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Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter Newsletter

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KATHLEEN'S CORNER

It is hard to believe we are already halfway through the year. Our chapter has been so busy over the past couple of months with meetings and various outings. We have added lots of photos to this edition for your viewing.

A highlight for our chapter this year was the Tall Ship cruise on Sydney Harbour on Saturday 13th May. We had a good turn out with 34 attendees from our chapter boarding. The tour guide was very friendly and was amazed to meet descendants of First Fleeters. He offered us a very warm welcome. Lunch was included as we sailed around the Harbour for two hours taking in the glorious harbour views. May was also the eighth year since the inaugural meeting of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter of Fellowship of First Fleeters. Time sure goes fast.

We will have Lorraine Stacker at Windsor on Saturday 10th June presenting on the historic Combewood House. This will be especially interesting for those who have not heard about this house before.

Our speaker organiser Judith is currently checking venues for a possible July outing and further information will be forthcoming if anything is booked in.

Our AGM will be held on Saturday 12th August at Windsor. All members are welcome and encouraged to nominate for a position on the committee. If you have thought about joining the committee, you can complete a nomination form which will be sent out shortly by Corresponding Secretary William Hempel. We always welcome new committee members.

Kathleen Forrest

Acting President

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE CHAPTER MEETING

Date: Saturday 10th June 2023

Venue: Tebbutt Room

Hawkesbury Central Library, Windsor

Time: 10:30am

Speaker: Lorraine Stacker (local historian)

Topic: Combewood Historic House, Penrith



AUGUST CHAPTER MEETING & AGM

Date: Saturday 12th August

Venue: Tebbutt Room

Hawkesbury Central Library, Windsor

Time: 10:30am

Speaker: Judith Dunn, OAM

Topic: To be advised

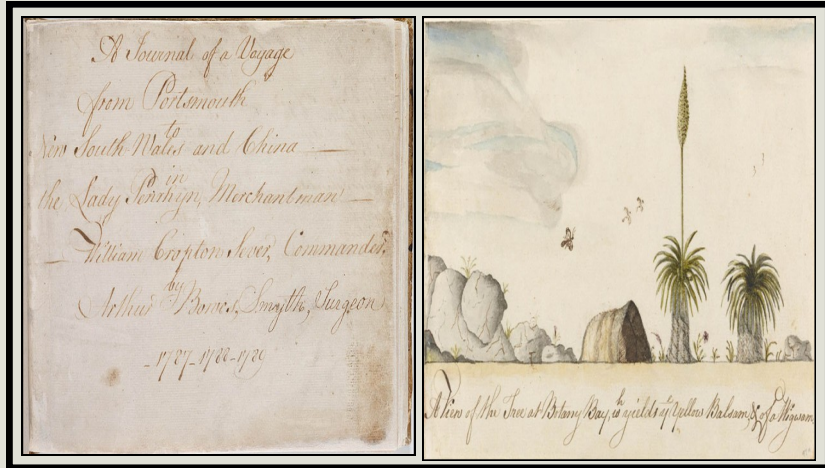


Stories from early settlement

Journals from the First Fleet

The State Library holds the largest collection of original First Fleet journals and correspondence. Of the known journal manuscripts, the majority are held in the Mitchell and Dixon library collections, State Library of New South Wales. The manuscript journals held by the State Library are written by:

- John Hunter
- Philip Gidley King
- William Bradley
- Jacob Nagle
- George Worgan
- Ralph Clark
- James Scott
- John Easty
- Arthur Bowes Smyth



All give insights into life aboard the ships, the convicts, officers and crew, ports of call, discipline, injuries, deaths and daily life in the colony. All are available to the public and most are online.

QUOTES FROM THE COLONY

Thursday 2nd June 1788

The criminal court sat. Two men were charged with feloniously, with force of arms stealing 20 pounds weight of goat's flesh, to the value of ten shillings...and the next day two more persons were charged with stealing 12 pounds weight of the said goat's flesh

Surgeon Worgan

Wednesday 8th June 1788

If I could send 50 farmers out with their families into the open country, they would do more in one year in rendering this colony independent of the mother country, as to provisions, than a thousand convicts

Captain Phillip

Tuesday 5th July 1788

I am sad that Lieutenant Collins will return to England on account of his very bad state of health, and I will take the liberty of mentioning to Lord Sydney that he is an officer and a gentleman I should not have parted with under any other considerations

Captain Phillip

CAROLINE'S STORY – submitted by Eileen Reid

The story of Pierce Colitt, his wife Mary and their children is well known to their descendants. They arrived in Port Jackson on MINORCA on 14 December 1801 with two baby daughters. Pierce was a convict who was originally assigned to wife Mary who obtained a land grant at Castlereagh and quickly prospered.

Pierce was a free man by the time the new road opened over the mountains in 1815. He quickly saw the potential of going west to cater for the weary travellers and squatted on some of the best land along the Lachlan River.

William Colitt was born 13 June 1815 and was the youngest of twelve children. This was just twelve days after the Australian explorer Evans discovered the Lachlan River. After travelling to the junction of the presently named Mandageny Creek he turned back to give a glowing report of this most western district thus far discovered in NSW. George Evans named the creek Burns Creek but its name was changed to the local aboriginal name in the 1850's. The junction where he carved his name into the Red River Gum was just downstream from the town of Eugowra. It is around this area and westward that in later years the Colitt family would expand their cattle grazing on huge tracts of land and build several Inns.

Old Pierce and the eldest surviving son John were among the first to gain permission to take a mob of cattle over the Blue Mountains in 1817. His farm BIRDS EYE VIEW, was on the Nepean River where all west bound travellers crossed near present day Emu Plains, afforded him knowledge of new developments. By 1823, Pierce had established his first Inn known originally as the Royal Garter at Hartley Vale. He built on land with no proper tenure, but in an era when all westward travellers passed at the base of Mount York, the road with the terrible descent coming off the tablelands to see the beautiful valley below on the way to Bathurst.

Young William Colitt was the first child baptised in the newly erected Christ Church, Castlereagh in 1815. It had been built by Rev Henry Fulton on a section of the present cemetery. William was not as bright as his older siblings, with several references to this through his lifetime. However, at the age of twenty five he married the thirteen year old Caroline James in 1840. Caroline was born in Campbelltown in April 1827 and was the third eldest child of William and Mary James who were very poor. Some time after Caroline's birth the family moved to Twenty Mile Hollow near Penrith where they squatted on twenty acres of land where her father built a small unsuccessful Inn where he aided absconders and runaway convicts.

Thomas Michael Pembroke was a native of County Kerry, Ireland. He was a convict and neighbour of William James. Pembroke married Frances Colitt at Castlereagh in July 1882. He wanted the land James was on and continual problems between them led to James being jailed as a result of a letter he wrote about him to the Governor. James was the eldest of twelve children born to Ann Bean and Samuel, a convict and he married Mary Lewis, Caroline's mother in 1827. He does not seem to have set the best example in life for his children as he married Esther Hindle on 24 July, 1832 but we see poor Caroline's mother in the following month hang herself. Caroline, then aged only eight years old had to care for her three brothers, a six year old sister and a newly born baby who died shortly after its mothers death. William James was sentenced for having helped his wife to hang herself, but was released from gaol after his trial because the witnesses gave their testimony drunk and evidence given was not substantial enough to convict him. James left his children in appalling conditions, when their plight was finally brought to the authorities of the time; Commissioner Thierry found the children had nothing to eat but described Caroline as a fine girl.

The children had taken their last half bushel of corn to Pembroke who refused to help them grind it into flour until he could be guaranteed payment. Of course the children could not guarantee anything. According to their age and appropriate situation, Sir John Jamieson arranged for the children to be placed in the orphan school or school of industry.

After William was given a free pardon on 25 July 1837, he seems not to have played any part in the lives of his children although records are scarce. He died aged seventy in 1878 in Yass. When she was only thirteen years and seven months old Caroline married William Colitt on 18 November 1840. She was possibly working at the time at Colitts Inn. Her younger sister Maria, married in June 1841 the particularly nasty John Walsh. Maria was just twelve years and two months old when she married. This is the youngest person the author can find married in New South Wales.

Under Surveyor General Mitchell the Great Western Road from Penrith to Bathurst was upgraded in the 1839's. The precipitous section near Mount York was under Mitchells' supervision and due to the extremely hard of many unfortunate convicts a better graded deviation which became known as the Pass of Victoria was built and is now known as Victoria Pass. The new road was opened in 1832 and by-passed Colitt's Inn at Hartley Vale. By 1836 a new town of Hartley well on its way to establishment on the western base of the new road. Colitt built another Inn, but their first Inn still stands today and is the oldest Inn west of the mountains.

Soon after Caroline and William married it is well known that she and her brother-in-law, John Walsh were having an affair. Caroline had left Colitt for a while and lived with her sister and Walsh. In January 1842,

she decided to go back and live with William but this did not happen. The Sydney Morning Herald on 5 April 1842 reported in part- 'Joseph Jagers, Inn keeper at Hartley at the bottom of Mount Victoria, knew the deceased Caroline Colitt and remembered seeing her at his house with the prisoner and her husband and Mr Gardner's stockman on 3 January. They were sober except Walsh, who appeared to have taken liquor'. The report goes on to say Walsh, the stockman, Caroline and William Colitt left together on a dark night. The following morning Caroline's body was brought back to his Inn at about 10am, her face was too mangled to be known but he recognised her by her clothes. John Walsh was charged with her murder. From evidence at Walsh's trial held at Bathurst it is clear he did not want Caroline to go back to her husband William Colitt, after they left Jagers' Hotel, Walsh punched Colitt to the ground, Caroline told him to run for his life as Walsh intended to kill him. This was the last anyone ever heard from her. She was found dead on the side of the road early the next morning with her head badly crushed from blows from a rock. Walsh put up a feeble defence of being attacked by four men whom he was forced to yield the young girl to. In 1836 he was tried for the murder of a person named Crate and again in 1839 for the murders of a woman and her little son; on both cases acquitted on the character of the principal witnesses against him, coupled with the ingenious line of defence which he sets up, and which bore a similar ring to it of the trial in Bathurst of Caroline, a young tragic girl who was only fourteen years and nine months old. The jury took minutes to return a verdict of guilt against Walsh. His Honour then passed sentence of death on him, which was carried out on 3 May 1842.

The circumstances and peculiar atrocity which this poor excuse for a man perpetrated on a poor helpless and abused child was avenged when Walsh was hung at Bathurst. The story goes on and has a legend to it. Those so close to this tragic murder at the time believed that Caroline's ghost was for the next one hundred years doomed to ride the coaches along Mount Victoria. Shortly after many people reported seeing the woman in black hanging from the back of a coach as it made its way down the mountain past the spot where Caroline died. During the early 1940's workers at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory reported seeing the woman in black.

Reference: Robert Ellis (The 1788-1820 Pioneer Gazette)



The Ghost at the Second Bridge is a poem written by Henry Lawson about the legend of the ghost of Caroline Colitts. The poem can be looked up online.

IN MEMORIUM

The Chapter was saddened to hear about the recent passing of one of our regular meeting attendees Judith Russell after she battled a short illness. Judith was a proud descendant of Nathaniel Lucas, Olivia Gascoigne and James Squire. Judith was a treasured member of her local community and on her chosen social networks, May she rest in peace.



CHAPTER TOUR OF ST MATTHEWS CEMETERY-WINDSOR

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter of Fellowship of First Fleeters toured the historical St Matthews led by Rebecca McRae on 11th March. Members were able to view many resting places of colonial characters including several First Fleeters. It was a hot day but Rebecca shared some great stories and those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the visit.



**CHAPTER
IN
ACTION**



St Matthews Tour– continued



Top L: Grave of William Roberts D: 1820

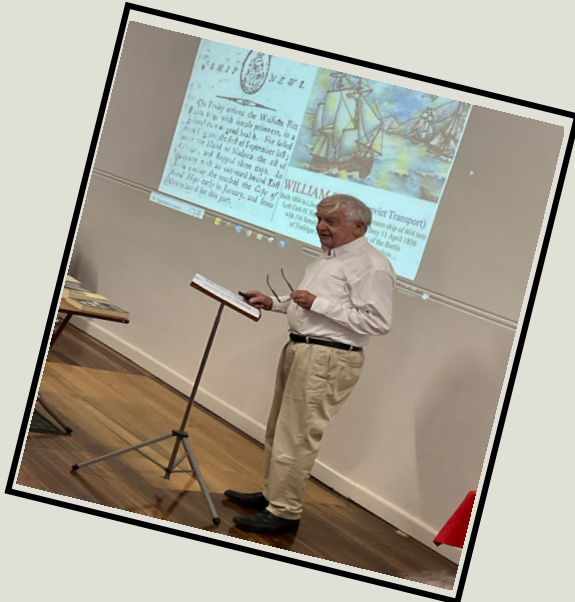
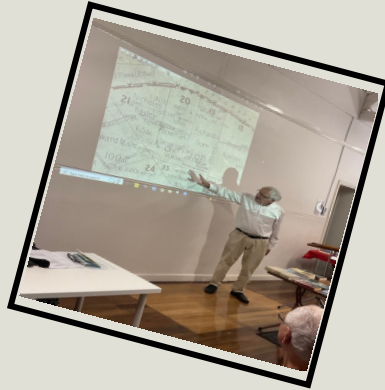
Top R: Grave of Robert Forrester

Lower L: Grave of First Fleeter John Cross Lower

Lower R: Grave of First Fleeter Daniel Barnet

The Bowman Flag- John Lanser

Our chapter was lucky enough to have a great presentation by John Lanser in the Old School House at Emu Plains on Saturday 8th April. John discussed the origin of the Bowman Flag and the property where it was first flown. It is interesting to note how the flag was made from part of a wedding dress. The Nepean Historical Society who allowed our chapter to hold this meeting in their hall were presented with a framed chart of those who sailed aboard the First Fleet by the Hawkesbury-Nepean Chapter of Fellowship of First Fleeters as a token of thanks.

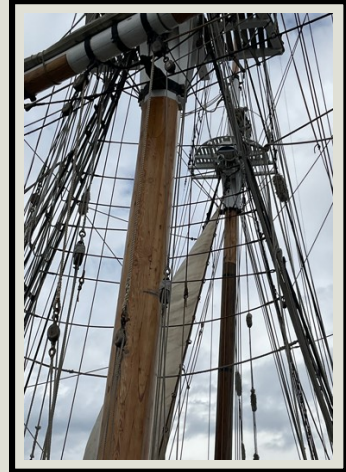


Tall Ship Cruise on Sydney Harbour

On Saturday 13th May, 236 years to the day after the First Fleet set sail from Portsmouth thirty four of our members boarded a tall ship and sailed around Sydney Harbour. The weather was great. If only our ancestors could catch a glimpse of what has become of the small colony they carved out way back then with their hand made tools. Below are some photos of our little adventure. A good day was had by all. A few members even climbed the ropes.



Tall Ship Cruise on Sydney Harbour continued



Australia's First Piano

In London during the early 1760s small, rectangular, five octave keyboard instruments started to be produced. Unlike the harpsichord or spinet, these were capable of playing both loudly and softly – the forte piano. The demand for these small square pianos was enormous, and manufacturers began producing instruments in quantity.

George Worgan, a surgeon on the First Fleet *HMS Sirius*, brought a piano with him to Australia. Although this may seem remarkable, music, song and dance were daily occurrences at all levels of society, even aboard ships of the British Navy. George inherited his enthusiasm for music from his father, Dr John Worgan, a respected organist and composer who also played at the Vauxhall Gardens, and insisted on his children having a sound musical education no matter which profession they intended to enter. A leading musician in London, John Worgan [1724-1790] had a doctorate of music from Cambridge University and was a close friend of George Frederick Handel [1685-1759] – a friendship which would have influenced George Worgan's choice of music. The Broadwood Piano Archives record that a Mr Worgan purchased one of their early square pianos on 10th April, 1783 – it is most likely this was the piano George brought with him to the colony.

A wide range of music was available from the classical piano repertoire of Mozart, Haydn and early Beethoven, through to Scottish music (the rage at the time), and lighter pieces such as sonatas, duets, waltzes, operatic airs and parlour songs. During the long voyage to New South Wales, George gave concerts on board the *Sirius* and subsequently provided a *very considerable branch of [polite] society* in the fledgling settlement. It has been suggested that the first piano may have supplied the music for the first play staged in Sydney, *The Recruiting Officer*.

In 1791, after several years residence in the colony, Worgan departed, leaving the precious instrument with his friend, Elizabeth Macarthur, wife of Lieutenant John Macarthur of the New South Wales Corps. Elizabeth is regarded as the first educated English gentlewoman to arrive in Australia, she arrived with the Second Fleet in 1790 and played a crucial role in the elite social life of the early colony. Elizabeth would have been familiar with the minuet as a dance. It was not long before more pianos were arriving in the colony: in 1803, a piano forte was advertised for sale in the Sydney Gazette for sixty guineas. In England, a plain square piano could be purchased for twenty-four guineas. This raises the question of the price of the piano in the Sydney Gazette – was it a superior type of piano or was it simply the cost of importing such an item which increased the price? It is possible an elegant piano was desired to grace one of the grand mansions which were already established in the colony. Pianos became the focal point of British colonial drawing-rooms, the instrument of the middle class in the nineteenth century. They became an indicator of social success and settlers would go to great pains to transport pianos to the most distant outposts of the colony. In 2016, a piano identified by Professor Geoffrey Lancaster as belonging to Surgeon Worgan, was donated to the Edith Cowan University in Perth by the collector Stewart Symonds. (Reference: Dr Heather Blasdale-Clarke)



"Our New House is ornamented with a piano-forte of Mr Worgan's, he kindly means to leave it with me, and now under his direction I have begun a new study, but I fear without my Master I shall make any great proficiency, I am told however I have done wonders in being able to play off God Save the King and Foote's Minuet besides that of reading the Notes with great facility..." Elizabeth Macarthur, 1791

Elizabeth Macarthur's letter to her friend Bridget Kingdon. 7th March 1791.

A Snippet of John Howe of Windsor-Judith O'Donohue

John Howe arrived on the *Coromandel* in 1802 as a free settler and became a man of some importance in the Windsor area. After Andrew Thompson died he took over many of his interests including that of being Chief Constable and Coroner. An enterprising man, he was contracted to build a bridge over South Creek, a road to Sydney and a wharf at Thompson Square. He also led an expedition encouraged by Gov. Macquarie to mark the Hunter which he did at Whittingham. Coming home he marked a track and soon settlers with their stock were using it. This became known as "the Putty Road". Although he received a land grant of 700 acres in the Hunter region, he continued to live in Windsor for another 30 years. Howe relocated to Morpeth after retiring in 1839 and died there in 1852 aged 78.

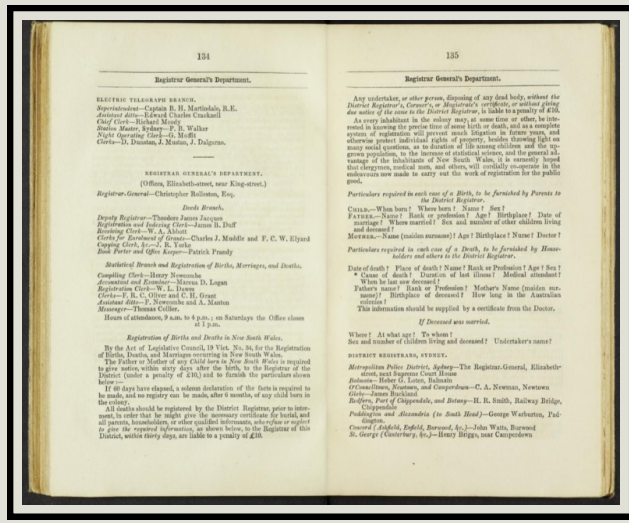
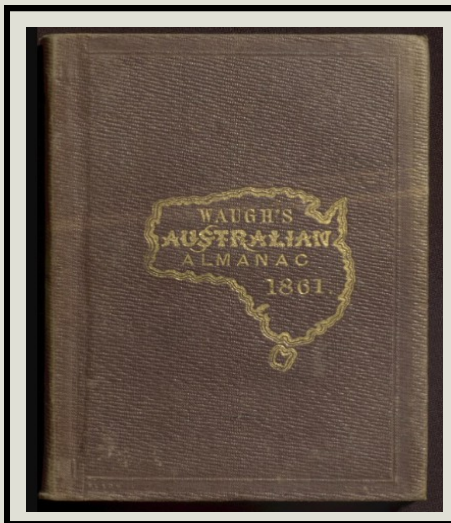
The Way We Were



Photos: Courtesy of NSW State Library

Registration of Births and deaths in NSW-submitted by Suzanne Shaw

The father or mother of any child born in NSW is required to give notice within sixty days after the birth to the Registrar of the District and to furnish the particulars below or face a penalty of 10 pounds. (1861)



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