

F.F.F.

NEWSLETTER

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Liverpool Pioneers' Memorial Park

(By Eric Blair)

My wife and I received an invitation from the Liverpool City Council to attend the official opening of the Liverpool Pioneers' Memorial Park by His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Roden Cutler, V.C., K.C.M.G., K.C.V.C., C.B.E., on Saturday 20th April 1974.

A large crowd attended the ceremony, including our President, Mr Kable, Hon. Secretary, Mrs Bernath, Mrs Markwell and Mr Meredith, both members of the Executive. Many other members of the Fellowship of First Fleeters were also present.

Buried in this cemetery is my ancestor Frederick Meredith, also his wife Sarah. My wife's ancestor William Broughton is also buried there. It was particularly gratifying to see that the condition of both headstones was very good, and it is hoped that photographs of both will soon be available for the Fellowship's archives.

We all remember well when, some four or five years ago, a party visited the cemetery and found it in a very dilapidated state. Great credit must go to Liverpool City Council for the wonderful transformation that has taken place.

Pathways originally divided the cemetery into three sections. Moving from south to north, the first two sections were Church of England, while the third was Roman Catholic and other denominations, including a section for paupers. These three defined sections were used by Council to split the area into three arbitrary sections (A, B and C), while, in fact, they now have no bearing on either the denomination or the order of burial.

The focal point of the park is the memorial building, which is centrally located in Section B. The building is of an early colonial design with plaques erected around the wall listing all persons known to be buried there.

From this building concrete pathways radiate to the four corners of the park, while towards the north-eastern corner a wall has been built containing many of the headstones which have been moved from their original positions. The headstones remaining in place will be progressively repaired and restored as funds permit.

The entire five acres of park have been landscaped with lawns, occasional flower-beds and mass planting of trees and shrubs. Altogether some 600 trees and 700 shrubs have been planted throughout the park.

An underground watering system has been installed to cope with the hot and dry conditions often experienced in Liverpool.

All headstones have been numbered, and should any interested persons wish to see the site of these First Fleeters, William Broughton is numbered 23 in A Section and Frederick and Sarah Meredith No 46 in B Section. I would urge as many members as possible to visit this Memorial Park, which is truly a fitting resting-place for our ancestors and pioneers.

Illness of President

As many members know, our President, Mr Edgar Kable, has been in the Repatriation Hospital, Concord, and is now convalescing. This is why this issue of the Newsletter does not carry any President's Report.

On behalf of all members, we take this opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery to full health.

Lecture Nights

The following two lectures will be given at the next two monthly meetings in May and June:--

On 21st May Mr John Ryan, M.A., a Senior Lecturer in History at Macquarie University, will speak on "The Irish." Mr Ryan is an authority on the Irish and the role these controversial people played in the early colony. He has just returned from a year's Sabbatical leave overseas, during which time he revisited Ireland, so that he brings a fresh view to the subject.

On 14th June it will be a great pleasure to have, once again, a descendant speaking about his own First Fleeter, "Frederick Meredith and the Meredith Family."

This talk will be given by Mr R. J. Meredith, B.A., a lecturer at Sydney Teachers' College, who should have much to say of interest to us all on this subject.

From time to time we hope to deal with all the First Fleeters who are represented in the Fellowship. Val Ross, 75 Douglas Street, St. Ives 2075 (phone 44 5941), will be pleased to hear from anyone who would be prepared to give a reasonably authenticated talk on any First Fleeter, or on any subject closely connected with this period of our history.

W. V. Wild

(From A. Ingham-Myers)

In the March Newsletter, the question was asked whether there were any sons or grandsons of First Fleeters (besides several named) who had become members of early Parliaments.

Henry and Susannah Kable had a great-grandson in the first reformed Parliament, that of 1859 -- William Vandercoulen Wild, barrister-at-law, who was chosen to represent Camden at the age of 24.

W. V. Wild was the son of John Wild, of "Vanderville," The Oaks, and his wife Emeline nee Gaudry. Emeline was a daughter of William Littleton Gaudry and Diana (nee Kable), Henry and Susannah's eldest daughter and second child (1788-1855).

He lived only a short time after his election and was buried in the old cemetery, St. Stephen's, Newtown. To his memory there is a mural tablet in St. James' Church, King Street.

It may be of interest to members to record that, in the Oaks cemetery, near the old Vanderville homestead, Henry Kable Jnr, the baby who came out with the First Fleet (1786-1852) and his sister Susannah (1795-1885), the widow of Dr James Mileham, are both buried.

"Sydney in 1848"

"Sydney in 1848," by Joseph Fowles, an English marine artist who came to Sydney in 1838 and lived here until his death in 1878, has just been republished by Ure Smith in association with the National Trust, in a paperback facsimile edition (\$2-50). Praised highly by reviewers.

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Rally and Service to Preserve Old Church

An inter-denominational rally and service is to be held at 10 a.m. on Sunday 19th May on behalf of the preservation of the Balmain St. Andrews Congregational Church.

A Mr Abba, of the Balmain Historical and Conservation Society, phoned Fellowship President Mr Edgar Kable appealing for support towards the preservation of the above church, which is 120 years old and in danger of being demolished. This sad fate seems to have befallen many old churches in the inner suburbs in recent years, and it would be a great pity if some effort were not made to try to preserve some of these fine old stone buildings.

Commencing at 9 a.m. on Sunday 19th May a procession of people dressed in appropriate costumes will march to the church, situated on the corner of Darling and Curtis Streets, Balmain. This procession will be followed by an inter-denominational rally and service at 10 a.m., after which some refreshments will be served.

The President would like as many Fellowship members as possible to attend this rally. Anyone seeking further particulars may contact Mr Abba at the Blood Bank (phone 29 6511).

Period Costume

Mention of a pageant (above) brings to notice that the Fellowship should perhaps make an effort to outfit ourselves with the clothes as worn in the days of the First Fleet. Many in the Fellowship feel that some thought and research should be given so that we appear in public dressed as 1788 and not as some critic has recently remarked, as 1888. At least people are apparently beginning to take some notice of the Fellowship, so it is up to us to look the part.

"Rocks Festival"

Argyle Day, 30th March at The Rocks, was our most successful day to date. Our Secretary organised a table-top truck which enabled those willing to take part in the procession, which made for a lot of fun and provided ideas for next year. A vote of thanks to those who so generously donated to our stall, and a special vote to those who manned the stall all day, working very hard and giving us our most gratifying result.

Personal Jottings

The engagement has been announced of Merri Weston Craig, daughter of Mrs Eric Blair, to Laurence Bolton, of Killara. . . . Elaine Haig, now of Surfers Paradise, has been visiting Sydney seeing her family and various F.F.F. friends. . . . Mary Thompson, of the Membership Committee, has unfortunately suffered a broken wrist, result of an accident. We wish her a speedy recovery. Mary's regular report will appear again in the next issue. . . . Christine Higginbotham, daughter of F.F.F. member Arthur Higginbotham, was a member of the New South Wales crew which won the Australian lightweight four-oared championship at the Australian titles rowed in Adelaide on 27th April.

Address on Australia's First Preacher

The speaker at the Fellowship's last monthly meeting, on 23rd April, was Professor E. J. Cable, M.A. (Cambridge and Sydney), Associate Professor of History at the University of Sydney, and the subject of his address, "The Reverend Richard Johnson, Australia's First Preacher." There was a very good attendance on a very wet night, and the address was very interesting. Professor Cable is to present his notes to the Fellowship for preservation in our archives. In the absence of the President, the vote of thanks was moved by Mr Eric Blair.

The Two Battles of Vinegar Hill (Continued)

(Information supplied by Mr Bert E. Weston, researched and put together by Mr W. D. Neil, of Castle Hill. Two earlier instalments dealt with the crushing by the English authorities of an Irish rebellion in 1798 at the Battle of Vinegar Hill, near the town of Enniscorthy in the south-east of Ireland, the ensuing transportation of many Irish political prisoners to the colony, and a convict outbreak on 4th March 1804 at the Government Farm at Castle Hill).

Over 200 convicts in this outbreak then planned to add to their number by recruiting convicts from the Hawkesbury River settlements, to seize Farramatta and Sydney and escape in ships which they believed would be waiting for them in Sydney Harbour. Had their "daring insurrection" been successful the course of Australian history could well have been changed. However, this was not to be the case.

At the beginning of the disturbance a few informers escaped and carried the news to Farramatta. Action on the part of the authorities was swift and efficient. Martial law was proclaimed in the district, and a small detachment of the New South Wales Corps, supported by a few civilian volunteers, pursued the main body of the rebels and caught up with them near present-day Rouse Hill. In a short confrontation the convict body could not withstand the superior and disciplined fire-power of the soldiers. They broke and fled. The rebellion was over.

For the ringleaders and prominent participants punishment was severe and decisive. Nine were hanged, and over 30 were sent to the re-established penal settlement at Newcastle on the Hunter River. The bulk of the remainder were treated reasonably, being allowed to return to their former places of employment.

From this time onwards the problems created by the discontent of the Irish prisoners gradually caused less concern. Time, distance and the restoration of civil rights led to a diminution of nationalistic fervour. Few of the former rebels ever returned to their native land, and many of them became affluent and respected citizens in the country to which they had been forcibly transported.

Echoes of events in their former homeland, however, did remain. The 1804 rebellion became known as the Irish revolt, and the encounter as the Battle of Vinegar Hill, in reference to the 1798 Battle of Vinegar Hill in Ireland. For some years the present Rouse Hill was known as Vinegar Hill. Today the name is kept alive by a short length of road, known as Vinegar Hill Road, near Rouse Hill House and Rouse Hill Public School.

W. D. Neil.

The Wild Colonial

Members may be interested to know of a new theatre-restaurant in Sydney with a colonial "atmosphere." This is the Wild Colonial, at 86 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards.

The Wild Colonial claims to be "dedicated in the most light-hearted way to all those wild colonial chums who gave so much of themselves and who came to the shanties and taverns of their day, to enjoy beaut tucker and grog and indeed to spend a few pleasant hours away from the 'bastardry that was without.' "

Current entertainment is a "colonial romp" set in the pioneering days entitled "Up a Gum Tree," written and produced by John Paassen, well known for this type of production. In keeping with the atmosphere, the waitresses are dressed as convict maids. There are set menus at what can be considered to be reasonable prices. Concessions are available for party bookings. -----