



Hello Everyone,

**This newsletter** arrives at destinations right across our nation, in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom. No doubt some of you have experienced extreme weather conditions – the fierce floods and fires – as part of climate change. We hope and pray that you are all well and out of harm's way.

**This edition includes information** on World War 1 soldier Staunton Johnston. How good it is to see that an Australian soldier of so long ago is remembered! There follows a 1941 obituary for Sarah Brand that contains interesting insights into life in Ebenezer in the 1860's. Karen Mills of the Grono Family Association has contributed an article on the rescue by pioneer John Grono of 10 men from an island on the western side of New Zealand. Some interesting reading ahead.

**I would like to thank** those readers who have donated towards the cost and production of our newsletters. Your support is encouraging and appreciated. Contact details are below should others wish to do likewise. Ted Brill, Church Secretary

## STAUNTON HOPE JOHNSTON

A present Australian soldier serving overseas, Corporal Michael Hamer, was required to research a past Australian soldier and he chose Staunton Hope Johnston, a descendant of pioneer Andrew Johnston who designed and supervised the construction of Ebenezer Church. About 40 people attended the visit by Corporal Michael Hamer. The following is a summary of his research.



Staunton Hope Johnston enlisted as an Australian soldier on 18th October 1915. He served in the 6th Remount unit (6th Squadron) as a private and was promoted to Corporal AIF Canteens on 18th July 1917.

Staunton and five other soldiers conducted a supply run to Jericho. In May 1918 he was a passenger in a 1910 Ford car that was part of

a convoy on the Jerusalem – Jericho Road when a truck in front stopped suddenly in the middle of the road.

The driver of the vehicle in which Staunton was a passenger later reported:

'I jammed my footbrake on hard. The brake refused to grip. I immediately applied my reverse gear but there was not sufficient room on the road to twist me back as there were a number of lorries behind me. The car balanced for a few secs on the side of the embankment and then rolled over twice. I crawled out and stopped the engine and then assisted Corporal Hope Johnston to get free, the others coming to my assistance.'

Corporal Johnston died a few days later on 11th May 1918. He was 30 years of age. A Court Inquiry to the cause of the accident stated that it was the result of failure of the brakes due to a faulty cotter pin in the foot brake. Evidence was produced to prove that the cotter pin in that model of car was not strong enough to support the foot brake.

Captain T. H. Trickett wrote to Staunton's family:

'I desire to express to you my deepest sympathy in your sad bereavement. Your son was with me for nearly two years, and he was most popular in the unit, and was one of my best N.C.O.'s. I was speaking to him about half an hour before he met with the accident, and he was then in his usual cheerful spirits, and it came as a great shock to me when I heard the sad news. He bore up splendidly under the pain he must have suffered, and his cheerfulness to the end was commented upon by all who came in contact with him.

'He is sorely missed by the unit, both from the point of view of the work he performed, and on account of his winning personality and splendid character, and I personally feel his loss very keenly as the relations which existed between us were always most cordial. It will be of some little consolation to you to know that he died on active service in the performance of his duty, which he always endeavoured to carry out to the utmost of his ability, and in which he never spared himself.'



Corporal Michael Hamer at Ebenezer Church presenting a copy of his research to Johnston family representative Robyn Sanday. The memorial to World War 1 soldier Staunton Johnston is in the background.

### Minister

**Rev. Helenna Anderson**

### Church Contacts

**Secretary:** Ted Brill 02 4579 9235  
Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Church,  
PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, 2756  
[tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au](mailto:tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au)

### Ebenezer Church Shop

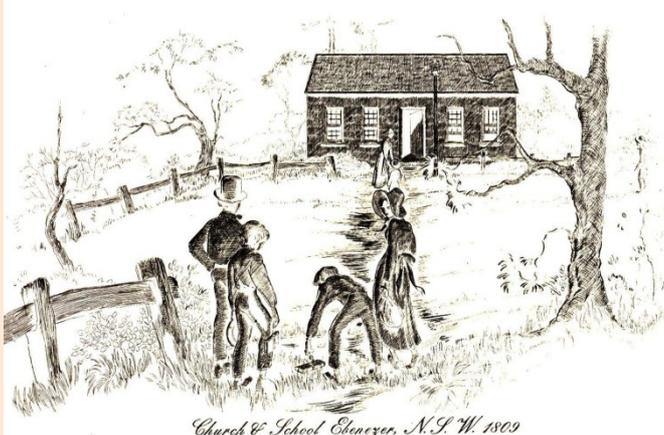
Bookings & Inquiries: 02 4579 9350

Ebenezer Church Shop,  
PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, 2756

## INSIGHTS INTO EBENEZER in the 1860's

School began in Ebenezer Church in 1810 and continued until 1886, closing when a public school was built, also in what is now Coromandel Road.

Using the internet site Trove, which includes old newspapers such as the Windsor & Richmond Gazette, the following obituary was found for Sarah Brand in a 1941 edition. The article provides interesting information on the church school, farming at Ebenezer in the period 1850-1870 and the 1867 flood from the Ebenezer side (the largest Hawkesbury flood in history and the flood that came up to the back of the Schoolmaster's House at Ebenezer Church).



### OBITUARY MRS. SARAH BRAND

ANOTHER link with the almost legendary past of the Windsor district was severed by the death at her home, in the early hours of Saturday last, of Mrs. Sarah Brand, of 'Lochiel,' Keith-street, Dulwich Hill. She was in her eighty-sixth year.

She was the daughter of Jeremiah and Susan Ryan, who operated their farm on land adjoining Ebenezer Presbyterian Church (now the property of Mr. Marshall Davison), and also partly on that now owned by Mr. J. Lang, M.L.A. Mr. Ryan had

eight daughters and one son, and the daughters took part in all the work of the farm. Mrs. Brand would often tell of hand flailing wheat, and the gatherings for corn husking; etc. On occasions her father would travel by bullock dray with produce to the Haymarket, Sydney, taking one or more of the family with him. Sometimes the journey would take a week to complete.

Mrs. Brand could enthral listeners, making the past actually live again, with her wonderful power of narration and mimicry. Often she would recount incidents that are part of the history of the Windsor-Wilber force-Pitt Town districts. She was about eleven when the great flood of 1867 devastated the district, and, with many other families, the Ryans took refuge from the waste of waters within Ebenezer Church.

Revisiting the old church in later years, she described how each family in that emergency was allotted a pew for their accommodation, and pointed out the very pew her family had occupied. She and all the other members of the family had their schooling also in the Ebenezer Church. Perhaps the most realistic of her school day reminiscences was her description of how the old church's stone threshold was worn down with the children rubbing their slate pencils on it to sharpen them.

In 1882 she was married to Mr. Harry Brand, later works manager of Beulah Potteries, Erskineville, and who died in 1924. .... The funeral took place at Rookwood on Saturday afternoon, and was preceded by a Service at St. Paul of the Cross Church, Hurlstone Park, celebrated by the Rev. Dr. Twomey, who also conducted the graveside service, and who spoke highly from his personal acquaintance of the late Mrs. Brand's qualities as a devout Christian and a devoted mother. A remarkable coincidence was that she was attended in her last hours by Nurse Haley, who also was born and lived her earlier life in the Ebenezer district.

## EBENEZER CHURCH'S OLDEST GRAVE



For many years we thought that the oldest grave in the Ebenezer Church graveyard was that of Richard Hayes – 1811. Then the Hayes descendants, after researching their family genealogy, told us that it was really 1841.

So Sarah Gilchrist's grave – 1813 – became the oldest. But in 2012 we were informed that 1813 was really 1843. It appears that on both headstones the forward part of the number 4 had been more lightly cut into the stone and with erosion only the downstroke remained, making it look like a number 1.

So the search was again on for the oldest grave. George Reeve, writing in the Windsor and Richmond Gazette (2 December 1921) stated that pioneer Mary Hall, wife of George Hall, who died in 1827, was the first burial in the churchyard, the Hall vault being the one closest to the church door.

But there is a grave at the opposite end of the same row as the Hall vault, that of Robert McKenzie, who died on 19 February 1825. So it would appear, until we hear otherwise, that Robert McKenzie's grave is the oldest.

McKenzie was one of the sealers that had been rescued by Captain John Grono from an island off the west coast of New Zealand

## SOMETHING TO PONDER

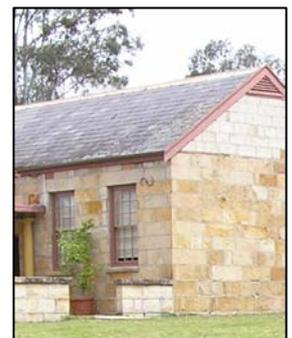
The question is often asked ... **'Why is the stonework different on the gable ends of Ebenezer Church?'**

Like the walls, the blocks are sandstone but they are of a different colour.

Questions arise...

Were they quarried from a different area?

Has the roof design been changed at some time after the construction of the church in 1809?



St Philips Church in Sydney town, built before Ebenezer Church but dismantled in the 1840's, had roof lines sloping towards the ends as well as the sides. Commonly referred to as a hip or jerkin head roof, it was a common building style in 1809.

Andrew Johnston's use of this style in his other buildings such as the Schoolmaster's House suggests that possibility Ebenezer Church originally had a jerkin head roof. Your thoughts?

# The Saga of the Crew of the *Active* contributed by Karen Mills, Grono Family Association

The Grono Family Association will be holding a family reunion on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013 at the Ebenezer Uniting Church for all descendants of John and Elizabeth Grono, who arrived on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1799 on the *HMS Buffalo*. This year we celebrate the 214<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Grono family's arrival in Australia. The Grono family are one of the pioneer families of the Ebenezer Church.



John Grono achieved much in his lifetime in Australia – he undertook numerous successful sealing and whaling voyages, which entailed exploring the New Zealand coastline, to which he is attributed as providing names for a number of locations. He built a number of ships including the largest ship to be built on the Hawkesbury in his time, the *Australian*. John also carried on a farm and participated in community life, for example serving as member of the grand jury in Windsor.

In September 1812 John Grono set out on one of his sealing voyages, in the ship *Governor Bligh*. However, this trip was to be unusual in that his cargo, on return in December 1813, was not just the usual seal skins and barrels of oil but this time included ten men, crew from the ship *Active* – who had been left stranded on the coast of New Zealand for 3 years and 10 months. This year marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rescue of those ten men by John Grono from the New Zealand coast and this seems an opportune time to revisit this story. It is an amazing tale of survival and perseverance against all odds.

The *Active*, under Captain John Bader, left England on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1808<sup>[1]</sup> bound for the South Seas on a sealing and whaling expedition. Initially the vessel arrived in Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, before continuing into Bass Strait to an island called The Slipper, and also to Kent's Group and Western Port.<sup>[2]</sup> It was here during bad weather that the *Active* was severely damaged. The crew managed to fix the vessel as best they could and proceeded to Port Jackson to have the ship properly repaired.<sup>[3]</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1809, following the completion of repairs, the *Active* set sail from Port Jackson for the New Zealand fishery<sup>[4]</sup> and, according to the Affidavit of David Loweriston<sup>[5]</sup>, arrived there in early January 1810. Captain Bader left ten men on an Island in Open Bay (most likely Taumaka) to hunt for seals. The *Active* departed on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1810 to collect more supplies from Port Jackson.

Unfortunately the *Active* never returned – it is believed the ship must have sunk without trace. (Perhaps its seaworthiness had been affected by the prior damage it had received at Western Port?)

The ten men named as left behind were:

David Loweriston  
Alexander Book (Books)  
Robert Robison (later known as Robert McKenzie)  
James Anderson  
John Waid (Ward)  
William Jones  
Frances Ferrara (Francis Farrero)  
John Cames (Camel/Campbell)  
William Jackson  
Bartholomew Vincent

The men were left with very little food, one whale boat, an axe, an adze and a knife. They managed to stretch their food provisions until early September 1810 and then struggled to

survive by eating the odd seal, bird, fish, and a type of fern. Food was extremely scarce and they often went for days without anything to eat.

In March 1811 the men travelled in their whale boat to the mainland of New Zealand in the hope of finding an easier existence. Life was really no better there and survival continued to be a struggle due to the lack of food. On the beach they found another boat (apparently left there by John Grono on one of his previous voyages). They repaired both boats, and planned to travel to "the more frequented sealing places"<sup>[6]</sup> – most likely the area around Dusky Bay, Chalky Inlet and Preservation Inlet as these areas were often visited by sealers. Unfortunately for them, a storm destroyed both the boats. So rather than giving up they tried to find their way overland – but were stopped by a chain of high mountains which they found impossible to climb over.<sup>[7]</sup>

In January 1812 they managed to make a canoe out of seal skins and used it to travel between the island where their seal skins were kept and their mainland home. While there they managed to preserve a great number of the seal skins they had obtained upon their initial arrival.

The canoe they had built was inadequate for a longer journey, so in May 1813 they decided to start building a new boat. With the few tools they had they slowly started to make planks of wood (they managed to make eighty) and used the metal hoops from their provision casks to make nails. Luckily on about the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1813 John Grono and his crew of the *Governor Bligh* arrived in the bay where they were living. John Grono took them on board and they arrived back at Port Jackson on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1813.

Somehow they had managed to survive for 3 years and 10 months in that inhospitable location. It is an amazing tale of survival! At least four of the rescued men subsequently travelled with John on his next sealing voyage in early 1814, they were Alexander Books, Robert Robertson (McKenzie), John Camel and Francis Farrero.

John Grono appears to have opened up his home to these men - as two of them, namely Alexander Books and Robert McKenzie, became his sons-in-law. Alexander Books married Margaret Grono on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1819 at St Matthew's Church of England, Windsor; and Robert McKenzie married Jane Grono on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1818 at St Matthew's Church of England, Windsor.

The graves of Alexander and Margaret Books and Robert McKenzie can all be found in the Ebenezer Churchyard Cemetery, along with those of John and Elizabeth Grono.

1. Lloyds List 1807-1808, No. 4288, London, Friday, September 30, 1808.

2. The Slipper is actually Curtis Island, so nicknamed because of its shape. (Eccleston, G. C., 2012, *The Early Charting of Victoria's Coastline: With Comments on Victoria's Maritime Boundaries*, Australian and New Zealand Map Society, p.90).

Kent's Group is a group of small islands lying in Bass Strait about 55km north-west of Flinders Island.

3. *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 1809, July 30, p.1

4. *ibid*, 1809, December 17, p.2

5. Court of Civil Jurisdiction, Sydney, NSW, 1814, *Ex parte James Underwood in the matter of John Bader deceased*, "Affidavit of David Loweriston", AONSW 5/1166

6. *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 1813, Dec 18, p.2

7. "Extraordinary Adventure of David Lowrieston and his Nine Companions" in Kirby, R. S., 1820, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*, Volume 5, London, p.295.

## Seeking the Lewis Jones family

On the occasion of the bicentenary celebrations we were overwhelmed by the response by church pioneer families to set up marquees in church grounds. The marquees were focal points for families and were greatly appreciated by descendants.

As pioneer Lewis Jones was a bachelor, we did not expect any family response. However, very close to the day of the celebrations, we had contact with a person who was a descendant of the sister of Lewis Jones and that person most likely receives this newsletter.

A researcher has taken an interest in Lewis Jones, is keen to further his research and wishes to contact descendants. If you are that descendant, I would greatly appreciate you contacting me. *Ted Brill* tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, NSW, 2756; 02 4579 9235

## Johnston Family Association

Website: [www.tribalpages.com/tribes/rsanday](http://www.tribalpages.com/tribes/rsanday)  
Information and over 600 photos can be viewed on this site. To gain an access password please email Robyn Sanday [rsanday@aapt.net.au](mailto:rsanday@aapt.net.au).

## John Youl

John Youl, the first teacher at the school in Ebenezer Church (1810) who occasionally led a worship service and also conducted a burial service, is a significant person in our church history. His descendants were well-represented at the bicentennial celebrations in 2009.

The contact for Youl descendants is ...  
Robert Starling, 6 Cecil Avenue, Wangi Wangi, NSW, 2267.  
[bobkwangi@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bobkwangi@optusnet.com.au) 02 49755391

### OWEN & MARGARET CAVANOUGH FAMILY REUNION

Descendants of Owen & Margaret Cavanaugh are invited to this reunion marking 225 years since arriving on the First Fleet.

WHERE: **Ebenezer Church**,  
95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer  
(Erected on land donated by Owen)

WHEN: **Saturday 20 April 2013 –  
10.00am to 4.00pm**

BRING: **BYO Picnic Lunch to have on the lawns.** Limited picnic tables available. The Schoolmaster's House will be open for Devonshire Teas but not lunches.

#### Contacts:

Sandra (02) 4324 7504  
[alan.woods1@bigpond.com](mailto:alan.woods1@bigpond.com)  
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[p1234@oneseniors.com.au](mailto:p1234@oneseniors.com.au)

### GRONO FAMILY REUNION 2013

**A Grono Family Reunion will be on  
Sunday 5th May, 2013  
Ebenezer Church,  
95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer  
Starting at 10.00am**

This reunion will be focusing on the 200th anniversary of John Grono's rescue of the crew of the Active who were left stranded in New Zealand for over 3 years.

For other activities on Saturday 4 May 2013, contacts are below.

#### Contact:

Mandy Waller, Secretary  
email: [gronofamily@gmail.com](mailto:gronofamily@gmail.com)

web: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gronofamily/index.htm>

### STUBBS FAMILY 35th ANNUAL REUNION

**Saturday 26 October 2013**

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

Stubbs Family Website:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~stubbs1802/>

Stubbs email:

[stubbs1802@gmail.com](mailto:stubbs1802@gmail.com)

## EBENEZER CHURCH PILGRIMAGE 2013

The 204th anniversary will be celebrated on Saturday 15 June. At 11.00am there will be walk-and-talks in church grounds and, if requested, to the nearby historic tree, quarry and landing beach. At 2.00pm a service will commence in the church and afternoon tea will follow. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please note that Schoolmaster's House will be open from 10.00am for devonshire teas but not lunches.

### EBENEZER CHURCH PIONEER FAMILY CONTACTS

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