

# 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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## The Coal River Bulletin

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# Happy 3rd Birthday !!



**An enthusiastic group of First Fleeters and supporters gathered at our June meeting to celebrate the 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday of our Hunter Valley Chapter.**

To add to the festive atmosphere photos of special events and outings from our last three years were on display. These created a lot of interest as did photos of early Newcastle, copies of our past Newsletters, a selection of relevant books and several convict bonnets made by Judy Pepper\*\*.

We were pleased to welcome several new faces and to see the return of some familiar ones:

**Barry Chaff and his wife Wendy** - F.F. Joseph Trimby - *Friendship*

**Gary Balhouse** - F.F. John Small - *Charlotte* and F.F. Mary Parker - *Lady Penrhyn*

**Wayne Crossley** - F.F. Matthew Everingham - *Scarborough*

**Geoff Stewart** - F.F. John Small - *Charlotte* and F.F. Mary Parker - *Lady Penrhyn*

**Carolyn Watson** - F.F. John Herbert - *Charlotte* and F.F. Deborah Ellam - *Prince of Wales*

\*\* Judy has a pattern for convict bonnets if you would like to make one yourself or she is happy to make a bonnet for you for a small fee to cover the cost of materials.

The Guest Speaker for our special birthday meeting was Sue Ryan, Research Librarian from the Newcastle City Library.



Sue with President Barbara

Sue spoke of the establishment of the early settlements in Newcastle. Our area was known to the local aboriginals (Awabakal and Worimi tribes) as “Muloobinba” – translated as “*place of edible sea fern*”.

A small group of convicts was sent here in 1801 but the settlement was abandoned a few short months later.

However the valuable resources in the area were recognised by the Government and a permanent settlement was commissioned in 1804. Lieutenant Charles Menzies volunteered for the position of Commandant and he wished the settlement to be named Kings Town. However Governor King named it Newcastle. Even so, some early documents and maps refer to the settlement as Kings Town.

In 1811 the population of Newcastle was:

100 male convicts,  
30 female convicts and  
47 soldiers.

By 1816 there were:

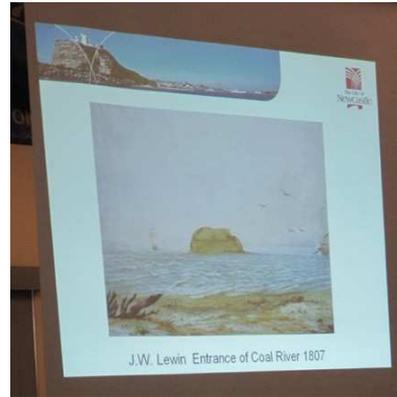
215 male convicts,  
39 females and  
33 soldiers

A school had also been established with 17 children.

Sue also had a selection of early images of Newcastle on a power point presentation. These can be accessed on:

[www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/library](http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/library).

We thoroughly enjoyed hearing more about the early days of our City and the links to various sites of interest to family researchers. No doubt the Library web site will be running hot over the next few days!



Early painting of Nobby' headland  
(JW Lewin – Entrance of Coal River 1807)

Fellowship continued over a tasty luncheon and PP John Brooker, together with wife Beth and our current President Barbara, cut our 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday cake.





## Birthdays

**Congratulations and best wishes to:**

**Beth Brooker - 9<sup>th</sup> July**  
**Dom Swinkles - 4<sup>th</sup> July**

### **MORE “FIRSTS” for June/July 1788**

**4<sup>th</sup> June 1788 - First Public Holiday in Australia – to celebrate the birthday of King George III.**

**5<sup>th</sup> June 1788 - All cattle brought from Cape Town escaped: they were not recaptured until November 1795.**

**22<sup>nd</sup> June 1788 - slight earthquake was observed. Lasted two or three seconds and so slight many did not feel it.**

## Report on our outing on May 17<sup>th</sup>:

A morning on the **Hawkesbury Postman Ferry** was another enjoyable and interesting outing – thanks Noelene – we all give it a big tick!

Thirteen of us braved the early morning train to Brooklyn and then joined up with 3 others who had driven down together. While the weather was overcast it was a very calm morning with lovely river reflections and fortunately the rain held off long enough for us to arrive home “dry”.



After a quick coffee we boarded the **MV Hawkesbury** for a 9.30am sharp departure - the cruise was for four hours. The Riverboat Postman has been providing this essential service to river communities since 1910, delivering mail, milk, groceries and newspapers.

Many of us had heard of the islands in the river by name but it was great to actually cruise past them and see the variety of homes in the small communities – some very old – others quite grand.



We enjoyed morning tea as we cruised along – but were not the only ones to enjoy the biscuits provided – at most stops along the way we were greeted by tail wagging and visibly **grinning dogs** who knew there was a treat in store for them too!

We cruised almost to Spencer before returning on a slightly different course but still calling in to deliver essentials of milk, bread, mail at various settlements.



It was also interesting to cruise past the remains of *HMAS Parramatta* which had been commissioned in 1908 and was the first war ship built in Australia. The missing bow is now a memorial which can be seen as you approach Parramatta on the Rivercat and the stern is a memorial on the foreshore of Sydney Harbour. *HMAS Parramatta* carried out patrol duties at Gallipoli.



Bar Island

On our return journey the Captain also pointed out Bar Island at the entrance of Berowra Creek. Apparently used by aborigines for thousands of years, the island became the focus of river communities in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A church, school and burial ground were located there but the arrival of the railway in 1889 resulted in the population moving to Brooklyn. The church and school disappeared over time but the historic cemetery still remains with around 60 graves.

We arrived back in Brooklyn with plenty of time to enjoy a late lunch of fish and chips, a speciality of the area, before boarding our train for the return journey.

**On a personal note I was delighted to meet two more “F.F. cousins” – also descendants of F.F. Ann Forbes.**



The Morris's (left) - Geoff being a descendant of Ann Forbes and William Dring, Robert Fraser (middle) and myself - both of us descendants of Ann Forbes and Thomas Huxley, but through different siblings.

**To recognise the sailing of the First Fleet from Portsmouth a number of our members gathered at the Kotara Bowling Club for lunch on the 13<sup>th</sup> May.**



**President Barbara gave the following toast:**

“At 4 o’clock in the morning on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May 1787, 223 years ago today, the signal was given by the Flagship Sirius for the ships of the First Fleet to set sail and begin their eight-month voyage from Portsmouth to establish a British convict colony in a remote and little known spot on the far side of the world.

There was no ceremony or fanfare as it was still early, two hours till day break, when the ships were assembled outside Portsmouth Harbour at Spithead which separates the Mainland from the Isle of Wight.

The First Fleet was the biggest single overseas migration the world had ever seen at the time. Each of the eleven tiny ships was heavily loaded with human cargo (nearly 1500 souls).

So it is, with this in mind, that we think of our ancestors who sailed from Portsmouth at this time – not knowing where they would end up.

Please raise your glasses and salute those brave souls, our forebears.”



Some interesting (and some quite amazing) statistics about the First Fleeters, from an article in the North Coast Chapter Newsletter, which were quoted from historian, Craig James Smee:

*The first generation consisted of 955 males and 1023 females.*

*48% of children were “illegitimate”.*

*83% of first generation girls were married by 16 years of age.*

*27% of men married to first generation women were 30 years older than their wives.*

*A quarter of women married at least twice, 39% married a man younger than themselves in subsequent marriages.*

*18.7% of their children died in infancy, 27.4% didn’t survive past their first 5 years. And yet the survivors were great breeders. 30% of women had at least 10 or more children.*

***Naming children at that time was not a creative exercise:***

*169 males were named John, 51 William, 109 James, 96 Thomas, and 60 George.*

*For females there were:  
223 Marys, 191 Elizabeths, 113 Anns,  
110 Sarahs and 40 Janes.*

*This penal colony – its very purpose being to accommodate the criminal debris of the mother country rapidly defied expectations. The colony’s first sons and daughters shook off the chains.*

*By the time of the 1814 muster only one of the first generation, Enoch Weavers, was in jail. In the 1828 census only one was listed as a convict. By the time of this census only 14% of first-generation men were classified as unskilled labourers. Two-thirds were land owners.*

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## COMING OUTINGS

### Monday July 19<sup>th</sup>:

#### **Newcastle City "TRAM" Tour.**

The tram departs from the Watt Street end of Newcastle Railway Station at 11 am. It is a one hour tour and Noelene suggests we meet at the tram stop at 10.45 am. Cost \$15 pp

We will then visit the Maritime Museum and enjoy lunch on the foreshore.

### Thursday September 9<sup>th</sup>:

#### **Victoria Barracks**

Guided Tour of historic Victoria Barracks, Oxford Street, Sydney  
Tour starts 10.30 am sharp – meet there at 10.15am.– tea and coffee available.  
Cost \$2 pp  
Train departs Newcastle 6.35am  
Broadmeadow 6.45am, Fassifern 7.03,  
Wyong 7.30am Arrives Central 9.20am  
Bus 378 from Eddy Avenue every 10 mins.

Lunch in area and return on 3.15pm train.

### Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>:

#### **Historic Goat Island Tour Sydney Harbour.**

A fully guided tour by National Parks and Wildlife Rangers. Cost \$24 pp

Tour departs Circular Quay at 10.15am from the Commissioners Steps (almost opposite Cadmans Cottage).  
Tour returns 12.45pm. Lunch at the Quay.

As the National Parks require payment beforehand, if you weren't at our June meeting, could you please send payment to our Treasurer Judy Pepper – 19 Bell Street, Speers Point. 2284 asap. Many thanks.

Train departs Newcastle 6.35am as above, then catch the City Circle Train to Circular Quay. We will return on the 3.15pm train from Central Station.

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FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE VERY WELCOME TO JOIN US ON ALL OUTINGS. **BOOKINGS are ESSENTIAL.**

PLEASE CONTACT NOELENE: 49593702, MOBILE 0403668563. SMS WELCOME.

# YOUR INVITATION

## Annual General Meeting

### Monday August 16<sup>th</sup>

Please note starting time will be 10am for 10.30am start

Following our meeting and AGM enjoy your hot soup and damper seated around a discussion table.



You are invited to exchange ideas, photos and information on the life and times of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, as well as of Newcastle's early years.



Please bring along any photos, paintings and articles of interest.

Meeting fee is \$5 pp – there is no need to bring a plate to share at this meeting!

**Hope to see you there!!**