

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



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Ku-ring-gai Family History Group
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The Royal Australian Historical Society
The National Trust of Australia (NSW)
The Society of Australian Genealogists
The NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc.

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MAY 2017 NEWSLETTER VOL. 35 NO 4

SATURDAY MAY 6

FAMILY HISTORY MEETING

11.00am WORKSHOP: *All About Cyndi's List.* Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet is a categorised and cross-referenced list of links for genealogical research. The site contains roughly 332,000 links in more than 200 categories.

2.00pm FAMILY HISTORY MEETING, followed by *The Women in Arthur Phillip's Life.*

Presenter: Michael Flynn.

Michael explores the stories of the women in Governor Arthur Phillip's life: that of his mother, Elizabeth Breach, a Londoner married to a German immigrant, his complex relationships with his two wives, Charlotte Denison née Tibbott and Isabella Whitehead, both aged in their forties when they married him, and Deborah Brooks, the woman rumoured to be his mistress (or was she?)



Charlotte Denison

Michael Flynn is the author of *The Second Fleet: Britain's Grim Convict Armada of 1790* and is working on a revised edition of *Founders*, Mollie Gillen's biographical dictionary of the First Fleet. He is a board member of Biographical Database of Australia and Society of Australian Genealogists.

Visitors Welcome

Afternoon Tea will be Available

SATURDAY MAY 20

2.00pm GENERAL MEETING, followed by *The Paul Brickhill Story.*

Presenter: Emeritus Professor John Ramsland OAM.

Distinguished historian John Ramsland's latest project traces the highs and lows of the career of Paul Chester Jerome Brickhill (1916-1991) the former fighter pilot, POW, North Sydney Boys' High School old boy and author of the post-war best sellers, *The Dam Busters*, *Reach for the Sky* and *The Great Escape*, all of which were adapted into highly successful films.



Paul Brickhill

John Ramsland is Emeritus Professor at The University of Newcastle, and the author of several books and many articles on Australian social history. He has also published widely on the history of neglected and institutionalised children in England, France, and Australia.



John Ramsland

Visitors Welcome

Afternoon Tea will be Available

APRIL FAMILY HISTORY

11.00am Session

Yvette Reeve opened the session and welcomed 33+ attendees, including the guest, Paul Parton from FamilySearch, inviting him to present information on using the FamilySearch website. FamilySearch is sponsored by LDS – Church of Latter Day Saints. <https://familysearch.org/> There is no cost to register and is easy to do on line. Paul showed a ‘simple’ search for an ancestor with name variations and of other searches i.e. filtered, batch and catalogue searches. Jenny Joyce thanked Paul for an interesting workshop and presented him with a KHS thank you gift.

2.00pm Session

Yvette Reeve opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. Neil Falconer was invited to chair the AGM for the Family History Group which has operated since 2001. Election results elsewhere in Newsletter.

As it was April 1, Yvette read out several instances of April Fools’ stories. Yvette then officially welcomed and introduced our master of stories, Patrick Dodd. Patrick initially spoke to us in French, as French explorers narrowly missed entering the bay first entered by Cook. Patrick commenced with the earliest explorers to our coastline: Willem Janszoon 1606, Hendrik Brouwer 1611, Dirk Hartog 1616, Luis Vaz de Torres 1606, William Dampier 1688, Pedros de Quiros 1606, and Abel Janszoon Tasman 1642. A 1753 map of Australia was shown.

His talk was about James Cook who joined the Royal Navy and was promoted on merit to a point where he was chosen to track the Transit of Venus in 1769. The ship he chose was a Whitby flat bottomed coal collier, re-named ‘*Endeavour*’. It was refitted for the voyage, and was the size of a tennis court. It housed more than 90 sailors. Joseph Banks had a very different background to Cook, but they drew strength from each other. Also on board was Carl Solander, botanist, and Sydney Parkinson, who did 1,350 paintings and drawings. After the observation of the Transit of Venus, Cook opened his Secret Orders to look for the Great South Land. He mapped the coastline of New Zealand, spending seven months there without any

welcome, and continued westward. Lieut. Hicks was first to site land, now called Point Hicks. Cook entered and named Sting-Ray Harbour, now called Botany Bay, where he spent seven days, while Banks and Parkinson collected plants and the ship’s carpenter made repairs to the ship. On 6 May 1770 Cook named Port Jackson, but did not enter, continuing north and naming many places. Up in the Great Barrier Reef, the *Endeavour* struck coral, and with a spare sail under the ship they limped into a river for repairs.

Noel Blake thanked Patrick, likening him to Geoffrey Blainey. *Notes by Elaine Turnidge.*

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

BETSY AND THE EMPEROR

At the March General Meeting, Anne Whitehead shared with us the story of Betsy Balcombe, her family and their friendship with Napoleon. William Balcombe, head of the family, was a merchant stationed in St Helena. It was rumoured that he was the illegitimate son of the Prince Regent.

When Napoleon arrived on the island for his exile he first stayed with the family in their home, *The Briars*, before moving to *Longwood House*.



The Briars, St Helena

Once he moved there, Balcombe took on the role of his provedore, visiting almost daily and often bringing along his daughters. Napoleon became very friendly with the whole family, but especially with the young Betsy; he helped her with her French homework and she tried to help him with his English. In later years Betsy wrote her memoirs entitled *Betsy & Napoleon: Recollections of Napoleon on St Helena*.

After three years of what was a dangerously close friendship, Balcombe was dismissed from his position and left the island in disgrace, never to return. The Governor of St Helena later found proof that Balcombe had

been smuggling letters for Napoleon. This was technically treason, and Balcombe was grilled at Whitehall and was very close to being charged with treason, which was a hanging offence.



Napoleon with the Balcombe Girls

In 1822 Betsy married Edward Abell, though the marriage was not a success and Abell deserted her after the birth of their daughter. Shortly afterwards William managed to secure a position as the Colonial Treasurer of NSW. The family arrived in Sydney in 1824 on the *Hibernia*. William received a land grant near what is now Canberra, and built a house there which he called *The Briars* after his home in St. Helena.

William Balcombe died in May 1829, leaving his family with large debts and no income. Bessie and her mother returned to England, and it was during this period that Betsy wrote her memoir of Napoleon in order to make money, which she also achieved by teaching music. The three Balcombe sons – William, Thomas Tyrwhitt and Alexander Beatson – all remained in Australia. The eldest son, William, took over managing the family properties. In 1851 he and Thomas travelled to the Turon goldfields where William died of a fever.

Thomas was a noted award-winning artist and had worked for the AA Company in Port Stephens until he suffered a bad head injury in a fall from a horse. He then worked in the Surveyor's Department for Thomas Hoddle and the two men sketched & painted in the evening. Amongst other things, Thomas drew pictures of the aboriginal people they met. Thomas married and settled in a house in Paddington which he named *Napoleon Cottage*. His behaviour was erratic following his head injury, and after the death of his beloved daughter, his mood swings increased. He committed suicide outside his house in 1861.

The youngest son, Alexander, was an early pioneer of the Port Phillip district and had a

property near Mt Martha on the Mornington Peninsula which he called *The Briars*.

Thomas's son, William Alexander Balcombe, married in 1884 and in 1895 built *The Briars* in Wahroonga, to which he and his family moved.



The Briars, Wahroonga

Thomas's granddaughter, Diana Bradhurst, then spoke to us. She told us stories about living in *The Briars* which her grandmother had dictated to her mother, including details of their pets. There were two magpies called Adam and Eve, a plover called Cecil & a silky terrier. For a while there were two seagulls, but one day the gardener, Brown, came to the door and informed the lady of the house "Yer seagulls is et."

We then were shown a medal awarded to Thomas Tyrwhitt Balcombe, a book of his pictures, and pictures of Diana's grandmother on her wedding day.

NEW FAMILY HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE FOR 2017-18

The new Committee is Leader: Lorraine Henshaw. Committee: Margaret Holland, Sue Holmes, Jenny Joyce (ex officio), Yvette Reeve, Jean Smith and Elaine Turnidge.

NEW COMPUTER RESOURCE

A new resource has been added to our Intranet and is available on the Shipping page:

Voyages of the Coromandel 1802 and 1804 - Donated to the Society with the consent of the author, Bert Howard. This resource covers the construction, plus 1802 and 1804 voyages of the Coromandel, which brought convicts and passengers from England to the Colony of New South Wales. It includes searchable lists of the passengers, crew, convicts and family plus people on the 1802 voyage of the *Perseus*, and a few people from the *Experiment*. Also included is a condensed version of the diary of George Hall about the 1802 voyage on the *Coromandel*.

TREASURER'S REPORT

This month our operating income amounted to \$1,344 with our expenses amounting to \$700 leaving us with a surplus for the month of \$644. Our net surplus for the year to date amounts to \$4,507.

PRESERVATION WORKSHOP

On April 5, Christine Yeats, from the Royal Australian Historical Society, conducted a very informative workshop on preservation and archiving for 25 attendees. She dealt with issues relating to damage and its rectification along with way of storage that prevents/reduces chances of damage to documents, photos, letters, maps etc. After the workshop, a light lunch was served.

Jenny provided a compressive set of handouts to support the presentation. Check with Jenny if you would like a set.

VOLUNTEERS' ORIENTATION

On March 2, Jenny Joyce led an orientation session for current and new volunteers. It was conducted on a Q&A basis, so many issues and topics were dealt with.

If you are considering being a volunteer contact Geoff Little, our volunteer coordinator, phone 9449 3131. Volunteering in the Centre is a very rewarding experience. Training is provided.

VOLUNTEERS' LUNCH

Volunteers mark your diaries. This year's lunch will be on Saturday July 15, prior to the General Meeting.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members are welcomed to the Society, and we hope to see them soon at some of our meetings:

Lynette and Angus Cottee, Wahroonga.

Robert and Janet Grundy, Warrawee.

Ian Hall, North Turrumurra.

David Hulme, Sydney.

Jan and Kim Mathews, Brooklyn.

Jane Miura, Naremburn.

Rosemary and Dion Ombler, Turrumurra.

Phil Orr, Gordon.

Richard Smart, Speewah, Qld.

Leonie and Witold Powierza, St Ives.

Christine and David Preller, Wahroonga.

TOUR DESK

Important – Our tours are very popular and it is important to make your booking as early as possible. In cases where the tour rapidly fills, and the venue has a limit, please complete the Expression of Interest form in the tour folder, and if there are sufficient numbers we can organise another visit. For those venues that do not have a limit we can attempt to organise a larger vehicle. In both cases, we rely on the expression of interest form.

The Booking process includes a Tour Description sheet for each tour that outlines timing, any special requirements and the pick up site.

Tour bookings can only be made by visiting the Research Centre rooms, and by completing a booking and a (new Blue - once only) participation form, if you have not previously completed one. This includes an opportunity to identify dietary requirements.

Payment is due when making your tour bookings. Please bring the correct amount or a cheque to cover the planned cost. Change is not always available. **Bookings are not confirmed until they are paid for.**

NORTH HEAD and NORTH FORT

Thursday May 18.

Timing: 8.30am for 8.45 am start.

Bookings open Monday 24th April.

The Harbour Trust North Head Sanctuary has repurposed the important and historic war time uses of the Northern Headland to Sydney Harbour.



Our guide will take us for a tour of the WW1 North Fort Tunnels, and the recently built Australia's Memorial Walk. The walk honours those who have served and supported the defence of Australia in peace and in war.

There are also some easy walks through virtually untouched bushland with rare flora

and fauna. Visitors are encouraged to watch out for bandicoots.!

The Third Quarantine Cemetery is also an interesting place to visit as part of our walk.

These walks give breathtaking views over the city, harbour and ocean from lookouts perched on North Head Sanctuary's spectacular cliff tops .

Cost: \$35 (Members), \$40 (Non Members).
Lunch at own cost.

NOTE: Take water, walking shoes and coat, due to regular winds across the headland.

The initial Tour includes paved bush tracks, stairs and approximately 20 minutes in WW11 tunnels. The stairs going down to the tunnels are quite narrow, the tunnel is well lit and safe but enclosed and underground.

POMPEII RESCUE NAVY, EMPIRE, CATASTROPHE

Wednesday June 14. Guided tour.

Timing: 8.30am for 8.45am start.

National Maritime Museum – Bookings open Monday 15th May.

In 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted spewing huge waves of volcanic ash and debris over the thickly populated Bay of Naples. In response the Roman fleet under its Commander, Pliny the Elder, ordered the fleet to the rescue, and is one of the first recorded rescues by sea of civilians by a military force.



The exhibition reveals how the Roman navy came to dominate the Mediterranean, and how this control created a boom in maritime trade not seen again for a thousand years.

Objects displayed include jewellery, ceramics, sculptures, and also frescoes from Pompeii and the region.

The ticket includes access to the entire museum after the Pompeii tour.

Lunch will be at the Harbourside YOTS Café.

Cost: \$50 (Members), \$55 (Non Members.)
(Includes lunch at YOTS café)

JEWISH MUSEUM, DARLINGHURST

Friday July 14

The tour will travel by bus to Darlinghurst to this world class museum dedicated to documenting and teaching about the history of the Holocaust, so that it will never be repeated. Material on Monash is displayed there.

Details in next month's *Newsletter*.

TOUR REVIEWS

TOUR TO EBENEZER CHURCH AND TEBBUTT'S OBSERVATORY

On April 3, in rainy weather, the tour progressed to Ebenezer church. We were led indoors to enjoy a most delicious afternoon Devonshire tea provided by the local team.



The rain stopped, and we entered the church, where Ted Brill, local historian and church elder, guided us through a thorough history of the church. This early Presbyterian Church is, in fact, the oldest remaining church in Australia.

The area, then known as Portland Head, was first settled in the early 1800s. The church was built in 1809 by 15 pioneering families. At that time the area was known as Ebenezer, which means 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'. Several other churches were built in the early colony, but they have not survived.



Ebenezer Church Interior

The land was donated by Owen Cavanough, who, according to family legend, was the first man from the First Fleet to step ashore at Sydney Cove. Very soon after the church was built, a school was added in 1810, and is now recognised as the oldest existing school building in Australia. The Schoolmaster's house was built in 1817, and now houses an interesting museum and souvenir shop.

Dinner was planned for the North Richmond Panthers, and en route we were able to pass by (dark and raining) Thompson Square, Windsor (the only 18th century civic square in Australia), Governor Phillip's little used house in George Street, the early Windsor Courthouse, finally passing the 1806 built house of George W. Evans, the surveyor of the first road across the Blue Mountains via Mt York. This road was built in six months, with Governor Macquarie stipulating that it must be wide enough to allow carriages to pass each other.

After dinner we travelled back to Windsor to the historic Tebbutt's Observatory.

The Tebbutt Family from Middlesex, England, arrived in Sydney as free settlers on board the ship 'Nile' in December 1801. John I (c 1863-1844), his wife Ann (nee Halfpenny), sons Thomas and John II (1794-1870), and daughter Elizabeth, had been assured a land grant would be available on arrival.

After many problems with the "promised land", the family settled in the Windsor area. In 1831 John II married Virginia Saunders at Parramatta. They had a daughter, Ann, and a son, John III (1834-1916). John III "began to take an interest in astronomy at the age of 19 years, and right up to 1912, he did work that attracted the attention and commendation of the leading astronomers of the world". He died on 29 Nov 1916 at his home, "The Peninsula", and is buried at St Matthew's, where he had married Jane Pendergast in 1857. By 1871 the family included six daughters and one son, John Thomas (1868-1936). His son Edmund Halley (1900-1978) was the father of John Halley Tebbutt, the great-grandson of the astronomer, who welcomed us, and told us about the first observatory built in the mid 1800s in Palmer Street Windsor.

Originally a wooden structure, which was replaced by the current buildings in 1888, and

where the 8 inch Grubb Refractor was installed. After an interesting inspection and talk about the observatory, the sky cleared, and we were able to view the first quarter of the moon, through a telescope set up by Sean Flavin, the current curator, who assisted us with observing interesting star clusters, and nebulae.



All aspects of the tour were certainly most informative.

Words: Neil Falconer and Jo Harris. Photos Margaret Holland

(‘Astronomical Memoirs’ by John Tebbutt, a reprint of the 1908 edition is available for further reading in the KHS Library, Biographical Section)

RESEARCH ROOMS: TECHNOLOGICAL UPDATE

The Society's Research Centre has a wealth of capacity to help members with their research activities. The computers are well maintained and are readily accessible for members during our regular opening days.

Peter Stehn held three very helpful Intranet/Kupedia workshops in early February to assist members understand, and use the Society's very substantial resources.

The Intranet provides an organised structure to catalogue and locate the more than 970 resources that are only accessible via computer. A wonderful and easily used resource.

KUPEDIA is the short name for the *Ku-ring-gai Historical Encyclopedia*, whose aim is to create an organised, fully searchable collection of articles of historical significance to the municipality of Ku-ring-gai, and has been under evolution from 2009. Well worth a look.

Peter completed the workshop with a review of the difference between Search and Research, and described the difference initially in terms of definitions found in Oxford Dictionary.

Search: try to find something by looking, or otherwise seeking carefully and thoroughly.

Research: The systematic investigation into and study of resources, in order to establish facts, and reach new conclusions.

Using these definitions, Peter encouraged 'seekers of information' to be very diligent to help ensure correct results and avoid inconclusive or non-verifiable results.

An excellent workshop.

Neil Falconer

USE OF COMPUTERS IN RESEARCH CENTRE

USB sticks and other devices are not permitted to be inserted/connected with the computers in the Centre for uploading or downloading.

MEETING RECORDERS NEEDED

After many years of providing reports of the presentations at our General Meetings, Doug Milne has indicated that he may not be able to do this for all meetings. The Society owes him a great big thanks of appreciation for all the hundreds of words that he has written to give a record of presentations.

We require some people who may be able to write reports on presentations that are made to the Society's General Meetings, when needed. Without them the Society would miss a valuable resource and record of its activities.

All that is needed is a report of 450 - 500 words in MS Word. The Newsletter Editor edits them as necessary.

The commitment would not be onerous, as we see this as being a shared activity.

If you are able to help, please let Jenny Joyce know.

GERMAN SIG

With 19 members present, the KHS German Special Interest Group met on Monday 10 April. Items discussed were:

German Ancestors of Ku-ring-gai residents group project - The draft document has reached a stage where it is ready for formatting and proofing, prior to internal publication on our Intranet in June. Volunteers were called for to form a working party to undertake this task.

Update on progress with German Australian Genealogy and History Alliance (GAGHA) -

Tony Karrasch gave a brief on recent development by GAGHA.

German ancestor stories - Kate Tytherleigh entertained the meeting with stories from her German ancestry.

Show and Tell - Susan Moore relived her recent experiences visiting Munich.

Reading German Handwritten Records - At the February meeting, members agreed to trial an online course on reading and understanding German script.

The next meeting is planned for Monday 19 June at 1:30 pm (note: this is the third Monday. Second Monday is the Queen's Birthday holiday). Les Jeckeln volunteered to give a Show and Tell, and Peter Roennfeldt volunteered to present a story from his German ancestry.

IRISH SIG

Next meeting will be at 1.30pm on Friday May 12 in the Research Centre. The discussion will be on the history of Ireland in the 1830s. All welcome.

WHERE IS IT?

April Answer:

"Wishing Chair Seat" is situated in the Secret Garden at Civic Square, Old School site, Gordon. The mosaic artists were Hal and Suzanne Holman, father and daughter. The mosaic bronze bas relief panel by Hal Holman was designed five years prior to the seat commissioned by Ku-ring-gai Council in 1995. The work involves elements from popular nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Haldane Sinclair Holman OAM born 1922, died June 20 2016, his daughter Suzanne Alexa Holman died March 9 2013, aged fifty seven years, in a microlight aircraft accident at Long Jetty, when the plane nose-dived into Tuggerah Lake. When you visit KHS Research Centre please take time to inspect this most artistic work.

This month's "Where is it?"



Cook Trig Station

DIARY DATES

May

Monday 1, Tour: Exploring Ku-ring-gai
 Thursday 4, 2.15pm, Committee Meeting
 Saturday 6, 11.00am **Family History Workshop: All about Cyndi's List.**
 Saturday 6, 2.00pm, **The Women in Arthur Phillip's Life**, Presenter Michael Flynn.
 Friday 12, 1.30pm, **Irish SIG**; History of Ireland in the late 1830s.
 Thursday 18, Tour: North Head and Fort North .
 Saturday 20, 2.00pm, **General Meeting**,
 Followed by: **The Paul Brickhill Story**. Presenter: John Ramsland.

June

Thursday 1, 2.15pm, Committee Meeting.
 Saturday 3, 11.00am, **Family History Workshop**
 Saturday 3, 2.00pm, **Family History Meeting**.
 Monday 5, 2.00pm, MAC SIG.
 Wednesday 14, Tour: Pompeii Rescue Navy, Empire Catastrophe.
 Saturday 17, 2.00pm, **General Meeting**, followed by *Life in Submarines*. Presenter: Doug Edwards.
 Monday 19, 1.30pm, German SIG

July

Saturday 1, 11.00am, **Family History Workshop**.
 Saturday 1, 2.00pm, **Family History Meeting**
 Thursday 6, 2.15pm, Committee Meeting.
 Friday 14, Tour: Jewish Museum.
 Saturday 15, Volunteers' Lunch.
 Saturday 15, 2.00pm, **General Meeting**, followed by **The Story of Eleven Maps**.
 Presenter: Robert Clancey

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Please send email copy for publication to editor@khs.org.au as early as possible, but no later than 13th of each month.

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Research Centre Hours

The Society's Research Centre is at 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon, adjacent to the Ku-ring-gai Library. The Centre is open to the public from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (except the first Saturday of each month when members have a Family History meeting).