. We have weekly services at both churches but unite as one congregation with one church council.

Thanks to generous support in the lead up to bicentenary celebrations, Ebenezer Church buildings are in a high

standard of maintenance and church grounds are now more inviting for visitors to the site. Scots Church is in need of maintenance and the church halls, which have served us well, now need revamping or replacing. A large housing development will soon commence at Pitt Town.

Our congregation, though not lacking in dedication and enthusiasm, is now much less in number and our average age is at the high end of the range.

So, what about the future?

It is clear that we need to focus on membership and that to survive we need to have a broader concept of what makes a person a member. But we realise that, considering the national decline of church membership, maintaining the size of our congregation will not be an easy task.

God will provide? I have trouble with this phrase. To me it brings forth visions of people sitting back in comfortable chairs, sipping drinks ... while God ‘provides’.

But I firmly believe that God will provide if people, no matter how small in number, face their problems with faith, courage, determination and commitment. The recent Ebenezer Church restoration program and bicentenary celebrations are recent examples of this.

Maintaining Ebenezer Church as a living church is our focus. I have a feeling that we will need some help on the way and would welcome your ideas.

Ted Brill, Church Secretary

Wedding at Ebenezer Church



Ebenezer Church continues to be a popular church for weddings. This wedding took place in March 2011.

Church Contacts

Minister

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

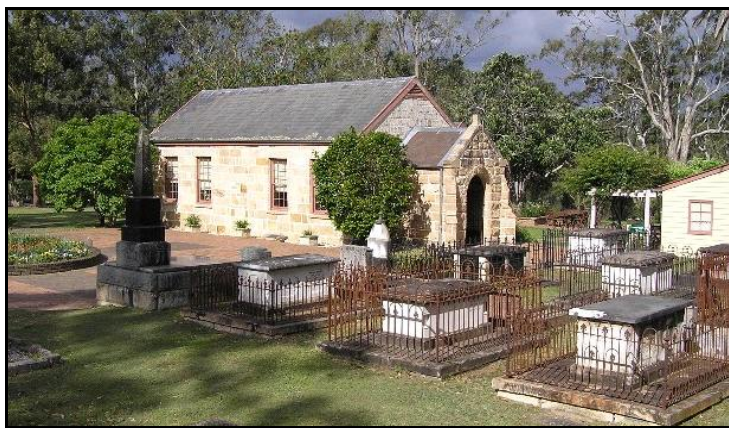
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Ebenezer Church Shop 02 4579 9350

Bookings & Inquiries:
Ebenezer Church Shop,
PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, 2756

Ebenezer Church Pilgrimage 2011 Saturday 18 June at 2.00pm



Everyone is welcome to attend the 202nd anniversary of Ebenezer Church. A service will be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 18 June. Invitations have been extended to the moderators of the Uniting and Presbyterian Churches to participate in the service.

Following the service we will be unveiling a new plaque dedicated to the pioneer families of Ebenezer Church. Over the last 25 years there has been an enormous increase in people researching their family history. With reference to our church pioneers, this research has revealed two omissions and a mistake on the present plaque in the church porch that was erected in 1938.

The plaque omits the first wives of Paul Bushell (Jane Sharp) and William Jacklin (Mary Cardell). Both of these women were present when the pioneers settled in this area and were part of this community. Also, Paul Bushell's second wife is listed as Elizabeth but her name was Isabella.

As per the current plaque, the wives will be listed by their maiden names. Occasionally visiting pioneer descendants become concerned about this as they 'knew they were married'! It must be remembered that many of the pioneers originally came from the border region of Scotland and England. According to a book of old Scottish customs, it was a common practice to refer to a married woman by her maiden name.

Following the unveiling, everyone is invited to stay for afternoon tea.



Paul Bushell, Second Fleeter Louise Wilson

It is pleasing to see that the lives of the pioneers of Ebenezer Church are still being researched and their stories published.

Publications of recent years include:

2007: **John Grono 1767-1847, Our Old Colonial Neptune** by Robert Taylor

2008: **Jacklin: a convict's story** by Victor King

2009: **The Coromandlers' Ebenezer**
by James D. Mein

2009: **Two Hawkesbury Sailors** Second edition by the Grono-Books Association

In 2010 Louise Wilson launched her book 'Paul Bushell, Second Fleeter'.



This book is described as 'a gripping, informative and humane view of early colonial life'. On the back cover it states ...

'Transported in 1790 with the hellish Second Fleet, the worst of all convict shipments to Australia, Paul Bushell triumphed and created his own piece of paradise on earth. Vigorous, independent, generous-spirited, community-minded, principle and hard-working, he championed the rights of others and prospered himself. His ecumenical views and respect for women's rights were ahead of his time.'

Louise Wilson is to be congratulated on her well-researched publication, for bringing forth information on Paul Bushell and so adding to our knowledge of the pioneers of Ebenezer Church.

In her book Louise reveals an interesting link between Paul Bushell and John Youl, the first teacher at the church school.

The book is available from the church shop for \$35 or \$46 posted.

Two Sides of the Lord's Prayer

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone because he was short of time and he couldn't find a space with a meter. He put a note under the windscreen wiper that read:

'I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I will miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespassers.'

When he returned he found a parking ticket from a parking officer, along with this note:

'I've circled the block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I will loose my job. Lead us not into temptation.'

PIONEER FAMILY REUNIONS

Grono Family – Sunday 1 May

Stubbs Family – Saturday 29 October

John & Elizabeth Grono

John Grono arrived as boatswain on the 'Buffalo' in 1799, bringing with him his wife Elizabeth and children. He settled in the Hawkesbury but devoted most of his time to building ships which sailed on the river and the open seas.

The achievements of pioneer John Grono are of particular interest. Grono was a ship's captain, sealer, trader and ship-builder. The ships he built included the 'Governor Bligh', 'Elizabeth' and 'Australian'.

They were built on Grono's property on the Hawkesbury River, his land being upstream from Ebenezer Church. How did the ships get out to sea? In the 1800's the river was much deeper than it is now and the river is tidal as far as present day North Richmond. Using the outgoing tidal currents the ships were able to make their way to Broken Bay and the open sea.

Ship building was a trade that continued in the Grono family, especially through Alexander Books.

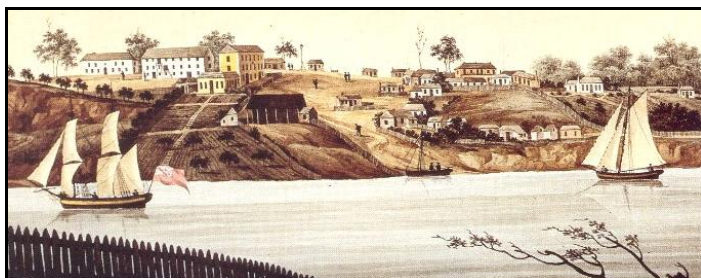
Grono sailed on a number of occasions to New Zealand between 1808 and 1816 and engaged in sealing, amassing considerable wealth. On one occasion he rescued ten sealers marooned for four years on an island off the South Island of New Zealand, two of whom, Alexander Books and Robert McKenzie, married his daughters Margaret and Jane.

New Zealand historian John Hall-Jones refers to Grono as 'Grono the Name-giver' as Grono explored and named many parts of the South Island of New Zealand.

Places named by Grono include Elizabeth Island (after his wife), Thompson Sound (after Andrew Thompson), Nancy Sound (after Thompson's wife), Milford Sound (formerly Milford Haven) and Windsor Strait.

John Grono was also a successful farmer and major land-holder in the Hawkesbury.

Elizabeth & John Grono were worthy pioneers of Ebenezer Church.



Windsor and the Hawkesbury River 1809

William & Sarah Stubbs

William Stubbs was a tailor by trade and probably worked for the same firm as his friend John Turnbull. When William and wife Sarah arrived in the colony in 1802 on the Coromandel they had three children, namely William 5 years, Sarah 4 years and Elizabeth 1 year old.

At Portland Head William Stubbs chose a site opposite John Turnbull on a horseshoe bend of the river known as Crescent Reach.

The family's holding proved to be subject to frequent raids by the Aborigines. We now know that the adjoining grant that was acquired a few years later had Aboriginal rocks carvings so perhaps the Stubbs were living too close to an Aboriginal sacred site.

The Aborigines were probably aware of William's absence one day in May 1805 when they dropped in from the rocky ridges to the east. Assuring Sarah Stubbs that they would not harm her or the children, they stripped the house and disappeared. That evening, leaving the children with William, Sarah rode off to Parramatta to replenish their supplies. News of further tragedy awaited her return the next day for her husband had drowned in the river.

The Sydney Gazette recorded the tragedy:

'William Stubbs, a settler of the River Hawkesbury, was unfortunately drowned in crossing the river in a canoe. A second person was accompanying him, and when in about the centre the vehicle unexpectedly upset, and the unfortunate man, depending on his ability to swim ashore, advised his companion not to quit the boat, as it would be sure to drift into the banks. He did so and saved his life. And Mr Stubbs after very nearly gaining the shore, unfortunately became entangled amongst a cluster of weeds, from which unable to extricate himself, it was his fate to perish in the presence of one of his children, who witnessed the melancholy disaster from the bank.'

With a young family to provide for, it is not surprising that Sarah, eighteen months after William's death, married James Painter. Painter appears to have been a kindly man who was willing to assume the role of husband and father.

Evidence of his and Sarah's continuing support of Ebenezer Church can be found in a copy of the minutes of the Portland Head Society of 30 March 1817 when James Paynter pledged five pounds annually for the support of the minister.

Promoting Ebenezer Church as a Tourist Destination



Our church members share the fascinating pioneer story of Ebenezer Church through our tourist activities.

We cater for coach groups that are mainly from Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Visits include an historic talk. Our church shop is kept open daily for devonshire teas and the sale of souvenirs, books, jams and pickles.

In the way of promotion, we have recently set up Ebenezer Church displays at two family history fairs. In August 2010 we were at the Deerubbin Centre in Windsor. At this fair Louise Wilson launched her book 'Paul Bushell, Second Fleeter'. The second occasion was in March 2011 when we attended the Nepean Family History Fair at Penrith. Both fairs were well-attended.

If you live within the above areas and belong to a social group that is looking for an enjoyable day's outing, please consider Ebenezer Church and give our church shop a call on 02 4579 9350 or email tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au.



GRONO FAMILY

The next GRONO FAMILY REUNION
will be held
on Sunday 1st May 2011
in the grounds of
Ebenezer Church,
95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW

Please direct inquiries to:
Mandy Waller, 1 Johnston Street,
Pitt Town, NSW, 2756.
gronofamily@gmail.com

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:
Coralie Hird (02) 8084 3808
cdhird@optusnet.com.au
Lillyan MacDonald,
23B/95 Stanhope Road,
Killara NSW 2071.

Stubbs Family Website:
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~stubbs1802/>
Stubbs email: stubbs1802@gmail.com

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