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Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter Newsletter

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KATHLEEN'S CORNER

Well here we are in March already. Hard to believe how fast time goes by. As mentioned at our last chapter meeting, next year will be the 10th anniversary of the FFF Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter. We are planning to celebrate this special anniversary at Nepean Rowing Club with a luncheon.

We are lucky to still have a good number of dedicated members who enjoy the great speakers that are booked and like to attend the outings. Good friendships have been formed.

Coming up in March is an outing to the Old Tannery in Windsor where Scott Andrew Will is looking forward to meeting some of our members. Scott has a great collection of vintage items collected from all over the Hawkesbury region. His building is adjacent to Windsor Court House. He is very passionate about sharing the history of the Tannery and the items now housed there.

The presenter at our April meeting Ron Moore has walked the Kokoda Track and he has been researching it for many years.

We had an enjoyable outing to the Tizzana Winery last year and in May we will head back there again for a ploughman's lunch and wine tasting.

Please consider an article for the next newsletter. All contributions welcome no matter how small.

Kathleen Forrest

President

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH OUTING 2024

Date: Saturday 9th March

Venue: Allotment 3 The Tannery

8 Pitt Street Windsor

(opposite the Court House)

Time: 10:30am for an 11:00am start

Speaker: Scott Andrew Will



APRIL CHAPTER MEETING

Date: Saturday 13th April

Venue: Tebbutt Room

Hawkesbury Central Library, Windsor

Time: 10:30am

Speaker: Ron Moore

Topic: The Kokoda Track



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY OUTING– TIZZANA WINERY

Date: Saturday 11th May

Venue: Tizzana Winery

418 Tizzana Rd, Ebenezer

Time: 10:30am

When our chapter visited the winery last year, members enjoyed it so much we decided to go back to this charming old place.



JUNE CHAPTER MEETING

Date: Saturday 8th June

Venue: Tebbutt Room

Hawkesbury Central Library, Windsor

Time: 11:00am

Speaker: Mark Bundy

Topic: The History of Rookwood Cemetery



DECEMBER CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON



Nepean
Rowing
Club

FEBRUARY CHAPTER MEETING

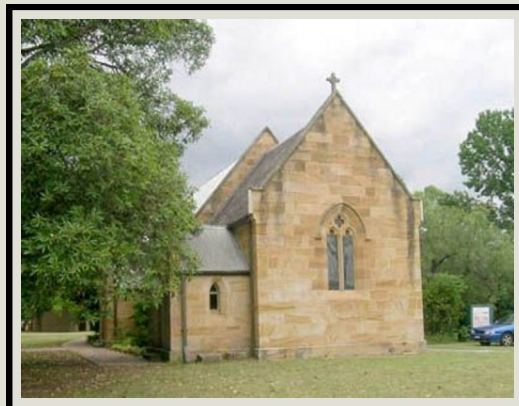


Steve Ford presented on
Land Records

EMU PLAINS GENERAL CEMETERY– submitted by Suzanne Shaw

This cemetery is accessed through either Short or Nixon Street and lies on a knoll overlooking the Western Railway Line. The cemetery incorporates the churchyard of St Pauls Anglican Church. The original section was located to the east of the Church. In 1967, the whole cemetery was handed over to the administration of Penrith City Council. The most notable burial is that of Toby and Mary Ryan. Toby was a grandson of First Fleet convicts Anthony and Elizabeth Rope. Both Anthony and Elizabeth are buried at nearby Castlereagh Pioneer Cemetery in Cranebrook and their headstones remain intact.

Nepean Family History Society transcribed the cemetery in 1994



QUOTES FROM THE COLONY

Wednesday 9th March 1788

I am authorized to emancipate the convicts for good behaviour, for being industrious and I am further authorised to grant land to them. Authority being withheld for my granting land to the marines is just, for their endeavors are required elsewhere. Today, the first reference to the first court martial convened to hear charges against two marines.

Captain Phillip

Thursday 10th March 1788

La Perouse, five days earlier than he had planned slipped out of Botany Bay and he and his two beautiful ships and all who had so far survived the journey sailed into the unknown never to be seen again.

Captain Phillip

Saturday 23rd April 1788

Though the Governor suffered much pain he would not relinquish the object of his pursuit of his expeditions...we made a kettle of excellent soup out of a white cockatoo and two crows which I has shot.

Chief Surgeon White

JOHN MORRIS STEPHENS aka- JOHN MORRIS—submitted by Joy Jorgensen

My 4 x great grandfather John Mor(r)is Stephens aka Morris came to the Colony of New South Wales with the First Fleet, that was led by Londoner, Captain Arthur Phillip, in 1788. Thus he was the first of my ancestors to arrive here. John was one of the '86 male convicts & 20 female convicts' aboard the *Charlotte*, an English merchant ship, chartered by the Admiralty 'to convey convicts as part of the First Fleet'. She measured '35 metres in length and was 8.5 metres in breadth'. During the voyage of the First Fleet the *Charlotte* was under the command of Captain Thomas Gilbert & her surgeon was John White, who was also the 'Surgeon-General to the Fleet'. The transporting of convicts to the shores of present day New South Wales, Australia was pre-empted by the loss to England of the thirteen emerging American Colonies in North America as the result of the American War of Independence. At the time of the departure of the First Fleet William Pitt, the younger, was Prime Minister of Great Britain and King George III was on the throne. King George is best remembered for opposing America's bid for independence and becoming deranged in his latter years. While Pitt is well remembered for the rehabilitation of his country's finances after the American War of Independence, and solidifying Britain's supremacy over world affairs. It was a time when the Industrial Revolution was well established in England. Thus England was transforming from an agrarian society to one with a much greater proportion of the population becoming urban dwellers which resulted in humanitarian troubles.

With the newly formed United States refusing to accept convicts being transported to their shores, English gaols had become overcrowded with prisoners awaiting Convict vessel transportation. As a result 'in May 1776, a new Act of Parliament received royal assent sanctioning the use of hulks for two years as temporary expedient to the problem of overflowing jails, and the absence of a suitable place to dispose of them.' Although initially intended as a temporary solution, civilian prison hulks were in service 'thereafter until 1850'. Life aboard a prison hulk was most unpleasant. The prisoners were 'kept at hard labour', usually in groups of ten to twenty individuals, & were a source of labour for the Ordnance Department, during their time on the hulk(s). They were 'shackled in irons, rising at 5 am' and worked for 'ten hours in summer and seven in the winter', with the exception of 'in wet weather and on the Sundays'. 'Each class was accommodated in a small room where the men eat their meals and slept' in hammocks. The very cramped, unhygienic sleeping conditions, along with an inadequate diet, contributed to the prevalence of various diseases including scurvy, 'typhus and tuberculosis'. Whilst the physical conditions were brutal 'the psychological conditions were far worse'. 'Death was a very real outcome for those onboard the hulks'.

Subsequent to his trial in March 1786, John was incarcerated on the prison hulk *Dunkirk*, a decommissioned ship now prison hulk, lying in the Hamoaze, an estuarine stretch of the Tamar River, at Plymouth. Whilst onboard he would have most likely have had very little in the way of clothing. 'Conditions there were so bad at one time that the officer in charge complained "many of the prisoners are nearly if not quite naked"'. His rations would have consisted of paltry portions of 'ox-cheek, either boiled or made into a soup, pease pudding and bread or a biscuit' with 'two pints of beer four days a week and badly filtered water drawn from the river, on the other days'. Food supplied to prisoners could be described as basic & sufficient but there was a 'lack of fruit, vegetables and bread', & the meat also was lacking in freshness.

During the time of John's confinement on the *Dunkirk* it was described as "'A derelict ship, its mast gone, its sides covered in green slime mired in a mud bank. This was the prison ship *Dunkirk*, The convicts smelled the hulk before they saw her, for she reeked of sewage and the foul stench of decaying wood and the unwashed humanity. Towering over the surrounding flats, her hull blackened with mire, the hulk *Dunkirk* loomed up before the approaching convicts like an apparition. A dark and spectral form around which the rising tide began to lap"'.

According to the *London Gazette* of October 1788 John departed England as 'Stephens John Morris' having, at the Dorset Assizes, been 'formerly convicted of Felony' with a Term of Seven Years. He had been born at Herefordshire in southern England and at the age of 22 had been tried on '6 Mar 1786' for stealing '1 waistcoat and other goods' to the value of '59 shillings', and given an original sentence of 'transportation'. For months prior to departure the First Fleet vessels' stores were loaded, in addition to guns & ammunition. Tools, agricultural implements, medical & surgical supplies, handcuffs & leg irons, along with trinkets were also among the cargo. Food indented included such items as flour, butter, beef, pork, bread, peas, cheese & rice; water, beer, rum & brandy. Livestock, seeds & seedling were also loaded closer to departure.

The Convict vessels of the First Fleet were outfitted in the same manner as those that carried troops, except for safety. This consisted of 'very strong & thick bulkheads, filled with nails & ran across from side to side of the 'tween decks abaft the Mainmast with loop holes to fire through, in case of any irregularities among the convicts, the hatches are well secured by Cross bar bolts & strong locks, they are likewise railed with large oak stantions from deck to deck, Sentinels are placed at different hatchways & a Guard always under arms on the Quarter deck'. The First Fleet didn't consist of only English individuals. Other nationalities included Irish, Scottish, Welsh, black Africans, West Indians, North Americans and Europeans from such countries as

Holland, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Sweden & India. During his confinement, of possibly about one year, on the *Dunkirk*, John was reported as being 'tolerably decent and orderly'. Upon joining the other vessels of the First Fleet, *Charlotte* received her convicts from the *Dunkirk* 'soon after the 6th May 1787'. Immediately upon boarding *Charlotte* the males were constrained in irons & 'hand cuffed together & remained so until 22 May' 1787.

The initial departure of the *Charlotte*, from the Hamoze, was delayed for a day because 'so violent was the gale' that it was 'impracticable to remove the convicts from on board the *Dunkirk*'. Then the Fleet's departure from 'Motherbank, Portsmouth on Sunday 13th May 1787' to Botany Bay was delayed slightly due to 'a strike by crews of the *Fishburn* & *Alexander*, who mutinied over wages and conditions'. The voyage took about 268 days to complete a distance of 20,900 kilometres during which the ports of Santa Cruz, Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro, Argentina & Cape Town in South Africa were visited for replenishment of fresh food supplies & water, along with taking onboard stocks of 'plants, seeds and livestock' for use upon their arrival in New South Wales.

Weather conditions during the voyage were varied. The First Fleet experienced the Doldrums of the Atlantic along with squally tropical weather and the gales of the Roaring Forties that kept the vessels 'almost constantly under water creating cold & wet conditions' in the cramped living quarters. During the majority of August the Fleet experienced 'bad weather, rain and heavy lightening'. And fifteen days after leaving Rio de Janeiro 'a convict fell overboard from the *Charlotte*', and drowned. And for 5 days from 27th September to the 1st of October, when the Fleet was journeying the lower latitudes of the South Atlantic Ocean & in the vicinity of the Southern Ocean, prior to arriving at Cape Town, it experienced 'fresh Gales of winds & a great Sea running'. This was followed by another 4 days of 'moderate winds & rain'. During this period it was reported 'that the *Charlotte* was getting sickly, having upwards of thirty in her sick list, mostly Convicts'. When the weather cleared, soon after the sick were allowed on deck, which resulted in their health being restored. As the names of those on her sick list were not identified it can't be verified if John was one of the sickly Convicts. Towards the end of December 'scurvy began to show itself on the *Charlotte*, mostly among those who had the dysentery to a violent degree'. Again, it isn't known if John was one of the infirmed. 'Vermin such as rats and parasites such as bed bugs, lice, cockroaches and fleas' were a constant problem for all on board any of the vessels. During the voyage the first convict of the First Fleet to be punished was on board the *Charlotte*. Thomas Brown received 'a dozen lashes for behaving insolently to one of the officers of the ship'.

After leaving Cape Town Captain Arthur Phillip 'decided to divide the fleet into two in the hope the faster ships would reach Botany Bay to prepare for disembarkation'. All the vessels of the First Fleet arrived at Botany Bay 'within 2 days of each another, Phillip having anchored on the 18th of January' 1788, with only '55 souls lost'. It is reported that their arrival was met, by the local inhabitants, with a mostly non aggressive but suspicious manner. After assessing the Botany Bay area Captain Phillip considered that the soils were too poor & with local water supplies being limited, it was an unsuitable site for establishing a settlement. Thus an expedition was launched to investigate the coast for a more suitable location. Four days later, after locating a cove, Captain Phillip decided to set up the new Colony 'near a run of fresh water, after known as the Tank Stream'. This 'north facing crescent of sand and shady trees deep inside a majestic harbour' became known as Sydney Cove ('after Lord Sydney, the British Home Secretary') in Port Jackson, although Captain Phillip originally named the colony *New Albion*'. The land was claimed for his Majesty King George III on 26th January 1788.

Soon after arrival of the vessels at Sydney Cove, John, along with the other male convicts, was disembarked & set to work. Land had to be cleared, tent accommodation & a hospital erected & a future barracks site laid out. The female convicts were disembarked a few days after the men. Later, in 1791, Phillip Gidley King RN, who served as Governor of NSW from '28 September 1800 to 12 August 1806', is reported to have said "'I can still say with great truth and satisfaction that the convicts, in general, behave better than ever could have been expected and that their crimes, with very few exceptions, have been confined to the procuring for themselves, the common necessities of life'".



References:

<https://sl.nsw.gov.au/collection-items>; transcription of Philip Gidley King's - Fair copy of 'Remarks & Journal kept on the Expedition to Form a Colony...', with additional information, 1786 - December 1790; compiled 1790, 1790. p. 8
<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/ships/hms-charlotte>
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_\(1784_ship\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_(1784_ship))
<https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/charlotte>
<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/ships/hms-charlotte>
http://freesettlorfelon.com/convict_ship_charlotte_1788.htm

Convict vessel *Charlotte*

Source: <http://fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au>

Note: Some spelling in this article has been left in the original form from which it was sourced.

THOMAS RICKERBY c. 1751-1818– submitted by Judith O'Donohue

Thomas Rickerby was a coachman when he was found guilty of stealing hay from his employer Lord Lonsdale. On 18 April 1787 he was sentenced to 7 years transportation at the Old Bailey. Rickerby arrived in Sydney as part of the third fleet aboard the William and Ann in August 1791.

Rickerby was eventually granted 30 acres of land at Mulgrave Place and by 1800 he held 80 acres. In 1798, Rickerby was appointed as the Chief Constable of the Hawkesbury. He was already living with a Catherine Smith by this time and she has been described as his housekeeper. He had named his farm Catherine Farm and it was reported in the Sydney Gazette in 1801 that the couple had adopted a young aboriginal boy whom had been injured because he was fair skinned.

In 1800, Rickerby along with Andrew Thompson is recorded as being the owner of one of two horses located at Windsor. He bred Old Kit by Rockingham which appears in the pedigree of the sire Bloomsbury.

CATHERINE CLARE c. 1756–1822

On the 18 April 1787 Catherine Smith was found guilty of stealing a silver watch from a man she was having a room with. Sentenced at the Old Bailey to 7 years transportation, she arrived in Sydney as part of the First Fleet aboard the Prince of Wales.

On 18 March 1789, one of the Catherine Smiths residing in the colony received 25 lashes for being in possession of a soldier's property. This Catherine Smith married a George Clare on 12 July 1789 and by 1798 she was living with Thomas Rickerby. They were still together in 1814. No record of her death has been found but it is believed that she died somewhere between 1819 and 1828. Rickerby himself had died in 1818 and left Catherine a house in Windsor and an annual income of 30 pounds a year. In his will, Catherine is described as his housekeeper who had rendered long and faithful service. It is possible that Catherine was the Catherine Ware who died at Windsor on 13 June 1822 aged 66 years.

On Sunday last died John Pilot Rickerby, a native boy 5 years of age, who was rescued from a barbarous death soon after his birth by Mr. Rickerby of the Hawkesbury. On the 11th of August 1805, he received Christian baptism and was interred on Wednesday last at the burial ground on the Green Hills. The funeral presented a solemn spectacle and was attended by most of the surrounding settlers, whose children, amounting to nearly 50 in number, all clothed in white, followed the procession.

JOHN PILOT RICKERBY

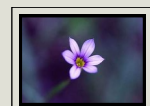
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References:

Mollie Gillen, *The Founders of Australia: A Biographical Dictionary of the First Fleet* (1989) pp.333-34.

Biographical Database of Australia: <https://www.bda-online.org.au>

The Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser, Sunday 27 July 1806. Page 4.



A Short Letter To Eleanor Gott– submitted by Kathleen Forrest



Dear Eleanor,

I see you were born in Liverpool in 1765 and were found guilty of stealing sundry items in 1789. On the 19th January 1790 you set sail from England aboard the *Neptune*. There were 421 male and 78 female convicts aboard. You would have witnessed the brutality being inflicted upon these convicts during the journey. Many aboard suffered diseases and sickness such as scurvy which can have horrible symptoms such as teeth becoming loose and bleeding under the skin. You yourself may have been one of those poor souls.

On the 27th June 1790 as the *Neptune* entered Port Jackson, there were reports of dead bodies being thrown overboard. It is believed 158 convicts died on the voyage to Port Jackson and as many as 269 were sick upon arrival in Australia. I found out some years ago that you are my 4x great grandmother and you survived the journey aboard that hell ship. I often wonder why you received the unusually short sentence of 3 years. Within six months of arriving in Port Jackson, Governor Phillip granted you permission to marry my 4x great grandfather Joseph Wright who had arrived with the First Fleet. You married at St Phillips Church in Sydney and I like to think you experienced some happiness with Joseph.

After being freed from servitude, I see Joseph was one of 22 settlers granted land in the Hawkesbury in 1794. Your marriage to Joseph produced seven children Joseph, Robert, Mary, John, Sarah, Samuel and Thomas from whom I descend. It was sad to hear you lost Joseph in 1811 when he was only 44 years old. It must have been very difficult being left with seven children to feed. Thankfully Joseph left you the deeds to the farm. And in February 1812, I can see you were looking out for your children's future when you gifted the farm to them along with a boat, horse, cart and harness. (Joseph had purchased the land from Owen Cavanaugh in 1800). Although gifted to your children, you maintained the right to live on the farm until your own death at which time the farm and property would pass equally to the children. On the 31st March 1812 you married Daniel Buckridge (a convict who arrived in 1792 aboard the *Pitt*). After you married Daniel, you lived together on your farm but had no children together. Your sons did well and each one had a trade including a wheelwright, a blacksmith, a cooper and a shoemaker. It is believed your own father was a shoemaker and passed this skill to you. Are you the one who taught Thomas?

You experience more heartache when you lost your second husband Daniel in June 1834. You saw him buried at Pitt Town Cemetery. Outliving two husbands you yourself died in April 1843 at the age of 78 years old which was a ripe old age in those days. You are also buried at Pitt Town Cemetery and I have walked the grounds many times to pay my respects to you. You certainly experienced much hardship from the moment you were forcibly removed from England and sent across the seas, but life moved on and you also overcame many obstacles. I bet you never would have imagined more than 200 years after arriving in Australia there would be people reading about you. It brings me happiness to know I share some of your DNA and that you are one of my forebears.

On the evening of the 28th the *Neptune* and Scarborough transports anchored off Garden Island, and were warped into the Cove on the following morning. Nor were they mistaken in their fears of the fate in which they might arrive, as by noon the following day, two hundred sick had been landed from the different transports. The West side afforded a scene truly distressing and miserable; upwards of thirty tents were pitched in front of the hospital (the portable one not being yet put up); all of which, as well as the adjacent huts, were filled with people, many of whom were labouring under the complicated discases of scurvy and the dysentery, and others in the last stage of either of those terrible disorders, or yielding to the attacks of an infectious fever.

The appearance of those who did not require medical assistance was lean and emaciated. Several of these miserable people died in the boats as they were rowing on shore, or on the wharf as they were lifted out of the boats; both the living and the dead exhibited more horrid spectacles than had ever been witnessed in that country.

Arrival of the *Neptune* Port Jackson on 28th June 1790

NO JUSTICE

When they returned to England, the Master, Donald Trail and Chief Mate William Ellerington, were prosecuted for the murder of an unnamed convict, along with a seaman named Andrew Anderson and a cook named John Joseph. After a trial lasting three hours before Sir James Marriott in the Admiralty Court, the jury acquitted both men on all charges *without troubling the Judge to sum up the evidence. There were no public prosecutions.*

Out of 500 passengers on board the Neptune but 42 were able to crawl over the ship's side; the rest were carried and eight out of every ten died at Sydney Cove. The detail of the sufferings of these wretched convicts ... were equal to any endured in the slave ships.

— sir Charles Bunbury's Resolutions Respecting convicts for transportation 1793, Parliamentary history of England [9]

Death or Liberty!

**Defenders of Thompson Square
are holding a commemoration
of the demise of Irish rebel convict**

Philip Cunningham

**who was hung from the Government Granary
at the village of Green Hills (Windsor)
after the Vinegar Hill battle and Castle Hill
Rebellion of 5 March 1804**

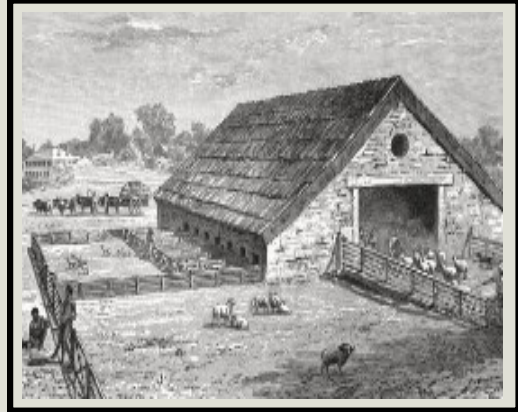
**Sunday 3 March 2024, 3pm - 6pm
Thompson Square, Windsor**

History talks and walks by historian/author
Jan Barkley-Jack and Helen Mackay, a display of
heritage costumes, Defenders of Thompson Square
stall, live Irish music, BYO picnic.

defenders@optusnet.com.au



The Way We Were



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