



Fellowship of First Fleeters

Hunter Valley Chapter

"To live on in the hearts and minds of Descendants is never to die."

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General Meeting 17th June, 2019



Today, on a typical cool June morning, we celebrated the 12th Birthday of our Chapter. We were very pleased to greet three new faces to the second meeting at our new venue in Teralba - all ladies with connections to those who arrived on the First Fleet.

Sue Musgrove, Liz Burgess, and Maggie Sulman

Welcome ladies and we hope you are able to continue joining with us at our regular meetings and outings when you are able.

Our **'5 minutes of history'** segment today was presented by Caroline Rupee who has a series of letters written by her G.G.G. Grandmother Mary Wild which were sent from Port Jackson to her mother back in County Cork, Ireland. Mary's husband was Lt. John Wild of the 48th Regiment.

Caroline is currently translating these letters and read us the first letter which was written on the 1st December, 1817. It was a lovely letter full of re-assurances from a daughter to a concerned mother back in the home country on the other side of the world. There were very interesting details about where they were living, the conditions in the settlement, the cost of living and what was available to buy and at what price.

This descriptive letter gave us a personal and positive appreciation of life in the very early days of the colony. We look forward to hearing more when Caroline has translated letter number two!!



Our Guest Speaker today was Chas Keys who is a flood consultant, an Honorary Associate of Risk Frontiers at Macquarie University and a former Deputy Director-General of the NSW State Emergency Service.

Chas pointed out that since the 19th century many towns were established on rivers and creeks for transport in the early days as well as being a convenient water supply. Many towns were also established on flood plains where the soil was the most fertile for planting crops.

In those early days there was no method of forecasting flooding events, such as we have today, and while the Bureau of Meteorology sometimes get it wrong their forecasts of flooding are usually within 1ft of the end result. We can appreciate the comment that nature is unpredictable and a flood prone area is always a flood prone area even if the floods are more than 70 or even 100 years apart.

Many of us remember the 1955 flood in the Hunter Valley – in Maitland the population of the City was 25,000 – all of the 8,000 that lived on the flood plain had to be evacuated or rescued or they died. The Bureau predicted the Pasha Bulka storm of 2007 would be worse than in 1955 and its prediction was an uncharacteristically bad miss as it peaked half a meter below the forecast at Belmore Bridge.



1955 Maitland flood

As an example Chas quoted the flood history of Nyngan with a population of 2½ thousand and which has smashed the record of flood evacuations. There have been 3 mass evacuations in 30 years. The largest flood was in 1955.

The Bureau had issued a high flood warning and residents were advised to evacuate. Most chose to stay. The roads were quickly cut off by flood water and evacuation was again offered by air but many locals remained to help with sandbagging the levee. They worked for 4-5 days with 7,000 sandbags brought in by caribou aircraft. Unfortunately this didn't work and the levee was breached and even the aircraft became trapped. Being such flat country there was nowhere to go to higher ground so 18 helicopters were brought in to evacuate 2,000 people – 3 at a time – to buses which drove them to Dubbo. 95% left but 5% refused so they were put to work where they could be kept an eye on. It was 3 weeks before people could return.

Chas says human nature being as it is, in an emergency situation **if you tell people to go some will stay, if you tell them to stay some will go**. The difference between an evacuation and rescue is: to evacuate you leave under your own steam – a rescue is when you can leave only with help, not under your own steam.



After answering some interesting questions President Barbara thanked Chas for his talk on a subject that, living in the Hunter, we could all identify with.

Chas Keys is also an author of 12 books mostly connected with rescue situations and the unpredictability of flooding - these book titles can be found on the web.

Outing May 13th, 2019

Each year we try to have our May outing in some way connected to the sea or an inland waterway as we remember the date our forebears sailed from Portsmouth. This year we were able to celebrate on the **exact** date – the **13th of May**.

Caroline had kindly organised a cruise for us from Lemon Tree Passage on Port Stephens, along the Karuah River as far as the township of Karuah.

We met, as suggested, at Lemon Tree Passage marina at 10 am to find our captain for the day wasn't able to join us due to a sad family health emergency. His replacement was a little late arriving to find what we had already suspected – we wouldn't be going anywhere for sometime as the tide was out and the vessel was grounded in the mud!



It was such a lovely morning and in a lovely setting so we found a nice spot to relax until the incoming tide re-floated the boat. We had heard wonderful reports on the amazing commentary on this cruise but of course without the captain this didn't eventuate. So we looked forward to purchasing fresh prawns at Karuah and having an oyster shucking demonstration. Again we were out of luck!



Being the day after mother's day they were completely sold out of prawns and as we were behind time there was no oyster shucking demo. However oysters were for sale and those who had brought coolers were able to look forward to a delicious feast that evening. The Karuah RSL Courtesy bus took us to their Club nearby and we enjoyed a lovely lunch.

It was a lovely peaceful cruise back to Lemon Tree Passage – for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way – when we were stopped by the Maritime Inspectors – they must have had good instincts to find a boat full of descendants of First Fleeter convicts to check out!

Lemon Tree Passage is situated on the **Tilligerry** Peninsular which we learned was the aboriginal word for **pelican**.

I can also add a little F.F. history about the area as the 3rd husband of my First Fleet ancestor Ann Forbes, Thomas Huxley (Jones), came out on the 3rd fleet aboard the HMSS Salamander which did call into Port Stephens along the way naming Salamander Bay.



You may be surprised to hear that the 22 who attended this outing still had a wonderful day on the water with great company, a relaxing cruise, good food and lots of laughter. We may even be brave enough to return in a year or so to hear and enjoy the interesting commentary!

A REMINDER:



Annual subscriptions are now due. With our much needed Chapter refunds in mind it would be greatly appreciated if you could pay before the deadline 1st August. These refunds help build up our bottom line and reduce costs!

Another plea from President Barbara! PLEASE give serious consideration to our need for a VICE PRESIDENT.

Barbara has on several occasions emphasized that she will not continue as President without a vice President for support. Kerry is willing to take on this role if another member offers to replace her as SECRETARY.

So there is a choice of either position!



Very best wishes to:

July

- 2nd Tony Huntley
- 3rd Pearl Bartley (Jnr)
- 7th Cheryl Brown
- 9th Beth Brooker
- 10th George Pinkerton
- 11th Dianne Wincote
- 30th Gail Parsons

August

- 16th Valterie Davies
- 16th Brian Halson
- 26th Lee de Bono

A few Lexophiles to ponder:

A boiled egg is hard to beat.

He had a photographic memory but it was never fully developed.

Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

The guy who fell into an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.



You are cordially invited to our AGM and annual SOUP & DAMPER Luncheon



When: Monday 19th August

Where: Teralba Community Hall Anzac Parade

Time: 10am for 10.30
Tea & Coffee on arrival

Guest Speaker:
Our member Roger Heading

Topic: Roger will introduce us to his First Fleet ancestors:
Mary & William Bryant

Cost: \$7 including Lucky door ticket

Please bring your own bowl & Spoon!

***** As usual there will be no outing in the cold weather of July *****

We are looking forward to visiting historic Alison Homestead & Museum, Wyong, on Monday, September 16th



This will be a car pooling outing More details at the next meeting and in the next Newsletter.

Judy Aubin - Editor