

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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www.firstfleetershunter.com.au

President: Barbara Turner Ph. 49439105	Vice President/Membership: Cynthia Huggup Ph. 49558045	Secretary: Yvonne Bradley Ph. 49574758	Treasurer: Judith Pepper Ph. 49584043	Minutes Secretary: Helen Pacey Ph: 49691406
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The Coal River Bulletin Newsletter No: 18 – December/January 2011

We farewelled 2010 at our Christmas celebration on December 13th and we reflected on what a great year we have enjoyed as a group. There have been very interesting speakers at our meetings and the monthly outings have been varied and really enjoyable. A detailed account our latest outing, a tour of Goat Island in Sydney Harbour, is further along in this Newsletter.



We once again enjoyed our Christmas luncheon at the historic Monet's Restaurant situated in the old Commandant's Cottage, Newcastle East.



Many, many thanks to all who donated to our Christmas Raffle. We had so many goodies we were able to have two hampers as 1st and 2nd prizes – plus a 3rd raffle prize. There were also four door prizes. Congratulations to all those lucky winners!



**** Around the Tables ****



(Apologies to those folk who had earlier commitments and were a little late and aren't included!)



Our focus now is on the New Year and we will commence 2011 in high style with our **Australia Day Stall** on the Newcastle Foreshore. Following the success of our efforts last year we are looking forward to once again spreading the word to passers-by. Council has approved the same location (between the lake and the harbour) which we thought was ideal and we will decorate the stall with our Banner, flags, bunting and FFF posters, etc. Volunteers to assist on the day will again be very welcome – it was a fun family day last year so please drop in at any time on Wednesday, 26th January to give a hand and enjoy the fellowship.

Publicity Officer Lee has been having success with advertising in the media and for those who missed seeing it the Newcastle Herald the following was in the paper on the 13th December. Again thank you Lee for all your efforts in spreading the news of our Chapter as well as of the Fellowship in general.

A FIRST FLEET FAMILY TREE

FOR those who have traced their lineage back to the first European settlers to come to our shores, the Fellowship of First Fleeters may be the exclusive club to join.

The Hunter chapter of the fleeters celebrate Christmas today at Monet's Restaurant at the historic Commandant's Cottage in Watt Street.

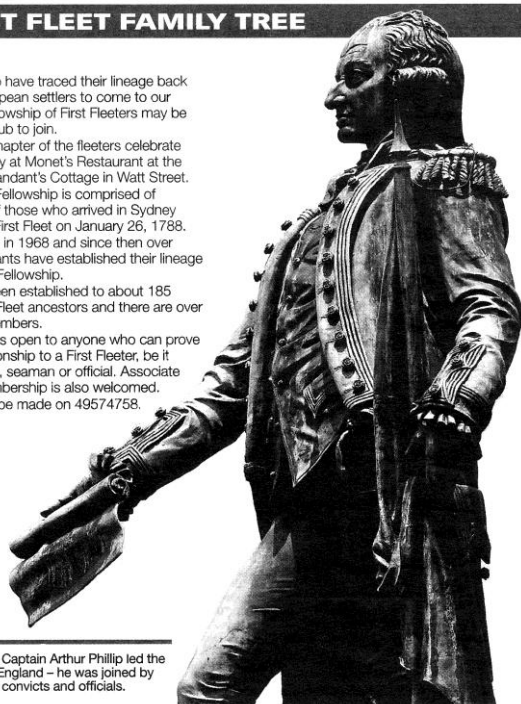
The national Fellowship is comprised of descendants of those who arrived in Sydney Cove with the First Fleet on January 26, 1788.

It was formed in 1968 and since then over 7500 descendants have established their lineage and joined the Fellowship.

Links have been established to about 185 individual First Fleet ancestors and there are over 1300 active members.

Membership is open to anyone who can prove his or her relationship to a First Fleeter, be it convict, marine, seaman or official. Associate and friend membership is also welcomed.

Inquiries can be made on 49574758.



DESCENDANTS: Captain Arthur Phillip led the First Fleet from England – he was joined by over 1300 crew, convicts and officials.

For Your Diary



You are cordially invited to our first general meeting for 2011

Date: 21st February

Time: 10 for 10.30am

**Where: Seniors Citizens Hall
Brunker Rd. Adamstown**

Cost: \$5 pp

Tea and coffee on arrival

**The Guest Speaker will be our own
Helen Pacey
who will speak on her
First Fleet ancestor, Anthony Rope.**

Please bring a small plate of goodies to share over a light luncheon.

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**Noelene has more great ideas for
2011 and beyond!**

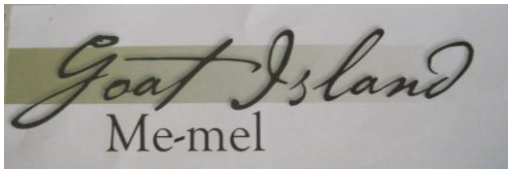
To begin the year our outing on **March 21st** will be a car tour around the East Maitland/Hinton areas including St. Peters Church and the old Glebe Cemetery where First Fleeter Joseph Trimby is buried.

We will car pool so arrangements for this and other details will be available at the February meeting or phone Noelene on:
49 593702 – mobile 040 3668536.

**Very best wishes to those celebrating
a birthday:**



Ray Meredith	November 30 th
Helen Pacey	December 1 st
Helen Moore	December 5 th
Don Huggup	December 26 th
Yvonne Bradley	January 21 st
Wilga Wilson	January 16 th
Wendy Swinkels	January 18 th
George Wilson	February 16 th



15th November, 2010

We had been looking forward to this outing for many months and were pleased to welcome folk from other Chapters who joined us at Circular Quay. The day before our visit the

temperature in Sydney rose to 38° so we guessed we could have either a cold southerly wind, or rain, or both to contend with. True to form the clouds rolled in and by 11am it began to rain, but fortunately with no wind, so we weren't faced with the added problem of being blown off the island into the harbour! Our guide, National Park Ranger, David, imparted so much info on the Island and its history it's hard to know what to include.

Originally called Me-mel ('The Eye' or 'Place from which you can see far') the island was formed 6,000 years ago when the Parramatta River flooded at the end of the last Ice Age. Bennelong and his wife were often seen on the island and Bennelong claimed it previously belonged to his father. Goat Island was named by the English, not because they found goats there, but because of its shape.



Goat Island isn't far off shore at all !

In 1825 Governor Darling had converted a wrecked ship, the *Phoenix*, into a floating jail and when Governor Richard Bourke initiated works on Goat Island in 1833, the rotting prison hulk was moored off Goat Island to house the prisoners. Convicts worked in chain gangs cutting sandstone from the quarry. This lovely sandstone was used in erecting substantial buildings in the growing colony and on the island itself.



Rowing the 200 plus convicts back and forth to the hulk each day was very time consuming so, when the hulk was condemned in 1837, all prisoners were transferred onto the island into portable wooden cabins on wheels. These first 'mobile homes' were 12ft x 10ft and up to 24 convicts were locked inside from sunset to sunrise and slept on 4 benches.

A wooden toilet opposite the door and between the 2 rows of double-decker bunks was, as our guide explained, obviously and hopefully only for emergency No.1's!

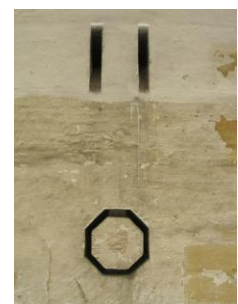


British Soldiers were stationed on the Island from 1833 to 1870, first as convict guards and then later to protect the powder magazine complex. Only 20 convicts ever escaped from the island and as all prisoners had their heads shaved they became very conspicuous and most were quickly recaptured.

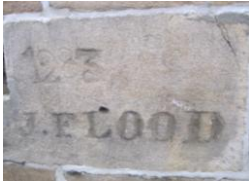
In 1838 convicts began construction of a large magazine depot capable of holding 3,000 barrels of gunpowder, complete with a cooperage, sentry wall, guard's barracks and kitchen. It took 4 years to complete. As ships visiting the harbour often caught fire they were required to surrender their store of gun powder to the powder magazine on entry. A fee was charged for their gun powder to be returned and as some couldn't pay they were forced to leave it behind. Over time the number of barrels in stock increased to as many as 7,000 barrels. The magazine had walls two to three meters thick and its vents were constructed in a zigzag pattern to stop bullets or sparks entering and causing an almighty explosion.



Powder Magazine Wall
2 to 3 meters thick



Zigzag wall vents



Guards were stationed all along the sentry wall and to help pass the long days some carved their name and number, or even a design, into the sandstone. ?Australia's first colonial graffiti? As the Colony in Sydney grew all explosives were removed from the island by 1900.



Also in 1838 a Water Police Unit comprising of one conductor and a convict boat crew was established on the tip of the island. One of their duties was to re-capture escaping convicts - it took awhile for authorities to realise that the small number ever caught was mostly due to having a convict boat crew who always gave firm assurances they were really rowing as hard as they could!

An interesting fact: This water police station was used in the TV series "Water Rats".

In 1901 the eastern side of the island was given to the Sydney Harbour Trust to establish a depot for its working boat fleet. In 1936 the Maritime Services Board replaced the Trust and constructed two large slipways, a workshop and installed a large hammer head crane.

I think most of us were amazed by the number of well constructed buildings still on the island. As well as the lovely old sandstone buildings a grand residence for the Harbour Master had been built in the early 1900's on the highest part of the island. There were also cottages for married members of the harbour's fire boat crew, barracks for unmarried members and other cottages for workers. Harbour Masters continued living there until 1967.



The Barracks - note the rare rounded sandstone pillars made from one piece of sandstone and shaped by hand



Harbour Masters Residence

At one point up to 200 residents and workers lived on the island. They were provided with a swimming enclosure, tennis court and social hall. Activities were all scaled back with the demise of the MSB in the 1980's. Goat Island became part of Sydney Harbour National Park in 1995 and a ship repair facility is still in operation. The Trust is open to suggestions on its web site as to how this facility should be developed in the future.

As we headed back to our Ferry (feeling more than a little damp) we passed by the remains of the original sandstone wharf built by convicts over a two year period in the 1830's.



I hope you all enjoyed discovering Goat Island, despite the inclement weather. If you weren't able to be there I hope you find this article interesting and enlightening. Thank you Noelene for organising another great FFF outing!

Do you think the shape of the Island looks like a goat?

(NB: English goats had long hair and the Island has probably changed shape over the years!)



Your Editor,
Judy Aubin