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Please address all correspondence to the Fellowship of First Fleeters, G.P.O. Box 4441, Sydney 2001.

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From the President

Since the last Newsletter we have celebrated our 10th Birthday. A very happy evening was spent by Members at the Weinkeller Restaurant, and it was particularly pleasing to have with us our three Vice Patrons, Foundation Members and even some new Members only admitted to the Fellowship within the last couple of months. Let us hope we will have many happy returns of that anniversary.

Don't forget the Coach Trip on 28th May to Gledswood Winery, Campbelltown, Camden, The Oaks and Burragorang Lookout. This area is steeped in early history, and I am sure it will prove a most interesting day. Phone me (709-8974) for any vacancies.

Word has been received that work is progressing well on the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations, and it seems certain that the Inaugural Meeting will be held in Canberra later this year.

I hope to see many Members on the coach on Sunday 28th May.

Beryl Lewis.

April Lecture Evening

The April Lecture Evening was an interesting and lively one. Vaughan Evans (Councillor for the Royal Australian Historical Society) and his wife Halcyon gave a talk titled "A Steerage Passage to the Antipodes in the 1850's". The talk described the hardship and struggle of Robert Thompson's voyage to New Zealand.

The voyage cost £3 if you were single, with free medical care, knives, forks and spoons and mattress allotted to each passenger. He said, "It was uncomfortable enough", but he managed, even though the berth was 18 inches wide.

The ship was of 482 tons, and well past her prime. On 23rd February 1856 the voyage began. A journey "is a fragment of Hell", it was said, and it soon proved to be a true statement. The meat was bad after a week at sea, and the allotment of food was below the dietary requirement. Later the hold was broken into, and the Captain said he would "blow the culprit's head off!"

The heat was overpowering, and they looked forward to the North West trade winds. During the heat of the day the passengers would swim near the bow of the ship. Saltwater was used for washing, and during the early part of the journey a small child died and was buried at sea. On 6th April they crossed the Line; they baited hooks and occasionally caught a shark.

The air was foul below decks, and Robert Thompson would sleep on the upper deck. "The life was monotonous", he said, and there was quarrelling between passengers and crew. The mate, pistol in hand, threatened the passengers as he walked the poop deck.

April Lecture Evening (Continued)

The passengers never knew where they were, as the Captain kept it a secret. The food was worse, pork and peas being the best meal. Then another child died. Robert nursed one of his friends who was suffering from extreme hunger.

Then the ship caught fire in the galley, but luckily the fire was extinguished. One thing happened after another, as huge seas pounded the ship, and a huge wave took away part of the bulwarks. Women fainted. The rudder chain broke -- fortunately after the winds had abated. Next the weather became bitterly cold, and the only thing to eat was mouldy biscuits.

After 17 weeks of voyage land was in sight. Robert Thompson said, "If my account has proved wearing, I was sick and tired of the voyage for a long time".

Vaughan and Halcyon made the talk interesting and amusing, too, with their exchange of dialogue and touch of theatre.

The evening ended with slides of old ships of those days. An evening enjoyed by all.

Sally Kalina.

Membership Report

This month we have only one name to welcome to our Fellowship:

Miss Morag K. Thompson, Collaroy. (John Baylis)

At the moment we are busily researching for three or four different new First Fleeters, and hopefully, by next Newsletter, there will be quite a few additions to our Family List.

At our recent ceremony at St John's Cemetery, Parranatta, the following address was given by Mr Edward Linn concerning his two First Fleeters, John Herbert and Deborah Ellan. The same day a plaque was also placed on the grave of Augustus Theodore Henry Alt, a prominent figure in the colony. As there are none of his descendants who are Members, we supplied the information for that article.

Naida Jackson. Mary Bailey.

John Herbert and Deborah Ellan (Address by Edward Linn)

John Herbert was born in 1760. On 14th March, 1785, he appeared before Sir Beaumont Hotham and Francis Buller presiding at the Devon Lint Assizes held at Exeter Castle. Together with Stephen Davenport, Robert Ellwood and John Small he was charged with feloniously assaulting James Burt in the Kings Highway and feloniously and violently taking from his person and against his will one metal watch in a tortoiseshell case value 30s and one pruning knife value 6d and 5s. Herbert and Small were sentenced to hang; however, Royal mercy was extended to them on condition of transportation for seven years.

Now there seems to be some dispute over whether the John Herbert who lies here is the John Herbert I've just mentioned. There can be no dispute -- the records are plain and clear. You know that when the First Fleet arrived, Phillip was without papers about the prisoners. Accordingly all prisoners were assembled on the deck of each ship before they landed and particulars were taken down from each person concerning their conviction, age, occupation, etc. Thus the records show that the John Herbert who was transported in the Charlotte was the John Herbert sentenced at Exeter.

You probably know that this means of collection of information from the mouths of the people was the means used in all subsequent musters and censuses. That is to say, that each time a muster was taken

The details in the 1828 Census, when compared with the will left by John Herbert of Parramatta and with other records, clearly establishes his identity — so clearly that I marvel that there can be any suggestion of uncertainty about which of the two John Herberts he was.

Deborah Ellan or Hellan was born in 1767. On 24th August, 1784, she appeared together with Elizabeth Hewitt and Alice Hatton before Richard Pepper and Davies Barrington at the Chester Quarter Sessions. They were charged with feloniously stealing and taking away one cotton gown value 10s the property of Mary Byron and one gown of silk and worsted value 20s, six yards of cotton cloth value 6s the property of Elizabeth Jackson in the dwelling house of Henry Byron. Deborah Hellan was sentenced to transportation for seven years. She arrived in Sydney Cove aboard the Prince of Wales.

John Herbert and Deborah Hellan were married at Sydney on 2nd April, 1788. The next we hear about them is on 5th December, 1788, when Deborah appeared before David Collins, the Judge Advocate, following a domestic altercation. The incident is a striking example of brutality breeding brutality. What happened was that, while John Herbert was away working, some pigs got into the kitchen garden and destroyed some plants. When he arrived home she was not there but at a neighbour's place. After some difficulty and some yelling, I gather she arrived home ready to do battle with him. Blows were exchanged (he struck her first), she left him — she was repentant or was persuaded or, more likely, the authorities got to hear about the matter. In any event she appeared the next day before Collins accusing John Herbert of striking her without just cause. She was unrepentant, apparently maintaining that if he struck her again she would reciprocate. The end result was that she was sentenced to 25 lashes and ordered to return to her husband. Seven months later she gave birth to her first child, Benjamin — on Tuesday 21st July, 1789, to be exact.

In 1790 we learn that John Herbert was working at the Prospect settlement in his spare time. His sentence was not expired, and he had declared his intention of settling there. This, in fact, happened. He received a grant of 70 acres at Prospect in late 1791. His farm was later known as Pender, which is a further pointer to his origin.

Things were indeed difficult for them. The hoe had to take the place of the plough; a bad drought in 1798-99 weighed heavily. They felt they were unfairly treated in the distribution of convict labour, but, difficulties notwithstanding, they were among the eight families out of 54 who had been granted land before 1795 still on their farms in 1800.

In addition to Benjamin, who was later to become Constable at Liverpool and Bringelly, they had the following children: William, born 28/12/1791. Charles, who is buried here, born 1795. John, born in 1796. James, born 8/8/1803. Joseph and Susannah. Susannah married Anthony Sanders at Liverpool in 1821 and was buried here in St John's on 17th September, 1829. I do not know the site of her grave.

We know nothing more about Deborah than our imaginations might provide or than her epitaph tells us. Life did not privilege her or reward her with much beyond unremitting hardship and toil. It is to women such as her that we owe our birth as a nation.

We do know more about her husband John, though. He remarried. Ann Dudley was his second wife's name, and they married at Castlerough a few months after Deborah's death in 1819. He appears to have prospered in a mild way. By 1828 he had acquired land in Campbell Street, Parramatta. The land is now No 41; it was then No 39 and

and when he died, left an additional son by his second wife. This son was Henry John Herbert.

John and Deborah Herbert's children and a number of their descendants down to the present day continue in farming in New South Wales through, I suggest, tradition. As a family they have participated in the waves of development, first along the Nepean, then westward to the Lachlan.

In looking at the material available about people such as John and Deborah, it is wise to remember that the history we can read or reconstruct derives from information recorded about them by their educated "superiors". History from their own point of view is silent. They couldn't write, so they left no diaries about their everyday comings and goings, much less their innermost feelings. How tragic this is for the history of Australia because, in the final analysis, it is the everyday interaction between people that establishes a society's traditions and shapes its destiny. People like John and Deborah were very much in the majority.

What do we know of the way these people have shaped our society? Why is it that, after all these years of neglect, we of the current generations of Australians seek to place plaques on the graves of people such as Deborah and John? Is it just fashion, is it history for history's sake, or is it really a search to understand our own identity as Australians? It may be all of these things, but I would like to think that Deborah and John Herbert and many more of their kind would support me in posing to you a question which I will leave with you . . . "Do Australians of the present day relate to their social institutions and each other in any different way to the way they did to theirs?"

Editor's Note: Regretfully the address on Augustus Theodore Henry Alt has had to be held over until next Newsletter.

Another Bloodworth Descendant

We are pleased to announce the birth of another Bloodworth descendant, Warwick Meldrum, born 10th February at Taree, grandson of Nell Sanson (Bloodworth).

Early Encounters Between Europeans and Aborigines in N.S.W.

(By Ena Harper. Reprinted by kind permission of Ashfield Historical Society and Ena Harper. First instalment appeared in last Newsletter)

The Australoid group of humanity, to which the Aborigines belong, are still to be found in small remnants in lands from Australia to southern India. Professor Elkin believed that very early types of man lived in Java, and Australoid man became differentiated, spreading north to India and Malaya and south to New Guinea and Australia.

These people were food-gatherers and hunters, and probably moved on from time to time in search of better hunting grounds. Also pressure of population, especially from people of a higher culture, may have forced them to fresh pastures. At any rate some Australoids eventually reached Australia and for a long time they remained completely undisturbed. They adjusted to the environment without explaining it, and lived in almost a perfect balance with the land, its plants and creatures. We should also remember there were droughts, bushfires and floods then as now.

There is one ~~great~~ fact that people of European stock should recognise as of great importance. Just stop and consider. This primitive race survived, carried out its affairs and was going quietly about its business when Europeans arrived. They had survived without benefit of psychiatrists, electricians, agronomists, mechanics, dietitians or chiropodists.

(To be Continued)

Coming Events