



Hello Everyone,

My apologies for the lateness of this edition of our newsletter.

A recent unexpected development at Ebenezer was that our minister Rev. Helenna Anderson had to withdraw suddenly from all church responsibilities because of illness. After a week in hospital, Helenna is making good progress and our prayers are with her as she undertakes the next stage of treatment.

Services at our two churches have continued – and for this we thank our lay preachers, retired ministers and ministers of neighbouring churches who have taken baptisms and weddings.

The unusual warm autumn weather has brought many visitors to Ebenezer Church and our volunteers have been extra busy. There have been many larger than expected bookings. A car club organiser thought if there were 30 members in his group, he would consider that to be a good response. Final numbers were 54! On another day a group booking grew to 75 for devonshire teas.

Comments by visitors are positive ...

Castle Hill RSL Photographic Club

'...a group of enthusiastic photographers from the Castle Hill RSL Photographic Club descended upon your historic church to (hopefully) take some interesting photographs in the dark with only the assistance of the moonlight and torchlight. ...For many of us, this was the first time we have been to Ebenezer....Your hospitality ... was appreciated by us all. We thank you and your volunteers.'

Cobra Car Club

'Please pass on our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful volunteers who provided us with such a delicious morning tea. The scones and cream were very popular. Your talk kept us all entranced and we all came away believing we knew just a little more of this area's early history. We thank you for your commitment to the church and the area.'

Sydney Living Museums

'Our visit to Ebenezer Church was the highlight of our visit to the Hawkesbury and we will be certainly recommending you far and wide!'

We thank our volunteers who are committed to maintaining Ebenezer Church as a living church and to preserving it for future generations.

Ted Brill

You're invited to the 205th ANNIVERSARY SERVICE of EBENEZER CHURCH

95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW
Saturday 14 June 2014
at 2.00pm
followed by afternoon tea

Participating in the service will be
Rev. Dr Brian Brown,
Moderator, Synod of NSW & ACT, The Uniting Church in
Australia,
and Mr Colin Langford,
Moderator - NSW General Assembly,
Presbyterian Church in Australia

Inquiries 4579 9235 tedbrill@ebenezerchurch.org.au

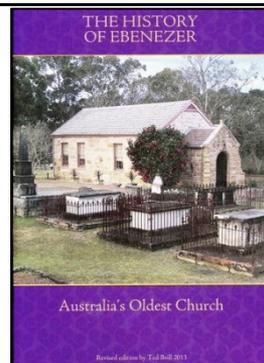
Released this year is a new edition of the booklet 'The History of Ebenezer, Australia's oldest church'.

It replaces the 1999 edition and includes information on the beginning of Ebenezer Church, the 15 pioneer families and a report on the 2009 bicentenary celebrations.

\$8 posted. Orders with payment to...

Ebenezer Church Shop

PO Box 7048, Wilberforce, 2756
Bookings & Inquiries: 02 4579 9350



Church Contacts:

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----- Ebenezer - Pitt Town Uniting Church – sharing our Christian faith and heritage -----

Ebenezer Church's first minister **PASTOR JAMES MEIN**

Susannah and James Mein's departure on the Coromandel would have been one of mixed emotions. There was the excitement of what had been an ambition was finally taking place – their embarkation on the Coromandel to a new land, the prospect of being settled with like-minded people on 100 acre land grants and, after becoming established, building their own church and school. At the same time they were leaving behind their two children James and Sarah.

In addition to this tragedy followed with the death during the voyage of James' brother Andrew. George Hall reported in his diary on 25th February 1802: 'Andrew Mein very ill, can hardly walk.' And on 28th April: 'Mr Andrew Mein became seriously ill and died at 12.45pm.'

But James Mein, as the spiritual leader of the new settlers, was prepared to face the responsibilities that lay ahead. 'Mein was set aside as a catechist, and authorised to baptise, bury and marry members of the group as required. In later years many would eulogise him as a great man of faith.'

Rev. J. D. Lang wrote of James Mein: 'Mr James Mein, an intelligent and pious carpenter from the Border, and a member of the Presbyterian Church in Crown Street, Covent Garden, ... officiated as the voluntary catechist ... assembling the different families for divine service every Sabbath in the most convenient central locality they could find, and there engaging in the high praise of God, by singings the psalms of David in the Scottish metrical version, reading the Holy Scriptures with a sermon'

In the new colony James Mein made his living as a farmer and does not seem to have had more than modest means. By late 1806 he had only 14½ acres (6 ha) under crop and owned 18 sheep and 8 hogs. Later he acquired an additional 50 acres (20 ha). The 1821 muster showed him as having 27 acres (11 ha) under crop and owning 35 cattle and 35 hogs. On the other hand although he remained a public-spirited figure he was also a fairly regular and large supplier of meat to the commissariat so he may have been occupying other land.

Together with the remaining Coromandel settlers and a number of other free settlers and emancipists he was a firm supporter of Governor Bligh in the Rum Rebellion. Personal antipathy towards some of the leading rebels, gratitude to Bligh for aid received after the great flood in 1806 and belief in the desirability of supporting the properly constituted authorities all played a part in shaping his attitude. On 18 April 1808 he joined in a plea to Lieutenant-Colonel Paterson to assume command and in an attack on John Macarthur and the other rebels.

No doubt James Mein urged the members of his congregation to build a church for it was he who led in prayer at the first meeting in Dr Arndell's in home September 1808 to discuss the project. It would have been a joyous occasion in 1809 when Ebenezer Church was built.

In 1816 James Mein subscribed to the Waterloo fund, in 1817 to the relief fund for sufferers from the Hawkesbury River flood, and in 1819 to the Windsor Charitable Institution. A year later he joined the committee of the Windsor Bible Association and in 1826 served on juries at Windsor Quarter Sessions.

A sad time occurred in 1827 when three Ebenezer Church pioneers died within seven days – Mary Hall on 29th June, James Mein on 3rd July and Jane Davison on 5th July.

In his life in the colony James Mein saw his fellow settlers become successful farmers, the building of Ebenezer Church, the commencement of the church school and the arrival of the congregation's first ordained minister Rev John McGarvie.

It is an oddity that when James Mein died he was buried not by Rev. John McGarvie but by Rev. Matthew Devenish Meares, Anglican minister at Pitt Town (and neighbour of McGarvie).

Perhaps this was because the family wanted a funeral service and funeral services were not allowed according to Presbyterian law at that time.

Ebenezer Church historian Ron Arndell wrote about Mein's house at Portland Head:

'... it would appear there was a verandah in front of the house, where the old man would enjoy the serenity, freed from the cooped-up life as a tailor in far-away London;

perhaps meditating on his sermon for the next Sunday;

perhaps tired after a ride through the hills and gullies on his old white horse in answer to a call from one of his flock in need,

perhaps rejoicing at the sight of their luxuriant crops of maize and wheat ripening for the harvest.'



Rev. John Dunmore Lang's recollection of the first communion at Ebenezer Church

For the first 20 years the congregation that gathered under the leadership of James Mein was not aligned to any existing denomination. Members of the Church of England and the Catholic Church, Congregationalists, Calvinists and those with a background of the Scottish church were all represented. It was a church of common Christianity.

The church became Presbyterian when Rev. John Dunmore Lang, the first Presbyterian minister in the colony, conducted a communion service in the church in 1824. This was the first time holy communion according to the hallowed customs of the Presbyterian Church had been celebrated in Australia.

Lang was a formidable and fiery orator whose influence in the colony of New South Wales spanned more than fifty years. He was also a writer, educationist, politician, newspaper proprietor and republican. Lang made six trips back to England encouraging skilled people to emigrate and also travelled extensively through the United States of America.



Even after such a varied and at times turbulent life, Lang still found a place in his memoirs to record his impressions of the first communion at Ebenezer Church:

'There were twenty communicants on the occasion; and considering the very peculiar circumstances in which the ordinance was administered, in the little church on the banks of the noble river and on the edges of the interminable Australian forest, after so long an interval from their leaving the mother country .. it was the most solemn and deeply interesting service in which I was ever engaged.'

LOYALTY TO GOVERNOR WILLIAM BLIH

No doubt you are familiar with the story that was re-enacted at the bicentenary celebrations of Ebenezer Church. Following the overthrow of Governor Bligh in January 1808 by the military, the rebels who deposed Governor Bligh, believing that the Portland Head settlers were friendly to the deposed Governor, issued instructions to the Military Commandant at Windsor 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 engaged in worship led by James Mein.

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.

And later we learn that Andrew and Mary Johnston called their next born son James Bligh Johnston in memory of the deposed governor. John and Anne Turnbull did likewise, naming their son William Bligh Turnbull.

Governor William Bligh was obviously a popular man at Ebenezer and in the Hawkesbury area. What had he done to gain the respect of the Hawkesbury settlers?

William Bligh arrived in the colony in August 1806 and earlier in March that year the Hawkesbury had experienced a severe flood. From the Sydney Gazette, 30th March 1806, we learn that the flood caught many settlers unawares and had to climb to roof tops for safety:

'Muskets were discharged by the settlers from the trees and roofs all day, and the great number had been taken up, and left in safety on the higher ground; but many were devoted to undergo a night of horror the most inexpressible: ... in the evening the dismal cries from distant quarters, the howling of dogs that had by swimming got into trees,

' Nearly 300 persons, saved from the deluge by the humane perseverance and incredible exertions of their rescuers, were released from a state of actual famine by a supply sent from the Green Hills ... to afford the sufferers every assistance and relief.

'Many of the stacks of wheat and barley that were floated off were forced by the current into the ocean; upward of sixty were seen by one observer to clear Cumberland Reach, ...upon some of these were many pigs, dogs, and prodigious quantities of poultry, a great many of which took flight and got to land as they occasionally approached the banks.'



It was during the 1806 flood that church pioneer Andrew Johnston had to move his wife Mary three times during one night to escape the rising water. The day before Mary had given birth to daughter Hannah. To move them, Andrew put Mary and child in a tarpaulin slung under a dray.

Bligh toured the whole of the Hawkesbury district, inquired into the circumstances of each individual settler and determined a course of action. He had government cattle slaughtered and given to the needy and promised to alleviate the distress of the settlers by purchasing for the government supplies all the surplus wheat from their next crop at ten shillings a bushel.

But there was another development that brought the settlers much closer to Governor Bligh. In early 1807 Bligh purchased two grants of 170 acres and later another 110 acres adjoining the 170 acres in the area now known as Pitt Town. Bligh set up a farm as a 'model' to show the colonists what he believed to be the benefits of efficient farming. The successful farm had a dairy with an 'immense flock of cows from the government herd'.

His farm overseer was Andrew Thompson and by then his neighbours would have been Ebenezer families such as the Halls, Johnstons, Gronos and Arndells. By establishing this farm Bligh showed that he was interested in their pursuits as farmers and he became highly regarded by them.

Merchant ROBERT CAMPBELL, Pastoralist, Politician, Philanthropist

By 1808 the Portland Head community felt a need to formalise their society. Governor Bligh had been deposed by the military in January and petitions to re-instate the Governor were unsuccessful.

On 26 September 1808 the families met at 'Hope Farm', the home of Surgeon Thomas Arndell, and the property on the other side of the river opposite to where the church stands today. At this meeting they formed the 'Portland Head Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and the Education of Youth'.

Mr Mein opened the meeting in prayer, Dr Arndell was chairman and George Hall the secretary. They agreed in covenant to build a church and school and set up the logistics for the building which was to measure 50 feet by 20 feet by 12 feet high.

Each family agreed to donate £10 and payments could be paid in cash or produce or livestock. For those paying by the produce of their farms, prices were determined. Wheat was to be 10 shillings a bushel, salted pork was one shilling and threepence a pound, fresh pork one shilling a pound and live pigs were nine pence a pound.

But with the building costed at £400 and there being no government assistance with finance or convict labour, from what source was the remaining £250 to be obtained?

Recent research reveals another donor. Between Sydney's Circular Quay and the Sydney Harbour Bridge is a small cove called Campbell's Cove, named after Robert Campbell (1769-1846), a Scottish merchant who is sometimes called the 'father of Australian commerce.' The current storehouses, now used mainly as restaurants, were built by his sons.

Campbell broke the stranglehold that the British East India Company exercised over seal and whale products, which were New South Wales's only exports in those early days. Besides being a merchant, Robert Campbell was a pastoralist, politician and philanthropist.

He donated towards many causes, and through his contact with Rowland Hassall, a former missionary who occasionally preached at Ebenezer, he made a generous donation in 1808.

It was of an amount of thirty guineas to the Portland Head Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. This would have been for the building of Ebenezer Church.



So the next time you visit Campbell's Cove remember Robert Campbell, the generous philanthropist who supported the building of what was to become Australia's oldest church and part of our Australian Christian heritage.

36th ANNUAL STUBBS REUNION

Saturday 25 October 2014

Ebenezer Church, 95 Coromandel Road, Ebenezer, NSW.

From 9.30am

BYO picnic lunch as well as any family details, photographs, ...

Please direct inquiries to:

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Stubbs Family Website:

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

Stubbs email: stubbs1802@gmail.com

GRONO FAMILY REUNION

The next Grono Family Reunion will be
NEXT YEAR

on Sunday 3rd May, 2015
at Ebenezer, NSW.

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