



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

From the Minister

It is now almost a year since the celebrations to mark 200 years of the Ebenezer Church. That was a wonderful occasion on which we could celebrate our heritage and history and gather all who are connected to the church through locality, pioneer heritage or even church connection.

It was a wonderful time of bringing a large portion of the family of the Ebenezer Church together in the unity, diversity and peace of the original settlers.

I wonder what those early pioneers would have thought if they could see how their faith, foresight and dedication to their community has impacted on our history and given us such an ongoing legacy.

Time moves forward as we move into the next phase of the life of the Ebenezer Church. There will be more events to mark, like 200 years since the visit by Governor Macquarie. There are new and continuing challenges as we share the lessons of our heritage to a changing world and seek to survive as a community and maintain the buildings with limited human and financial resources.

As we move forward together as a family, it is important that we try to take time to gather together so that we can celebrate and learn more of our past and the heritage that we share. By doing this we strengthen the bonds of our community and the mutual support that we can give.

On the 19th June we will be having a service and afternoon tea to mark the 201st year of the church. This is our annual Pilgrimage to Ebenezer. Please come and share with us as we gather again as a family and continue to learn of and celebrate our past as we move forward together into the future.

Rev. Grant Bilbey

Ebenezer Church Pilgrimage 2010 Saturday 19 June 2010

As has been our custom since Ebenezer Church became a Uniting Church, invitations have been extended to moderators of both the NSW Uniting and Presbyterian Churches to attend the annual pilgrimage.

In 2010 Rev Dr Brian Brown, Uniting Church Moderator Elect of NSW & ACT, and Rt Rev. Christie Balzer, Moderator Presbyterian Church in NSW, will be attending this celebration.

Invitations are being sent to past ministers and families, to Hawkesbury government representatives and, through this newsletter, to pioneer descendants. An open invitation is extended everyone who would like to attend.

To date, Ray Williams MLA and Bart Bassett, Mayor of Hawkesbury, have accepted invitations to be at this 201st anniversary.

This will be a much smaller event than 2009 but for those attending it will be an opportune time to visit Ebenezer Church at a quieter time. It will be the last occasion that Grant Bilbey attends as our minister.

A service will be held outdoors at 2.00pm. It will be followed by unveiling a plaque acknowledging the 200th anniversary of Governor Macquarie's visit to 'the schoolhouse at Portland head'. Afternoon tea will follow.

Visitors are welcome to bring their own lunches and picnic in church grounds before the service. Please note that the church shop will be open for devonshire teas but not lunches.

Ted Brill
Church Secretary

Visit to Crown Court

Many of the settlers who came to New South Wales on the Coromandel in 1802 had worshipped in Crown Court Church of Scotland in Covent Garden, London. Ray Johnston, a descendant of church pioneers Andrew & Mary Johnston, and his wife Lyn, have arranged to attend a Thursday morning service at Crown Court when they travel overseas later this year. On behalf of Ebenezer Church and its pioneer descendants they will be presenting Crown Court with a bicentenary commemorative plate.



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New Columbaria

The colonial graveyard of Ebenezer Church includes the graves of many of the pioneers who settled in the Hawkesbury around the year 1800 and is recognised as being one of great historical significance.

As burial plots are no longer available, four columbaria for the interment of ashes were built in 2009. The materials

selected for their construction were chosen to blend with other church buildings. Plaques have been standardised and are made of bronze with raised lettering. One side of the columbaria faces the river and the other side looks towards the church. Being on heritage property, the columbaria will never be removed. The purchase of niches in the columbaria is not restricted to church members; they are available for purchase by the general public. For further information please contact the church secretary.



Loss of an icon

A surprise to us all last December was the collapse of the palm tree outside the entrance to the church. Luckily it fell when the only people present were inside the Schoolmaster's House. We were fortunate too for the direction in which it fell. The tree with its massive trunk could have fallen on the church. It could have also fallen on the vaults of pioneers George Hall, John Grono or Andrew Johnston but it fell between two graves, the only damage being to the surrounds of the grave of George Grono. No headstones were damaged.



Ebenezer Church & Scots Church Pitt Town – Two churches, One congregation

Scots Church, Pitt Town

Prior to building Scots Church, the Presbyterian families living on the Pitt Town side of the Hawkesbury worshipped at Ebenezer. Transport was by rowboat, but those fortunate to possess a horse, or horse and sulky or buggy, could cross the river by 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 tablet in the 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.'

The church was built of solid blocks of Hawkesbury sandstone fourteen inches (350mm) thick and 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 2012 Scots Church will celebrate its 150th anniversary.



Scots Church Pitt Town was opened in 1862. The manse (right) was built in 1883.

Macquarie 2010 Bicentenary

Lachlan Macquarie became the fifth Governor of New South Wales on 1 January 1810. Macquarie was to leave an enduring and ongoing legacy for the people of New South Wales.

To commemorate his period of governorship, events are being held throughout the state.

Initiated by Hawkesbury City Council, a 'Governor Macquarie' rose was developed and was launched on 14 April 1810 by Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales. On 10 October an 'Elizabeth Macquarie' iris will be launched. More information on this event and other Hawkesbury Macquarie 2010 Bicentenary events can be found at www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au.

Information on Macquarie's visit to Ebenezer, prepared for an earlier newsletter, is repeated below.

Macquarie's visit to Ebenezer Church

In his first year the Governor travelled with Mrs Macquarie to Windsor and from there made several excursions within the Hawkesbury district.

From his journals we learn that on Tuesday 4th December 1810 Governor Macquarie...

'Wishing to explore the Hawkesbury River as far as Portland Head [Ebenezer], and at the same time view the front farms on both banks that far, I set out this morning between 5 and 6 o'clock, accompanied by Mrs. Macquarie, Mrs. Cartwright, Mr. Cartwright, Mr. Cox, Mr. Hassall, and the gentlemen of our family, in the late Mr. Thompson's barge and another smaller boat, on our excursion to Portland Head.

We stopt at Govr. Bligh's farm of Blighton, ... a very beautiful situation; and after walking about the grounds there for half an hour we proceeded on our voyage down river.

At 8 o'clock we stopped at the new school-house recently erected by subscription... where we had determined to breakfast, which was accordingly prepared with all convenient haste within the new school-house, which is prettily situated on the bank of the river. Here Doctor Arndell came to pay us a visit from his farm on Caddy Creek on the opposite side of the river, and breakfasted with us.



After breakfast we embarked again and prosecuted our voyage down the river ... The farms on both banks, especially those on the left bank, are rich and well cultivated, and make a pretty appearance from the water, being generally interspersed with extensive orchards of peaches and other fruits.'

No doubt Governor Macquarie was impressed with the church/schoolhouse built at the initiative of the dedicated settlers of Portland Head. He was also pleased with the development of the pioneers' farms during the seven years since settlement. The properties on the left bank, that is when facing downstream, generally had more extensive areas of flood plain and so were more easily observed. These were the properties of settlers such as Owen Cavanough, James Davison, John Howe, John Turnbull, William Jacklin, James Mein and Andrew Johnston.



Macquarie's journal entry for 4 December 1810 is evidence of his unbounded enthusiasm and energy. He was on the river between 5.00 and 6.00am, stopped at Bligh's farm, had breakfast at Ebenezer Church, proceeded to a point 'about 20 miles by the windings of the river' from Windsor and then returned to Dr Arndell's farm about 2.00pm.

Macquarie's visit to Pitt Town area

Mrs Macquarie then returned to Windsor by coach while Governor Macquarie, after a half-hour rest, went by horseback to Nelson Common to find a site for a township that was later to be named Pitt Town.

'Having rode over the Common in various directions, we at length determined upon the part of it most eligible and convenient for a township ... entirely out of the reach of the inundation of the river.'

The Governor then rode back into Windsor, arriving at Government House ...

'at ½ past 6 o'clock in the evening' and found 'Mrs. M. ... had dinner ready prepared for us, which we enjoyed very much after our long water excursion in the morning and fatiguing afternoon's ride.'

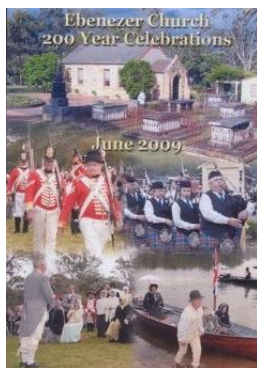
On the 19 June 2010 we will be acknowledging Governor Macquarie's visit to Ebenezer Church by unveiling a plaque in a small bed of Governor Macquarie roses. A similar event will take place at Scots Church Pitt Town later in the year.

DVD of the Bicentenary of Ebenezer Church

\$25.00 at the church shop,
\$27.50 posted

CD of the Bicentenary Service

\$6.00 at the church shop,
\$8.50 posted



EBENEZER CHURCH, AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST



Bicentenary Edition
by Ted Brill

This book traces the 200-year history of Ebenezer Church through the periods of its 23 ministers.

\$25 at the church shop or \$30 posted.

GRONO FAMILY OUR NEXT REUNION WILL BE NEXT YEAR

on Sunday 1st May, 2011

in the grounds of
Ebenezer Church, Ebenezer, NSW

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

Family of CHARLES & ROSE (FLOOD) CROSS

Sunday 27 June 2010

Ebenezer Church
commencing at 10.00 am

Displays of baptism/christening gowns and Photos
Tea / coffee & biscuits available but bring own
lunch, chairs, ...

Inquiries to Lois: mrnewman@pacific.net.au

MEMORIAL TO ELIZABETH RIMES WIFE OF MATTHEW JAMES EVERINGHAM

A memorial plaque to Elizabeth Rimes has been placed next to the headstone of James in the Wilberforce cemetery.

Members of the Everingham family
and their friends are invited to

The official dedication of the memorial
on

Sunday 20 June 2010 at 12.30pm

A picnic lunch will follow in Wilberforce Park.
Please bring your own food, drink, tables
chairs, ...

STUBBS FAMILY 31st ANNUAL REUNION Saturday 30 October 2010

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

BYO picnic lunch, folding chairs, ...

Please direct inquiries to:

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Stubbs Family Website:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~stubb1802/>

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