

Our outing to *Tahlee*, Port Stephens began when the *FUN BUS*, with driver John, departed from the Senior Citizens Hall in Adamstown around 8.30am on Thursday the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2013.

Heading north there was a short stop for morning tea at the Twelve Mile Creek rest area – we enjoyed the cuppa and cake – the stop also included an unplanned life experience!



We turned off the highway to Carrington and made our way to the harbour and Tahlee village where we were welcomed at the historical waterfront by our guide dressed in period costume. This set the tone for the day as we heard from Ruth about the three distinct phases of the settlement's history.



The earliest inhabitants were the Gringai tribes of aboriginal people.

The white man's arrival in the area had its beginnings when Britain wished to be able to source wool from a colony rather than from the war prone regions of France and Spain. A grant of a million acres of land in the colony of New South Wales was made to the Australian Agricultural Company. In 1824, after exploring the Hunter River and Soldiers Point, the harbour was crossed and it was decided that Tahlee and Carrington would be where the headquarters of the company would be established. There were many Commissioners involved in the Company - the first four have been remembered in the street names of Newcastle: Dawson Street, Parry Street, King Street and Layman Street. Tahlee ceased to be the home of the AA Company Commissioners in 1849 and was sold to a private owner and changed hands several times.

The third phase of Tahlee's history was in 1942 when it became headquarters for the Gospel Fishermen Mission. In 1998 the Mission's name changed to Gospel Service Ministries but a lot knew it as Tahlee Bible College. The Mission is run entirely by volunteers – they do a great job as it's a huge area with many buildings to maintain. We were then given a tour of the out buildings.



Tahlee House is a lovely historic building and furnished accordingly. The first Commissioner, Robert Dawson, began work on the house in the first year of settlement in 1826. It has seen many changes and renovations since the early days and is now a historical reminder of those times.



The quaint boat harbour was built originally by convict labour and has been restored quite recently by a local resident, David, who proudly showed us around the grounds describing the origin of the huge old trees some of which must have been planted in the early days. There were 12 full time gardeners then.

At 1pm we gathered in the Tahlee House ballroom and enjoyed a lovely 'baked dinner' for lunch, topped off with handmade cream horns!



We saw the complex on the most perfect autumn day – it was truly lovely. Many thanks to Helen for organising this day out - and for the trivia etc. on the bus to keep us entertained!