

Hawkesbury Historical Society Newsletter

Newsletter of the Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc.

HAWKESBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Address: The Secretary PO Box 293, Windsor NSW 2756
T: 0410 498 944 **E:** secretaryhawkesburyhistory@gmail.com
Website: www.hawkesburyhistoricalsociety.org
Facebook: facebook.com/hawkesburyhistoricalsociety
Aim: Hawkesbury Historical Society aims to encourage and preserve the history of the Hawkesbury
Meetings: 4th Thursday, alternate months, 7:30pm-10pm, except June and August - 2pm. Venue – St Andrew's Uniting Church Hall, 25W Market Street, Richmond.
Open to: People interested in the preservation of the history of the Hawkesbury, new members welcome.
Patron: Wendy Sledge

Office Bearers 2023/2024

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Secretary: Peta Sharpley Public Officer: Neville Dehn
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Neville Dehn, Heather Gillard, Janice Hart, Cathy McHardy, Kathy Layton, Rebecca McRae, Jan Readford and Oonagh Sherrard

HHS Collection Committee

Carol Carruthers and Elissa Blair (Museum representative)

Publications Committee

Jan Barkley-Jack, Cathy McHardy, Rebecca McRae and Jan Readford

2024 MEETINGS

Saturday, 24 August– 2pm
Thursday, 24 October – 7.30pm

St Andrew's Uniting Church Hall
25 West Market Street, Richmond

HAWKESBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. TAKES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY OR THE AUTHENTICITY OF ARTICLES OR ANY STATEMENTS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

Hawkesbury Historical Society General Meeting

and

Alan Aldrich Memorial Lecture

Saturday, 24 August at 2pm

to be held at our new venue

St Andrew's Uniting Church Hall

25 W Market Street, Richmond

and via Zoom (*details provided separately*)

Parking is available next door.

Speaker: Grace Karskens

Grace Karskens is Emeritus Professor of Australian History at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. Grace's books include *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney*, which won the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Award for non-fiction, and *People of the River: Lost Worlds of Early Australia* which won the 2021 Australian History Prize in both the NSW Premier's History Awards and the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, and co-won the Ernest Scott Prize for Australian History. More recently, Grace worked collaboratively with Darug people on *Dyarubbin: The Real Secret River* project, which explored and mapped a long-lost list of Aboriginal place names for Dyarubbin, the Hawkesbury River.



Topic for the 2024 Alan Aldrich Memorial Lecture:

Reframing Biography: New Directions in Australian Life Stories

How do we write life stories? Whose lives do we write? In this year's Alan Aldrich Memorial Lecture, Professor Grace

Karskens will explore the exciting new developments in biography-writing over the last decade. Traditionally publications like the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* were dominated by biographies of white men of upper- and middle-class backgrounds. Today the *ADB* includes many more biographies of women, working people and Aboriginal people, even biographies of Mungo Lady and Mungo Man. How did this amazing change come about? And how do we research and write the lives of people who were scarcely recorded in their lifetimes, or who lived tens of thousands of years ago?



Alan Aldrich

August is the month of our memorial lecture to Alan Aldrich.

Alan, the boy who grew up in Newcastle, was our Hawkesbury Historical Society President from October 2010 to October 2013.

He first joined our Society and volunteered to help with the refurbishments of displays we were undertaking in the Society's old Museum, when artefacts were solely housed in what is now known as 'Howe House' in Thompson Square, Windsor. Alan's practical skills as a retired Design Draftsman were put to good use, and over the years Alan remained a volunteer at the new Regional Museum when the care of our artefacts was handed to Hawkesbury City Council and housed in a new purpose built adjunct to 'Howe House'. His photography skills came into their own and he helped with the digitisation of the items in our collection.

Alan loved to research and when he became President, he organised small group researching sessions at the Library and wrote for our various Newsletters and our Journal. He also maintained the Historical Society's website for many years.

Alan was fiercely independent and he managed his own activities after an accident which left him a paraplegic. It was important to Alan to stay active and one of Alan's greatest contributions to the Hawkesbury district came from his being Vice-Chair of the Hawkesbury City Council Access Committee. He was also an official volunteer photographer for the Para [1] Olympic Games, and one of his accolades was a Premier's Award in recognition of his 'outstanding volunteer service'.

Hawkesbury Historical Society is proud to remember the outstanding achievements of Alan Aldrich and to celebrate them with a Memorial lecture, this year given by Grace Karskens. ■

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

August 2024

Greetings everyone,

Big news this month! Our guest speaker in August is Grace Karskens, an author already well-known in this district for her last book, *People of the River*, which is a history about the Hawkesbury. From Professor of Australian History at the University of New South Wales, and now Emeritus Professor there, she is also a strong advocate of change in how we, and the community, view the past in Australia.

Mulgrave Place remained a microcosm of Aboriginal and pioneer colonial life for almost 50 years after colonisation, comprising the Boorooberongal clans of the Dharug tribe, ex-convict settlers, mainly poor free arrivals, duty soldiers, and a sprinkling of those who regarded themselves from their education and privilege as elites. Yet despite the growth of a free, healthy and proud second generation, it wasn't until 1836, according to Peter Cochrane, author of *Colonial Ambition*, that the ratio of poor and rich in colonial society rose from 2:1 to 12:1 in urban centres. It wasn't until the mid-1840s with some free election of legislators that the elite were forced to begin to accept socially those from humble beginnings who were elected into governing society.

From the earliest writings about the district until recently, the Aboriginal culture had almost always been looked at separately to the colonial scene and denigrated. Writing about instances of assistance and interactions between the two cultures has been rare and usually histories revolved around disagreements over sharing lands and resources leading to conflict.

Grace Karskens has introduced a new way to record such a history showing it as a joint concern, no longer with the two cultures spoken of separately, but being reported together. Further, the help and impetus Grace gave to the subsequent and very inspirational 'Dyarubbin' exhibition held in Sydney and Hawkesbury art galleries, has helped make the local Boorooberongal clan's voices heard more clearly.

Whilst the spelling of the Aboriginal name for the Hawkesbury district and river written as 'Dyarrubin' is that which Grace has preferred, first written in 1829 by the Reverend John McGarvie at Ebenezer, another earlier spelling comes to us from David Collins, the earliest judge advocate in the colony as 'Dee-rab-bun'; it is also to be seen in many Hawkesbury buildings and sites transliterated as 'Deerubbin'. All are valid.

Whilst many histories of the Hawkesbury have been written over the years, few have the revisionist appeal which made the community embrace the works of Grace Karskens. She has reset the narrative of colonial history to revolve around a journey into lost 'complex' worlds of interacting cultures. Karsken's tracing of the natural and built environments in terms of their impacts on the cultures of the Deerabbun area tell a wide-ranging story of both intersecting lives with greater 'entanglement' over time.

The effect that Grace Karskens has had on historiographical changes in recent times cannot be overestimated and she has continued to pursue new perspectives on colonial life. We are privileged to have some of this work reflected in her talk at our meeting where she will reflect on biographies and how traditional ways of writing them are made difficult for some from lack of information recorded at the time in our historical record. For more information about this talk, which Grace will give as the annual Alan Aldrich Memorial Lecture, read the separate article in this newsletter and be sure not to miss it.

Also, may I remind members and friends that Hawkesbury Historical Society has held two walking/driving Tours this year very successfully and that our next function is a very popular one not to be missed. It is, of course, the Tebbutt Observatory star watching event held annually. With over 80 participants last year and a waiting list, you need to round up your family and not miss out on a ticket. Children in particular love this event and looking through powerful telescopes at the night sky, but it holds interest for adults too, especially as the historic nineteenth century Tebbutt Observatories will be open for inspection. Free tea, coffee and cakes are available and if you are a member of HHS and able to help on the night with providing supper and serving it, please let Peta or myself know.

Much to look forward to in the next month or so.

Cheers,

Jan Barkley-Jack
President

John Stogdell: Hawkesbury's first outstanding ex-convict

By Jan Barkley-Jack

During Hawkesbury Historical Society's recent tour *From Stars to Three Superstars: the Peninsula of Windsor*, I gave an account of an ex-convict who has always piqued my interest, but is very little known in the annals of early Hawkesbury colonial history. The reason? I feel it is mainly because there were no newspapers in the colony before his death, and so unlike, say, Andrew Thompson who began his pivot to outstandingness only after Stogdell died in 1801, his exploits were not widely reported.

The other reason is because only the writings of officers and government officials who published diaries and sent

official records to England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, reported what was driving the success of NSW. Things were, understandably, always reported only about their own successes and abilities of leadership and the improvements they made to the colony. As the major diary writer, David Collins, who was the first judge advocate in the colony said in his diary, he always wrote with the agenda of promoting the success of the officers during their time in a disreputable penal settlement like NSW[1], an agenda shared by most other officers and elites of his time.

One of those on the tour asked me why John Stogdell was not an everyday name synonymous with early European success, like Andrew Thompson, and requested that I write another article about this outstanding man in this newsletter. I have written about Stogdell before in my book, *Hawkesbury Settlement Revealed*, and in my PhD thesis, which I hope soon to publish, and in other articles, but her suggestion seemed timely and got me thinking.

The acceptance of my thesis content gives credence to much previously undiscussed information about many of the ex-convict and poor free-arrival families who successfully improved their lives and shows those from 'humble means', who led others to find new ways to join progressive trends. In this, it gives a totally new examination of ordinary folk's achievements in the colony. This was despite their having few resources and no privileges.[2] Some, in other ways, also became outstanding or rich citizens. The lowly citizens of NSW who were lumped together and always written about dismissively by the officers, did go on to gain agency and form a story of the early colony that needs to be more widely understood.

Thus begins my series about those successful and often unknown from humble backgrounds, pulling together my research over time. Some information you may already know, but some of the successes of the lowly may truly astonish you.

John Stogdell's story begins in London. Stogdale (or Stogdell as he was usually known), may have lodged in the very heart of that city, and he might have indulged in a spot of receiving of stolen goods like watches and jewellery worth £100, but his genteel manners and appearance marked him off from most other ex-convicts. These attainments were to stand him in good stead when he arrived in the colony in the First Fleet, for his proficiencies as a valet, including barber's skills, were quite rare in a convict and much desired by the officers. When he met up with the third highest citizen in New South Wales, John Palmer, Commissariat, his services were snapped up. He became, moreover, the trusted manager and agent of Palmer's affairs, even to the point of being left totally in charge of all Palmer's colonial dealings when he went back to England to bring his wife, Susan Stillwell, to the colony.

Having come on the First Fleet, Stogdell was in Sydney when Governor Phillip was wanting to have another meeting with the Aboriginal man, Bennelong. Stogdell willingly stood hostage to the Aboriginal people for Bennelong's safe return when he went to Sydney to talk to Phillip. As a barber, Stogdell demonstrated to the clan his

cutting and shaving skills in 1790 until Bennelong returned home safely. Five years of dedicated service to Palmer later, Stogdell received a rare absolute pardon from the governor and married Mary Reavill, a free arrival that same year. Mary is an elusive colonist and when she died in 1797, little more is known of her than her burial details, on the bronze coffin plate which was found in 1929 when excavations were being carried out to build Town Hall railway station. The plaque measures 31 x 21 centimetres and was a rare find detailing her name and death details.

Entrepreneurial John Stogdell pushed ahead with his plans for advancement from 1795 when a select privilege, as a result of Palmer's influence, allowed him to be the only convict to join an officer scam to buy up many properties cheaply from soldiers at fertile Mulgrave Place in central Hawkesbury. This scam netted Stogdell 200 acres on the northern bank of Freeman's Reach when most other ex-convict settlers had their land ownership dictated by the governor's whim and received only 30 acres. Strategically, Stogdell also purchased another 30 acres from centrally placed settler, William Bond, the very first ex-convict settler at Hawkesbury to sell his granted farm. Bond then became the first manager of all the land that ex-convict Stogdell had been able to acquire. The highly unusually detailed knowledge of the Palmer-Stogdell business affairs is possible because on Stogdell's sudden death the ownership of all Stogdell's property became disputed by John Palmer who tried to deny the evidence of the contracts between himself and Stogdell, and who contrived to gain all Stogdell's land, stock and belongings for himself. This was disputed strongly in court and the court records, which I first found in the Mitchell Library and tell most of the detail we now know.[3]

By the time Stogdell drowned in the high 1801 flood, he had purchased all 225 acres of the peninsular land formed by the arc of the South Creek as it enters the Hawkesbury River for himself, in addition to his 200-acre 'Reavill Farm'. He also purchased land on the opposite side of the river at today's McGraths Hill on Palmer's behalf. This was also the start of a most unusual agreement whereby an officer gave total control of his expanding estate and business affairs to an ex-convict in the colony. Stogdell then began about five years of complicated agency oversight work for Palmer, including the building of Palmer's grand new home 'Woolloomooloo' at today's Elizabeth Bay.

The skilled craftsmen Stogdell employed on Palmer's house, the ex-convict then used to build his own house and grounds at Hawkesbury, which was on his purchased grant belonging to John Brindley, one of the six making up the peninsula in the vicinity of today's Tebbutt Observatories. Matthew Golder constructed wagons for him and William Earle fixed his 'Schooner boat'. He brought fine furniture and crockery, glassware, chests of fine clothes and a fiddle, two flutes and original art works of Sydney in black and gilt frames, as well as volumes of poetry and music scores to fill his house.[4]

William Bond stayed on as manager of around fifty men on Stogdell's 'Peninsula Farm' tending 500 fowls, 140 large and small pigs, 160 goats, and 450 sheep, some of which

Stogdell owned, the others for Palmer. The six purchased farms he owned on the peninsula were those of Bond, Ruffer, Wilson, Wilcox, Brindley, and three soldiers' allotments of 25 acres each. Stogdell was the first to send his wagon to Sydney loaded with the farm's produce every two weeks and have it return with tobacco and grain and pork for the Concern. Thomas Horton was the bullock driver and John Wood was Stogdell's personal groom.

William Bond ran Stogdell's inn on this farm also. When Stogdell unexpectedly drowned in the high flood of 1801, his personal groom as well as Palmer came up to supervise not just his body being taken to Sydney for burial beside his wife, but to ensure that Palmer's best interests were paramount. As most of the labourers and William Bond now worked for Palmer, their Court testimony featured sudden lapses of memory about Stogdell's property and Palmer himself showed massive forgetfulness about anything pertaining to his agent as he declared Stogdell's account books lost, although they were later produced to the court.

In the season before Stogdell died, Robert Campbell, a rich Sydney merchant, had loaned Stogdell money to cover his potential 8,000 to 10,000 bushels due from his next crop in one of the ubiquitous officer credit deals, all this around a time when Andrew Thompson only rented a one acre lot in the Hawkesbury civic square and owned no property at all, and William Cox had not yet come to live in the Hawkesbury.

Stogdell was the first ex-convict settler at Hawkesbury to own such large amounts of property, and to be part of the deals of officers and the privileged, and at his death the 'Peninsula Farm' was reputedly considered worth £1,000. Stogdell's achievements vindicated the truth of his claims that he was going to come to Hawkesbury to live as soon as he had settled accounts with Palmer.

John Stogdell belies the stereotypical picture of an ex-convict sent to Britain by Lieutenant John Macarthur, that such men were incapable of managing business and should never have been given land at all [5]; and though Stogdell presents a picture of a rare convict success in the eighteenth century, unable at that time to be replicated by other ex-convicts from lack of patronage, he did show exactly what a convict was capable of achieving. John Stogdell demonstrated the possibilities of a more comfortable life achievable with hard work and some acquired skills for ex-convicts which did not go unnoticed by some like Andrew Thompson.

[1] D. Collins, *An Account of the English Colony*, pp. 546-547 September 1796.

[2] *Australian*, 17 May 1843.

[3] Simeon Lord...against John Palmer, 10 August 1802 to 7 July 1803, Civil Court Records, CY1092. NSW State Records and Archives, Kingswood.

[4] R. Jordan, *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*, Currency House, Sydney, 2002, pp. 100, 306.

[5] Macarthur to Duke of Portland, 15 September, 1796, *Historical Records of New South Wales*, III, p. 133.

FINAL RESTING PLACE ~ FIJI

By Michelle Nichols

At the back of the Windsor Catholic Cemetery lies the headstone of Sgt JJ Fitzpatrick. It also records the death of his son, Herbert in Fiji in 1896. I often wondered about the circumstances and decided to investigate.

Way back in 1869, Herbert James Keppie Fitzpatrick was born in Mudgee in NSW. He was one of eight children of Sgt John James Fitzpatrick and Elizabeth nee Lucas.

Herbert's father was Irish born, who had arrived in Victoria in the early 1850s lured to the Ballarat goldfields. He was a police officer, who worked his way up through the ranks and married his wife in 1861. As a police officer, the family moved around and lived in places such as Riverina, Mudgee and eventually arrived in the Hawkesbury. His siblings included:



Windsor Catholic Cemetery
Photo: M. Nichols, 2005

1. John Charles Lucas Fitzpatrick 1862-1932
2. Albert E. H. Fitzpatrick 1863-1874
3. Ossary A. Staunton Fitzpatrick 1865-1950
4. Gertrude A. Fitzpatrick 1867-1950
5. Herbert James Keppie Fitzpatrick 1869-1896
6. Mildred H. M. Fitzpatrick 1872-1872
7. Florence Mary Fitzpatrick 1873-1939
8. Fredrick Arthur Fitzpatrick 1873-1958

Tragedy struck the family when, Albert Fitzpatrick, aged eleven drowned in South Creek in 1874. He is buried with Thomas Probert who also drowned trying to save him at St. Matthew's Anglican Cemetery, Windsor.

In 1877, Herbert's parents were granted a divorce. The divorce was on the grounds of adultery. His mother, Elizabeth and Edward McPhee, a constable boarding with the Fitzpatrick's at the time, were named as the two parties. Herbert would have only been a young boy, aged about eight years, when his mother left, his youngest brother only about four at the time.

After attending the Catholic Boys School in Windsor, Herbert served his apprenticeship with chemist Robert A. Pye, of Windsor and was then employed by Messrs Elliott Bros in Sydney. He moved to Kempsey, operating as a chemist and in 1892 was elected as the Auditor for Kempsey Municipal Council. He travelled widely, visiting Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. He was managing the business of Pollard and Green's in Coonamble and then applied for a position in Fiji.

By 1895, he "*was employed as analytical chemist on the Holmhurst Sugar Plantation*".¹ The sugar mill was established in the early 1880s on a luxuriant 1,000 acres. A steam operated tram transported the sugar cane to the mill.²

While employed on the plantation, Herbert contracted typhoid fever, leaving him with a bacteria in his bloodstream and intestinal tract. He would have suffered symptoms such as fever, fatigue, headache, nausea, abdominal pain, and probably diarrhoea. Herbert was gravely ill so was taken to the Colonial Hospital at Suva. For some time, he was cared for by Dr Keith and the medical staff, in particular Matron Beale.

¹ (1896, March 14) *Windsor & Richmond Gazette*, p. 9. Retrieved <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72548142>

² (1884, July 14) *Sydney Morning Herald*, p. 5. Retrieved <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13562572>



Colonial Hospital, Suva built 1916. Herbert died at the hospital that was previously on this site.
Photo: M. Nichols, 2024.

Despite the care, Herbert succumbed to the disease and his death recorded on 28 February 1896.

DEATHS.

—

FITZPATRICK.—February 28 h, at Suva, Fiji, Herbert James Keppie Fitzpatrick, fourth son of Sub-Inspector Fitzpatrick, of Windsor. Aged 26 years. A dutiful son and an affectionate brother.

Death notice.
Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate,
14 March 1896 p. 4³

He was buried in the Suva Cemetery on the same day. It was recorded that, *“notwithstanding the fact that the deceased was a stranger to Suva residents, a large number of wreaths were sent by those with sympathised with his loneliness during illness, and the sad demise of a promising young man. Thus, though his remains rest in a land far away from old Windsor.”*⁴

Herbert’s father retired in 1893 as Sub-Inspector and he was heartbroken at the news. He died in 1899 aged 69 years and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery at Windsor. Although Herbert’s exact burial site is not known, his death is recorded on his father’s headstone in the Windsor Catholic Cemetery.

The headstone transcribed reads:

Herbert J. Keppie Fitzpatrick
Who Died At Suva Fiji
28th Febry 1896
Aged 26 Years

Herbert’s older brother was John Charles Lucas Fitzpatrick, a journalist, politician and author. He had established the *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* in 1888. When news arrived about his brother’s death, he travelled to Fiji arriving just eight weeks after Herbert’s death.

Fitzpatrick was winding up his late brother’s estate and visited Suva. Whilst travelling onboard the ‘*Victoria*’ from New Caledonia to Fiji in April 1896, he penned the following, in memory of Herbert, which was published in the *Windsor & Richmond Gazette*⁵ 25 April 1896:



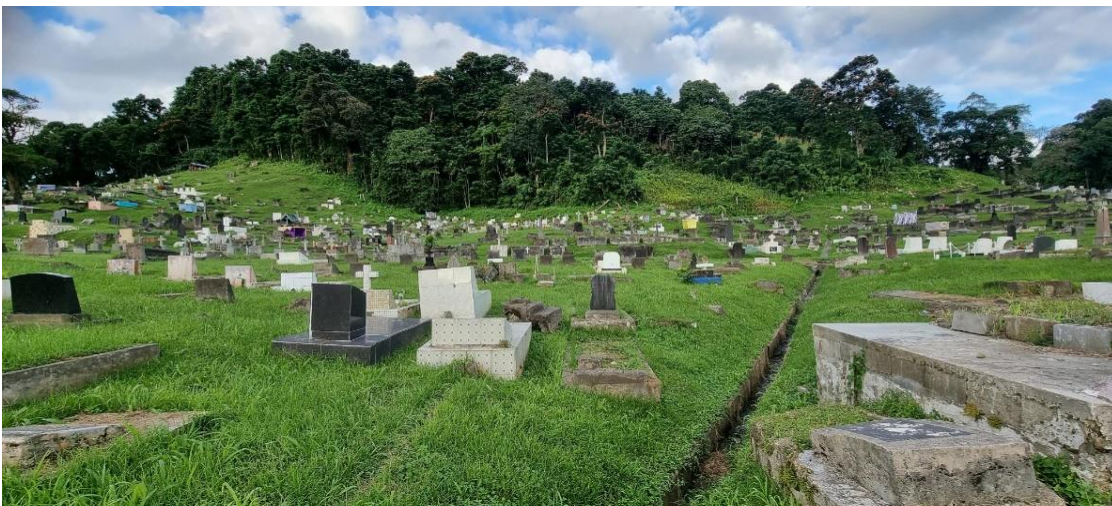
³ (1896, March 14) Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate, p. 4. Retrieved <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page8895461>

⁴ Obituary. (1896, March 14) Ibid.

⁵ (1896, April 25). *Windsor & Richmond Gazette*, p. 9. Retrieved <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72548496>

*On a verdant isle in the Southern Seas
 Is his grave,
 Kissed by the lips of the ambient breeze
 And the wave
 Which breaks into tears on the rock-bound coast
 And mourns for one whom the earth has lost -
 One good and brave.
 In a strangers' land, 'neath a pleasing sky,
 Now he sleeps;
 And the wind moans loud as it wanders by,
 And it weeps
 For a loved-one's spirit has taken flight;
 And the moon looks down on his tomb at night,
 And vigil keeps.
 All his troubles now with the world are o'er,
 And his rest
 Is calm in his bed on that distant shore -
 Perhaps 'tis best;
 And those who knew him in days ago.
 And who sorrow for brother and kindly son
 Wish him blest!*

On a recent trip to Fiji, I tried to follow up where Herbert was buried. With the cause of death typhoid, he was buried quickly. It appears from newspaper reports he was buried in Suva but the exact location is now a mystery and the records cannot confirm the exact final resting spot.




View of Suva Cemetery.
Photo: M. Nichols, 2024.

The twenty-six-year old Herbert, *“was regarded as one who had a bright career before him, for whatever may have been his faults; he was a generous and kind-hearted young Australian.”*⁶

Windsor Fire Brigade had a good practice with the reel and hose on Tuesday night. They came out into the street, and practiced with the hydrants.

Windsor and Richmond Gazette, Saturday 21 June 1902 (Trove)

 Hawkesbury Library Service



⁶ (1896, March 14). *Windsor & Richmond Gazette*, p. 9. Retrieved from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72548142>

Hawkesbury Historical Society

INVITES YOU TO

BACK TO TEBBUTT'S SKYWATCHING EVENT

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Given a clear sky we will observe First Quarter Moon as well as Venus rather low down.
- The brightest part of the Milky Way will be well up.
- Saturn will be visible.
- Various constellations will be explained.

The popular skywatching event is to be held at the historic Tebbutt's Observatory on Saturday, 7th September 2024 at 5.30pm.

The sky will be seen through modern telescopes provided by local and Sydney astronomy enthusiasts. The original 8" Grubb Refractor Telescope, installed in 1888 by John Tebbutt, Astronomer, will also be open for inspection.

- We suggest you wear warm clothing and bring a torch covered with red cellophane.



- Refreshments and supper will be available and is included in the booking cost.
- Children particularly enjoy this event but it is an exciting outing for all ages.

DETAILS

Please note that bookings and payment are essential prior to the event due to limited participants being accommodated. The event will proceed in all but severe rain.

For bookings please phone or email 0410 498 944
secretaryhawkesburyhistory@gmail.com

Family **\$20.00** Singles **\$10.00**

Cost includes supper

When booking by email please provide your name, number of people (adults/children) and a contact phone number.

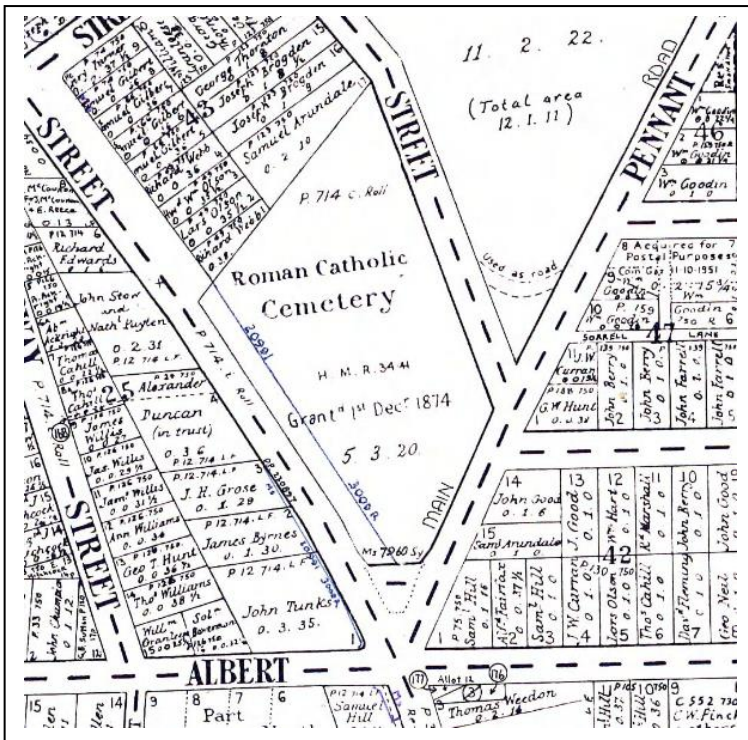
Payments to be made to ANZ Account
Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc.

BSB 012874 Acct 227709583

Who was Thomas McKenna of Wilberforce

Cathy McHardy ~ cathy@nisch.org

July 2024



Town Map of Parramatta, Parish of St John and Field of Mars County of Cumberland 4th Edn 1961 showing the location of St Patrick's Catholic Cemetery at the junction of Church Street and Pennant Hills Road. NSW Land Registry Services <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>

One of the first to be interred in the newly consecrated ground of St Patrick's Catholic Cemetery at Parramatta was Thomas McKenna of Wilberforce.

The formal establishment of the Catholic Church in NSW dates from 1820 when two Catholic chaplains, Fathers John Joseph Therry and Philip Connolly appointed by the Colonial Office in London, arrived in the colony [1].

The previously established cemetery at Parramatta was dedicated as a Church of England burial ground in the early 1820s [2], and Fr Therry, a man of action, saw the need to make alternative arrangements for the burial of those of the Catholic faith.

There is a lack of documentary evidence detailing the processes leading to the allocation of the land for the Catholic burial ground in Parramatta, but what is known is that on the morning of the 29 September 1823, Rev Therry sent an important letter to Governor Thomas Brisbane.

Signifying his intention to consecrate the Catholic burial ground which "his Excellency has been graciously pleased to grant to the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Parramatta and its vicinity" the note stated that the consecration would take place at 12 o'clock that day [3].

The cemetery was certainly in use by 1824 when three individuals were interred. Thomas Nugent in April, Philip Reilly in June and Thomas McKenna, a farmer of Wilberforce, in August of that year [4].

It is interesting to speculate why a man who resided at a distance from Parramatta should be one of the first burials in the new cemetery. Had the unfortunate McKenna met with accident or illness while visiting the town of Parramatta or were there other factors which influenced the decision that his burial should take place so far from home? The Catholic Cemetery in Windsor had been in use from 1822. No details of the circumstances of his death have been discovered thus far, so the answer to this question may never be revealed.

The inscription in memory of McKenna reads:

Gloria in Excelsis Deo
Here lieth interred the
body of THOMAS MCKENNA of
Wilberforce Farmer who
Departed this life August the 18th 1824
aged 46 years

McKenna arrived aboard the *Britannia* in 1797 having been tried in County Meath, Ireland in the summer of 1796 with a sentence of transportation for life. He appears to have done well for himself for in 1800 is mentioned in the list of grants and leases of land (Serial 3 Page 28) registered in the Colonial Secretary's Office as farming 30 acres in the Eastern Farms.

In January 1811 he received freedom and was forthwith "to be considered an emancipated person within the Colony" [5].



Grave of Thomas McKenna of Wilberforce Section F Plot 35 St Patrick's Catholic Cemetery, Parramatta. Cathy McHardy March 2023

From 1812 he had been allowed to draw cattle to stock his farm from the government stock and he did so several times over the next twelve years.

By 1814 he is listed as a landholder and off stores living in the Windsor area in the General Muster of NSW. He also has an assigned convict by the name of Owen Mahon (or Maughan), who had arrived on the *Three Bees* earlier in 1814. Also listed in the muster was his wife Johana (sic) Witfield (sic), per *Mary & Ann* in 1791, who was tried and convicted in Exeter, Devon the previous year.



Parish of Currency County of Cook 4th Edition 1916 showing the location of Reavill Farm, Freemans Reach

In 1816 he was leasing Ravil (Reavill) Farm of about 300 acres at Freemans Reach when a for sale notice for the property appeared in the *Sydney Gazette* in December [6].

NOTICE.—The Public are hereby cautioned against purchasing a certain Farm granted unto one William Clarke, of Wilberforce, by His Excellency Governor MACQUARIE, in the year 1820, as I have a Lease duly executed for a series of years yet unexpired; which Farm is cultivated by me, and in my actual possession.
THOMAS M'KENNA.

Notice in response to an advertisement for the sale of the land he had leased warning prospective purchasers that his lease agreement still had some time to run. *Sydney Gazette*, 6 October 1821, p. 3 Classified Advertising. Retrieved 20 May 2022 from

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2180523>

The value of his wheat crop clearly demonstrated the level of his prosperity by 1821, when he was able to contribute 84 bushells of wheat to the government store at a rate of 9 shillings per bushell amounting to the large sum of £37 16 shillings [7].

McKenna clearly benefitted from the use of convict labour on his farm and was regularly assigned newly arrived prisoners. On several occasions the assigned labour absconded or re-offended and he placed advertisements offering a reward for information on their whereabouts in the *Sydney Gazette*.

In May 1823, Benjamin Cross, Thomas Belcher and Samuel Fipps (sic) were indicted for stealing a sheep, the property of a neighbour, Henry Baldwin. The felons had arrived aboard the *Eliza* only a few months earlier and the ringleader Cross had induced his companions to offend with the promise of “escaping to Timor” [8].

A few days before his death in 1824, McKenna petitioned Governor Brisbane on the 12 August to convey to him a grant of land in consideration of his “endeavours to deserve the good opinion of his superiors” stating that he had been farming a leasehold property of 300 acres of land and had “by industry” accumulated 120 head of cattle [9].

McKenna’s dream of a grant of his own was not to materialise for he died on the 18 August 1824. Probate was granted to his wife Johanna in October [10]. She continued to farm in her own right and was assigned convict labour until 1825. Johanna then disappears from official records and what became of her I have yet to discover.

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- [4] Dunn, J. *The Parramatta Cemeteries: St Patrick's*. Parramatta and District Historical Society, 1988, p. 10.
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- [7] Index to the Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1825. Retrieved on 20 May 2022 from <https://records-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1e5kcq1/INDEX2381743>
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Hawkesbury Panorama Hillclimb

By Patsy Moppett

Bathurst has Mount Panorama and its well documented history of motor racing. However, the Blue Mountains also has a history of motor racing, albeit on a much smaller scale. This includes of course the Catalina racing circuit of the 1950s at Katoomba. But the Blue Mountains also has its own 'panorama' racetrack!

The Hawkesbury Panorama Hillclimb operated up the hill bends on the Hawkesbury Road, from Shaw's Creek to the lookout we know today, and involved both motorcycles and cars. Hawkesbury Hill's first event took place on 26th January 1948, then known as Anniversary Day. It was a combined competition between the Vintage Sports Car Club of Australia (NSW) and the Australian Sporting Car Club. Some negotiation was required with the NSW Police and Colo Shire before the event could be held due to the necessity for the road to be closed during the event. Alternate access to the mountains was available and the races commenced on January 26th with a start at 10.30am for a two hour practice on the 1.4km hill, which had 9-11 corners/bends, one of which is a significant hairpin. Later events started practice at 9am, with the first events commencing at 10.30 or 11am. The climb was negotiated by racing cars, with motorcycles only using it once in November 1951.



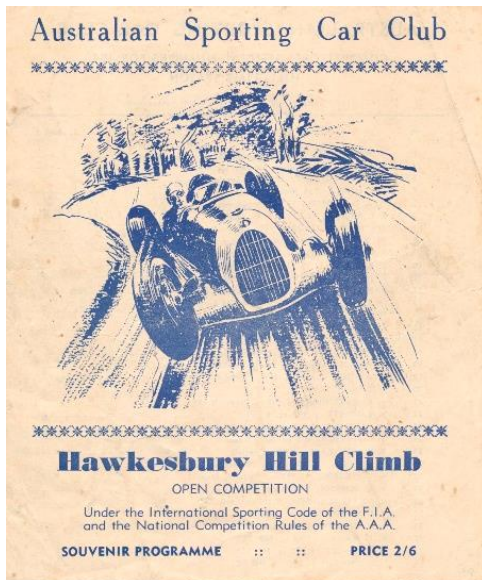
Remarkable photograph at the lookout in 1948 by Bill Daly

Rock slides and gravel were common hazards along the way due to the steepness of the adjoining hillsides, and retaining walls were built at critical locations. Heavy rain also resulted in the cancellation of events at times, even though the road was tarred and usually in good condition.



Negotiating the climb

They were usually ticketed events, and proceeds were donated to charitable organisations, such as the North Rocks Youth Club and the Spastic Centre. Up to 2,000 people attended each race day, which usually hosted about 30 contestants.



Event programs

From the early beginnings in 1948, events appeared to have been concentrated from then until 1955, and were usually run by the Vintage Sports Car Club of Australia (NSW) and the Australian Sporting Car Club, and included the annual hill climb championships.

- * It is noted that there was a Springwood and Districts Auto Club affiliated with the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) in 1972.
- * Another note is that the name Sulman is associated with the event as a regular competitor. Tom Sulman was the grandson of Sir John Sulman (architect and Sulman Art Prize), the family owning Kihilla at Lawson. Tom raced his Sulman Singer here on a number of occasions.

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- Springwood Notebook 1788-1989: Allan E Searle & Richard A Morony 1990

MEETING REMINDER

Please note:

WINTER meetings will be held on Saturday afternoon

The next meeting for the Hawkesbury Historical Society will be held on

Saturday, 24 August at 2pm

All meetings will be held at our new venue

St Andrew's Uniting Church Hall

25W Market Street, Richmond

PARKING is available next door.