

# Hawkesbury Historical Society Newsletter

Newsletter of the Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc.

## HAWKESBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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**Aim:** Hawkesbury Historical Society aims to encourage & preserve the history of the Hawkesbury

**Meetings:** 4th Thursday, alternate months, 7.30pm-10pm  
Hugh Williams Room at the Museum in Baker Street, Windsor

**Open to:** People interested in the preservation of the history of the Hawkesbury, new members welcome.

**Patron:** Ted Books

### Office Bearers 2020/2021:

President: Jan Barkley-Jack

Snr Vice President: Ted Brill

Jnr Vice President: Richard Gillard

Secretary: Peta Sharpley

Public Officer: Neville Dehn

Treasurer: Heather Gillard

Social Co-ordinator: [Vacant]

Publicity Officer: [Vacant]

Hon Curator HHS Collection: Carol Carruthers/ Rebecca Turnbull

Newsletter Editor: Jan Readford

Web Administrator: Dick Gillard

Bookshop Manager: Heather Gillard

Facebook Administrator: Peta Sharpley

**Committee members:** Rebecca Turnbull, Sean Flavin, Ellen Jordan and Peta Sharpley

**HHS Collection Committee:** Carol Carruthers, Hawkesbury Regional Museum Manager and Curator – Rebecca Turnbull

**Publications Committee:** Jan Barkley-Jack, Ellen Jordan and Jan Readford

## MEETINGS

Thursday, 25 February 2021 - 7.30pm \*

Thursday, 22 April 2021 - 7:30pm \*

Saturday, 26 June 2021 - 2pm

Saturday, 28 August 2021 - 2pm

Thursday, 28 October 2021 - 7:30pm

(\*) Join the meeting by telephone or Zoom

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## Hawkesbury Historical Society General Meeting

25 February 2021

at 7.30pm via Zoom

All members will be able to participate in the General Meeting either via a telephone hook-up or Zoom. **Instructions will be provided to all members prior to the meeting.**

### Speaker: Jan Barkley-Jack

Jan Barkley-Jack, historian and author, is currently President of Hawkesbury Historical Society. A member of the Society since 1973, Jan has held a number of roles including that of HHS Honorary Curator for over 25 years, during which time she was instrumental in establishing museum practices for the Society's collection, now housed in the Hawkesbury Regional Museum.



### Topic: Fenn Kemp's Pigs

Jan will speak about...one sunny morning in the Hawkesbury, when Commandant Fenn's pigs escaped and the trials and traumas that followed - such a common Hawkesbury occurrence.

Fenn Kemp was an irascible man and found himself involved in issues of the French Revolution.

### Zoom meetings are just modern seances



"There's someone who wants to join us."  
"Elizabeth, are you there?"  
"We can't hear you."  
"Can you hear us?"

# CAN YOU HELP?

## Historic Grave Site Damaged by Vandals



The Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc. is seeking assistance to raise funds for the restoration of this historic tombstone in the St. Matthews Church of England cemetery in Windsor. The Society is seeking to raise \$5,000 towards the cost of restoration and a brass plate to provide details about the Freemans interned in the grave site.

### Details about the grave:

**The lettering:** It is unusual for a headstone not to have names on it, whereas it is the footstone at the base of the grave that usually contains only the initials. However, from its placement this appears to be a very modest headstone, possibly erected this way from a lack of funds. Alternatively, the headstone may have previously been lost and the footstone rearranged.

**The dates:** The 1820 date William Freeman died, being the first date on the stone, and Elizabeth known to have died earlier, probably indicates that Elizabeth may have been buried here in 1816 without a headstone and later included on William's marker, or she may be buried on the property if the farm was not close by.

**Identification:** The grave identification was complicated. First the records of burial were studied to find burials from the dates indicated for a couple with these initials. This resulted in a few choices. It was the location which confirmed it to be the Freemans as the other contender was buried elsewhere in the cemetery.

**The Freemans:** When Elizabeth Chaffrey arrived as a convict from Dublin in 1796 her future partner, William Freeman, aged 22 years had already been in the Colony four years having arrived on the *Royal Admiral*. He was likely still a prisoner, after being sentenced for stealing three wooden casks with hoops, although there seems doubt as to whether he actually stole them.

Elizabeth and William had their first child, William jr, in 1797 and another son in 1801 when they were living at Hawkesbury. William then received his first land grant at Parramatta and purchased more land to farm where the couple lived with their

growing family. From 1801 the couple had three sons, John, James, and Joseph in consecutive years and a daughter, Lucy, the following year. That meant Elizabeth was caring for William 9 years old and four children under six when George arrived in 1806. Thomas and Samuel were born in 1809 and 1811. When Elizabeth died in 1816, she was only 36 years old.

William had the trade of a cooper, was likely literate, having a subscription to the *Sydney*.

*Gazette*, and had been of good character in NSW. Both had served out their sentence and they were working hard to support themselves and their seven children in the Hawkesbury from around 1814.

The family continued together until William died at the end of winter 1820, when George, Thomas and Samuel were placed in the Parramatta Orphan School.

Restoration of this gravestone is vital for the preservation of the history of the early settlement of the Hawkesbury Region. Your contribution will assist the Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc. maintain the historical integrity of objects which portray the lives of our early settlers.

You can donate via the button "***I want to help***" on the first page of our web site Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc., or donate direct into the Society's bank account as follows:

Bank:	ANZ Richmond
BSB No.	012874
Account Number	227709583
Identification	Grave (your surname)

The Hawkesbury Historical Society Inc. will be offering to all donors the opportunity to participate in a tour of the historic St. Matthews Anglican Church and cemetery at Windsor once the gravestone has been repaired.

**Thank you for your donation.■**

### FIRST FLEET PIANO DEBATE



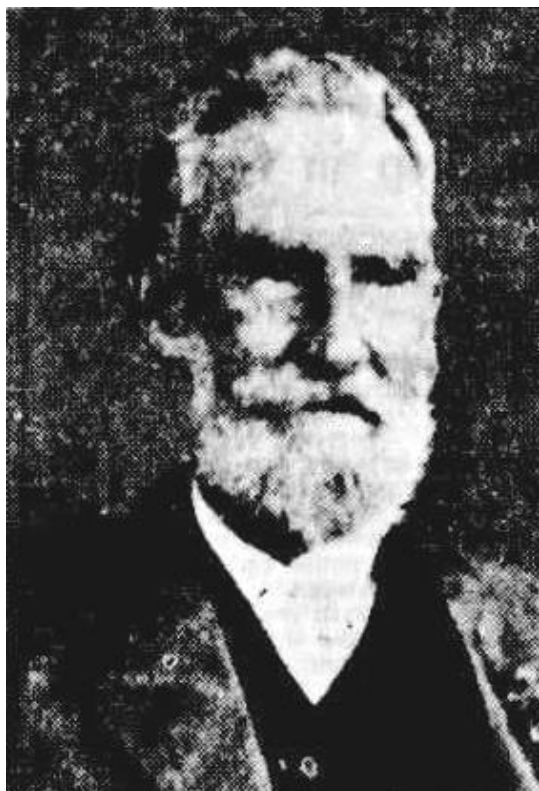
Elaine Phillips recently read the article titled "Tinkling the Ivories" which appeared in our October 2020 newsletter.

Elaine has undertaken a lot of research into the debate about early pianos in the colony. If you would like to read more about this topic, please check out Elaine's research on her website <https://lochista.com/category/first-fleet-piano/>



# Arthur Blacket – the Hawkesbury Connection

Cathy McHardy - January 2021



Sydney Morning Herald, 9 Aug 1929 p. 12.  
Obituary Mr A Blacket.  
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/16574162>

Readers will probably be familiar with the work of the notable architect Edmund Thomas Blacket but most will not know of his son Arthur, and his connection to the Hawkesbury district.

Born in Oxford Street, Sydney in 1848, Arthur Blacket was the third child and eldest son of Edmund Blacket and his wife Sarah Mease who arrived in the colony of New South Wales aboard the *Eden* on the 3 November 1842.

Largely self-taught in his chosen profession, Edmund Blacket slowly built up his reputation as an architect and was appointed Colonial Architect for NSW in 1849. In 1854, he won the prestigious commission to design the first buildings of the newly established University of Sydney although he is most well-known for his gothic inspired ecclesiastical buildings. His sons were to follow in their father's footsteps with Owen being appointed a director of Blacket and Co, Cyril joining the family firm in 1880 and Arthur in 1883 after the death of their father (1).

According to his obituary, (2) Arthur Blacket was educated at Sydney Grammar School and Eglinton College, Glebe which was a school for the sons of the Sydney upper classes founded by Rev John Pendrill in his home Eglinton House. After leaving school he then joined the staff of his father's business.

Perhaps constrained by his position in his father's firm, Blacket felt the need to make a name for himself, away from the influences of family ties. He saw many opportunities presented by the growing prosperity of inland country towns and spent several years designing and supervising civil engineering projects across the Central West of New South Wales. During this time, according to his obituary, he also served his articles with Ingham Suttor Clements, a licensed surveyor.

In 1879, Blacket gained the position of Superintendent of Roads in the Condobolin district and in December of that year the new bridge over the Lachlan River was completed (3). Newspaper reports of the occasion note that Mrs Blacket was invited to officially christen the bridge. Blacket had married Mary Louisa Home, daughter of the late James Stirling Home, a solicitor of Bathurst that same year.

His work then took him to the Forbes district where in March 1882 he was appointed Town Surveyor and Inspector of Works for the Forbes Municipal District (4). While in this position he designed and supervised the construction of the Forbes Waterworks



F L Barker Wool Store, Pyrmont designed by Arthur Blacket (1893). Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.  
Detailed plans of this and other wool stores may be viewed online:  
[http://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?embedded=true&toolbar=false&dps\\_pid=IE10465321](http://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?embedded=true&toolbar=false&dps_pid=IE10465321)

which was completed in December 1883 bringing a reliable reticulated water supply to the residents of the town (5). In appreciation, he presented the town with a 'very useful and handsome donation in the shape of a drinking fountain' which was well received by the community (6).

The death of his father in 1883 prompted his return to Sydney where together with his brothers, continued on his father's business for several years under the name of Blacket Brothers. Arthur Blacket was appointed diocesan building surveyor for the Church of England from 1888 to 1895 and while residing in Auburn served as an alderman on the local council for several years (7).

Many important ecclesiastical commissions were completed during this time including St Peter's Anglican Church, Maitland (1884-86); St Saviour's Anglican Church, Redfern (1885-86) and the Hunter Baillie Memorial Church, Annandale (1886-89).

Blacket's commissions were many and varied including 'Hawthorn' (1886) the home of Frederick William Binney, Secretary of the Newcastle-Wallsend Coal Company and the Northern Collieries Association, the cottage hospital in Junee (1890) and the Romanesque style, F L Barker and Co Wool Store in Pymont (1893).



Detail of architect's stamp from the plans of F L Barker Wool Store, Pymont. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

Perhaps tiring of the city life, Blacket again felt the need to relocate his family and business to the country, although according to the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, it was:

ill-health drove him from the city, and he settled down to the quietude of the Vineyard, where his farming is interspersed occasionally with an engagement at the old building game (8).

Under the Conditional Purchase scheme, Blacket selected two properties fronting what is now Stahls Road, Oakville: Portion 127 in October 1895 and the adjoining Portion 126 in 1905. He named his property 'Alneau Glen' and advertised his services as an architect, civil engineer, and surveyor in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*. [I failed to uncover the origin of this name during my research].

It wasn't long before commissions began to come his way. In July 1896 he supervised the repainting of J Paine's prestigious home in Windsor, 'Sunny Brae' (9). In August he called for tenders for the erection of a water tower for the Hawkesbury Dairy and Butter Company Limited, Windsor (10).

Wherever he and his family resided, Blacket immersed himself in local affairs. He was a lay preacher for St Paul's Anglican Church, Elizabeth Street, Riverstone standing in for the incumbent, the Rev S G Fielding on several occasions (11). Blacket was also commissioned to design and supervise the construction of the additions to this gothic style brick church comprising the chancel and vestry. Mr. Telfer of Parramatta was the contractor for the work (12).

Blacket's services as a surveyor were also called upon on several occasions. In January 1897, Mr F Wheeler was preparing some allotments for sale at the rear of Mr E Joseph's property in Riverstone which would be auctioned at the end of the month (13).

Commissions also took him to Windsor where he organised the repairs of the Windsor Presbyterian Church in George Street (14) and the painting and renovating of the Hawkesbury Benevolent Asylum (15).

**Arthur Blacket, F.I.A.**  
**ARCHITECT,**  
CIVIL ENGINEER, AND SUVEYOR,  
"Alneau Glen," via Riverstone,  
(Late of Bond-st., Sydney).

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Plans and specifications of Buildings, Sewerage,  
Drainage, and Irrigation Works, prepared, and  
work supervised.

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Adjuster of disputed claims for work.

*Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 14 March 1896, p 11 Advertising  
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72548119>



As a member of the Vineyards Progress Association, he actively petitioned Windsor Council for the repair of roads and the provision of services, faithfully recorded the rainfall in the area each day and was appointed one of the trustees of the local recreation reserve.

In 1913, he agitated for the provision of a railway platform at Vineyard to service the small but growing population in the area calling for Windsor Municipal Council to throw its weight behind the proposal and convince the Railway Commissioners that a platform halfway between Riverstone and Mulgrave would be a great benefit to the residents (16). [Interestingly, a platform was not constructed until 1935 and the present structure which was built as part of the electrification of the line to Richmond did not take place until 1991.]

Apart from his professional work, family and farming matters also occupied Blacket's time in the Vineyards. The couple's sixth and last child Guyon was born there in 1898 and sons Nigel and Ulric serving in World War One and returning home safely.

Arthur Blacket was an inventive and curious individual. In 1900, he patented his 'improved stump extractor and weight mover' which he christened the "Alneau Shifter" (17). He believed that he could design an improvement on the currently available machines and advertised that his invention was lighter, stronger and more easily operated reducing the time and effort it took to clear land.

Farmers whose properties were away from natural sources of water such as rivers and creeks were reliant on the vagaries of rainfall for crops, stock and domestic supplies. Accordingly, there was discussion in the local newspapers regarding farm water supplies and the possibility of sinking wells or bores to provide a reliable source of water in the current time of drought.

Blacket took the trouble to sink a well on his property to the depth of 35 feet and sent a sample to the NSW Department of Mines and Agriculture for analysis. The water was found to be 'diluted poison' having a high saline content and was deemed 'unfit for human consumption, stock or irrigation purposes' (18).

Blacket gave his professional opinion on schemes to combat the problem of silting in the Hawkesbury which rendered the river unnavigable. Dredging the river, however not removing the sand but keeping it on the move with the current was the only reasonable and effective solution to the problem.

A wire rope, with iron blades fixed on to it every foot or so, might be stretched across a sand bar or promontory of sand, having a water wheel (on the Archimedian principle) sunk in the current, above attached to the rope, and anchored there, with wings to force the water on to it. This, in turning, would turn the rope, and the blades would keep the sand in motion for the current to carry away (19).

By March 1921, the Blacket family's association with the Hawkesbury was coming to an end. The *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* noted that Mr Arthur Blacket had sold a portion of his property known as 'Alneau Glen' to 'Mr T Stahl who intends to use the land for poultry farming' (20). Then in 1928, Doris Emily Stahl purchased the adjacent 43 acre property on the corner of Stahls Road and Bocks Road from Arthur Blacket.

Arthur Blacket died at his home in Harbord, NSW on the 4 August 1929 at the age of 81 years and was buried in Manly Cemetery. His wife Mary Louisa died in Springwood on the 23 January 1948 and was buried beside her husband.

Blacket's legacy remains today, a tremendous and varied body of work, large and small and deserving our attention, study and admiration.

**WINDSOR AND RICHMOND**  
**Gazette.**  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1900.  
**THE ALNEAU "SHIFTER."**  
MR. ARTHUR BLACKET, of Alneau Glen, has just patented an improved stump-extractor and weight-mover, which, the inventor claims, is light, strong, easily worked, does not get out of order, and reduces the work of clearing of land by one-half. A successful trial of this machine was given on the Pitt Town Common last week. Several farmers and others were present, and the machine was worked by Mr. Fred White. We understand that Mr. Blacket can supply this "shifter" for the sum of £6, or a heavier, and, of course, more costly one, can be made if required. The makers are Messrs. Ritchie Bros, Auburn, and Mr. Blacket is the inventor and patentee. It will be exhibited at the Nepean Show next month, and also at the H.D.A.A. Show in May. Those interested should not miss the opportunity of inspecting the machine.

*Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 24 February 1900, p 4.  
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85856964>

## References:

- (1) <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/blacket-edmund-thomas-3005>
- (2) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 16 August 1929, p 3. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85929440>
- (3) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1879, p. 5 Condobolin. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/13451828>
- (4) *NSW Government Gazette*, 21 March 1882, [Issue No. 122] p. 1629 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/225732806>
- (5) *Evening News*, 19 December 1883 p 4 Forbes Water Supply. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/108838622>
- (6) *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 7 June 1884 p. 1079 Forbes. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/164385926>
- (7) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 16 August 1929, p 3. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85929440>
- (8) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 3 April 1903, p 13 Riverstone. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66353999>
- (9) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 4 July 1896 p 11 Advertising. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72549120>
- (10) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 22 August 1896, 11, Advertising. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72549540>
- (11) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 5 July 1902 p 5 Vineyards. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/86222234>
- (12) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 3 April 1903, p 13 Riverstone. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66353999>
- (13) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p 12 Advertising. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72550776>
- (14) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 27 March 1897, p 11 Advertising <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72551440>
- (15) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 28 May 1898, p 11, Advertising. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66437928>
- (16) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 19 April 1913, p 1, Windsor Municipal Council. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85847497>
- (17) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 24 February 1900, p 4. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85856964>
- (18) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 8 March 1902, p 3, From Week to Week. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/86218832>
- (19) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 5 June 1903, p 9, Hawkesbury a Navigable River. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66354515>
- (20) *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 25 March 1921, p 4, Week to Week. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/85874496>

# THE GOOD WIVES OF THE HAWKESBURY ROYALTY

## Sarah Cobcroft (Nee Smith)

By Richard Gillard



Figure 1 Portrait of Sarah Cobcroft (nee Smith) By Joseph Backler from the collections of the State Library of New South Wales [a928715 / ML 169] (Mitchell Library).

Early research into Sarah Smith's life led to many false leads being accepted by researchers at that time. There were a number of Sarah Smiths who were born around the time of Sarah Smith's birth as deduced from her age shown on her grave.

One of these Sarah Smith's, who was originally thought to be the Sarah Smith in this short biography, travelled with our Sarah Smith aboard the *Neptune* as a convict.

It was not until members of the Cobcroft family were searching through papers of Sarah's sister Susannah Sephton's probate file that they found an Affidavit made by Sarah to the Supreme Court of N.S.W. on the 30th September 1833. She had witnessed the Affidavit when it was read to her with her mark affixed to the Affidavit as she could still not read or write.

In the Affidavit she clearly states, *Susan Sephton otherwise Smith deceased was the daughter of William Smith and Sarah Gladman his wife both of Hadley in the County of Hereford in England*<sup>1</sup>.

Until the discovery of Sarah's Affidavit, researchers could only speculate as to her date of birth and her baptismal date. The Affidavit allowed a more detailed research of the records of Monkey Hadley around 1772 now that the names of her father and mother were known. With this additional information, Cobcroft family researchers were able to search the records of St. Mary the Virgin around the year 1772. This year being identified from the age shown on Sarah's grave. One



child was identified as being baptised on the 1st of March 1772 at St. Mary the Virgin church at Mon- key Hadley. The birth record has the child's name as Sally Smith, parents William and Sarah Smith<sup>2</sup>. In discussions with author Warren John Luxford (author of Cobcroft, A Genealogical Index of John Cobcroft & Sarah Smith, Volume 1: 1790-!908), Warren is of the firm belief that the record showing the name Sally should have been shown as Sarah and her birth date was 1 March 1772.



Figure 2. Map of Monken Hadley. Courtesy Old English Maps. Accessed 7 January 2021.

Monkey Hadley in the year 1471 figured prominently in the War of the Roses. The Battle of Barnet was one of two principal engagements. The War of the Roses was the first civil war in England when King Edward VI fought his Lancashire opponents who were adherents to Henry VI. The Yorkist troops advanced through the town of Monkey Hadley, the main battle engagements taking place to the north of the town at Hadley Wood and to the west of the town at Hadley Green. The 16th Earl of Warwick, Richard Neville, was killed fleeing the battle. Approximately a month later King Edward defeated the army led by Henry VI's Queen Margaret of Anjou. This left King Edward VI secure as King of England until his death in 1483.



Figure 3. War of the Roses, Britannica.com. access 12 January 2021

Little is known of Sarah's early life in Monken Hadley. It is obvious from her inability to read or write, even at the latter stages of her life, that she received no schooling in Monken Hadley. The question then is, how did this seventeen-year-old girl come to travel all the way to Australia as a free settler?

One of the early theories was that Sarah had been selected to travel to Australia to become a midwife in the colony. This theory most likely evolved from a statement made in Sarah's petition to Sir Thomas Brisbane in November 1825 requesting a grant of land. In this statement she said, "*the petitioner came to this country with six other females sent out by the Government for the purpose of practicing midwifery...*"<sup>3</sup>. No documentation has been



found that supports this theory or the statement made by Sarah, and it seems highly unlikely that the British Government would select a seventeen-year-old girl to perform the function of midwifery in the colony.



Figure 4. Cottages in Monkey Hadley, photograph courtesy of Wikipedia accessed 11 January 2021.



Figure 5. The Church of St. Mary's Monkey Hadley, photograph courtesy of Wikwand, accessed 11 January 2021

Another theory which may be partly true, was that she was living with John Cobcroft and came to Australia as his de-facto wife. Again, there was no evidence of John and Sarah living together before travelling to Australia. Following the loading of the *Neptune* with 424 convict men and 78 female convicts it was found that there was room for another thirty or forty females<sup>4</sup> and W.W. Grenville requested Lieutenant Shapcote to approach a number of convicts to invite their wives to travel to Australia aboard the *Neptune* even though their husbands may be travelling on a different second fleet vessel.

Research undertaken by Anne Needham suggested *the six women who arrived under this agreement were: Sarah Cobcroft (Smith); Sarah Fielder (wife of William Fielder); Maria Wood (wife of John Wood), along with Elizabeth Connor, Harriet Hodgetts, and Jane Reed*<sup>5</sup>. Warren Fielder or John Wood or John Cobcroft may have received notification of the offer for their wives or partners to travel to Australia aboard the *Neptune* even though they were already aboard the *Scarborough* awaiting departure. Warren John Luxford in his previously mentioned book, proposed that Sarah Smith most likely accompanied Maria Wood and Sarah Fielder to assist in minding their children on the long voyage<sup>6</sup>. Sarah may well have taken John Cobcroft's surname to make it easier for her to embark on the *Neptune* with Maria Wood and Sarah Fielder.

On the 16th of April 1788, John Cobcroft along with John Wood and William Fubbs (Fielder) attacked and robbed William Frost, his wife and daughter on Edgeware Road, near Edgeware as they journeyed to London. They stole from William Frost a gold guinea and six silver shillings. The three highway robbers then fled towards Edgeware whilst William Frost and his family hurried onto Bell. Frost gained the assistance of a Mr. Herrington, who with the assistance of others, chased after the highway robbers, eventually capturing them near the Bull and Bush at North-end. The trio were arrested and taken to Newgate Prison to await trial at the Old Bailey.

The trio were fortunate that they only spent a few weeks in Newgate Prison, their trial at the Old Bailey, commencing on the 7th of May 1788. They were found guilty of highway robbery and sentenced to death<sup>7</sup>. On the 9th of September 1789 at the Old Bailey, their sentence of death was commuted to transportation for life<sup>8</sup>.

John Cob- croft, John Wood and William Fielder were



transported to Australia aboard the *Scarborough* leaving Portsmouth on the 19th of January 1790 and arriving in Port Jackson on the 28th of June 1790<sup>9</sup>.

John Cobcroft would have experienced one of the most horrific convict voyages to Australia aboard the *Scarborough*. Several convicts aboard threatened to mutiny and take over the ship. The planned mutiny was foiled by a prisoner notifying the Captain of the mutiny plans. Seventeen convicts were involved in the planned mutiny. The two ring leaders were severely flogged and transferred to the *Prince of Wales* for the rest of the voyage. The other main conspirators were chained to the deck with minor participants flogged. As a result, all the prisoners were kept below deck for the entire voyage, resulting in the spread of disease amongst the prisoners. Out of a prison population of 253 convicts, 68 convicts died during the voyage.



Figure 6. Scarborough, Source (WP: NFCC#), Fair use <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=59790582>, accessed 12 January 2021.



Figure 7. Neptune, Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neptune> (1780\_ship), accessed 12 January 2021.

On the 19th of January 1790, the *Neptune* set sail for Australia with 421 male and 78 female convicts on board along with those wives or partners who were granted permission to come to Australia. The voyage must have been a harrowing experience for Sarah as 127 male and 11 female convicts died on the voyage. This represented a death rate of some 31% amongst the convicts. Even worse, on landing at Port Jackson on the 28th of June 1790 after 160 days at sea, 269 convicts were extremely weak and extremely sick. The treatment of convicts aboard the *Neptune* was extremely harsh, food was deliberately withheld so that the owners of the vessel could sell the remaining stock of food at exaggerated high prices in Sydney. Convicts suspected of stealing were flogged to death, the majority of convicts remained chained below decks for the whole journey resulting in diseases being endemic.

The early records of assignment of convicts have not survived the eons of

time. John and Maria Wood were living in the Parramatta area with their children from the period of their arrival until around 1792. Susan may well have travelled to Parramatta with them and John Cobcroft may have been assigned to John Ruse. It is most likely because of John's friendship with John Wood, a relationship with Sarah developed.

The first real record of Sarah and John's relationship was the birth of their first child, Richard William Cobcroft, who was born on the 3rd of February 1793 and baptized on the 17th of March 1793 at St. John's Church Parramatta<sup>10</sup>. Over the period between 1793 and 1813, Sarah gave birth to a further 10 children. Unfortunately, her second child, Elizabeth, was still born when she was born in August 1795. Elizabeth's burial was held at St. John's Parramatta on the 28th of August 1795<sup>11</sup>.

Details of Sarah and John's children are:

Richard William Cobcroft	3rd February 1793, died 24th July 1866. Married Charlotte Smith 2nd November 1812, 8 children. Married Mary Ann Cross 27th October 1829, 11 children.
Elizabeth Cobcroft	1795 still born. Buried St Mary's Parramatta 28th August 1775.
John Frederick Cobcroft	15th May 1797, died 5th February 1881. Married Mary Crew 29th December 1817, 13 children.
Sarah Cobcroft	13th September 1799, died 19th July 1872. Married William Blackman 25th September 1821, 5 children.
Mary Ann Cobcroft	1801/2, died 7th September 1877. Married Michael Ford 7th November 1820, 9 children.
Susannah Cobcroft	6th March 1805, died 5th September 1868. Married John McManis 9th September 1823, 10 children.
James Cobcroft	Birth 1806/7, death 9th May 1830.
George Cobcroft	24th July 1810, died 14th August 1874. Married Maria McGinnis 14th December 1835, 13 children.
Eliza Cobcroft	15th December 1812, died 30th July 1894. Married John Robinson 27th March 1834, 8 children.
Matilda Cobcroft	8 December 1813, died 24th March 1860.

Whilst nine of Sarah and John's children grew to adulthood only eight married and raised their own families. James Cobcroft was extremely ill and required a significant amount of Sarah's time to care for him. In her petition to Sir Thomas Brisbane for a land grant in 1825, she states in the petition *"That petitioner has a family of nine children. One of whom is a boy of ten years of age has been afflicted with paraletic and insanity from a child"*<sup>12</sup>. In today's medical terms, James suffered from epilepsy. Sarah had a great love for her family and at the time of her death in 1857, Sarah was the proud grandmother of eighty-three grandchildren stretching across five generations.

Sarah not only cared for her ever-increasing family, but she also provided midwifery services in the Wilberforce area of Sydney. Sarah made comment on the services she provided in her petition to Sir Thomas Brisbane for a land grant in November 1825, *"That the petitioner attends the family of all the female prisoners of the district Gratis..."*<sup>13</sup>.

John was granted a conditional pardon on the 12th of December 1794<sup>14</sup>. On the 22nd of July 1795 John received his first land grant of 30 acres in the District of Mulgrave Place<sup>15</sup>. There is no definite date when John and Sarah moved to their new property. It is most likely that John built a hut on the property to house Sarah and their son Richard before they moved there.





Figure 8. Wattle and daub home with bark roof and parget wooden chimney in the District of Liverpool Plains. 1890.  
Wikipedia. Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The home that John built for Sarah would have been built along the same lines as the home shown in Figure 8. The home would have been basic and built with the timber from the 30-acre land grant.

The *Cobcroft Farm* as the property became known was further expanded when John on the 1st of June 1997 received a further grant of 40 acres adjoining the grant of 1975<sup>16</sup>. The *Cobcroft Farm* faced the road between Windsor and Wilberforce.

John continued to expand his property portfolio. By the year 1835 John had received land grants of 380 acres, 120 acres at Mulgrave Place, 60 acres at Kurrajong and 200 acres in the district of Wentworth. John's will shows that he had purchased approximately a further 308 acres of land up until the time of his death<sup>17</sup>. John also held a License to Depasture on Crown Land.

On the 1st of July 1830, John obtained a license to sell liquor from his residence on *Cobcroft Farm*<sup>18</sup>. John and Sarah called the hotel *The George & Dragon Inn*. The Inn was ideally located on the road between Wilberforce and Windsor and was very profitable as liquor was seen as the only solace available to relieve the pressures of the unbelievable hardship the early settlers faced. The operation of an Inn in the early colony fell mainly on the innkeeper's wife whilst the husband carried on with farming his grant or other business enterprises, he may have been engaged in. With such a large farming empire it is most likely that Sarah was heavily involved in the running of *The George and Dragon Inn* on her own. The Inn was operated by John and Sarah from 1830 until it closed in 1846.

Sarah was involved in the management of the farms as well. In the latter years of John's life, Sarah, with help from her sons, managed the farms. On the 18th of December 1823 she delivered 3,000 lb. of salted pork at a price of 5 1/2d per pound. Over the years from 1821 she continued to deliver to the Storehouse at Windsor, bushels of wheat, the sale of which she had successfully tendered for<sup>19</sup>.

The strangest part about the relationship between Sarah and John was that they had never married until John was 79 years old and Sarah was 70 years old. It is most likely they decided to marry to make their union legal to overcome any financial or legal problems that might occur on their deaths. Sarah and John were married under license on Christmas Eve 1842. The ceremony was conducted by Chaplain Charles Campbell Kemp in the Macquarie School House at Wilberforce<sup>20</sup>.

It must have been a special moment for Sarah when she had word that her sister Susannah had arrived in Australia. Her sister was tried at the Old Bailey on the 24th of April 1794<sup>21</sup> for stealing various goods from a William Purser. Susannah was found guilty and sentenced to transportation for 7 years. Susannah arrived in Sydney aboard the *Indispensable* on the 30th of April 1796. The exact date of when Sarah and Susannah were able to meet is not recorded, it most likely would have been sometime in 1796 or 1797.

Susannah was to settle in Richmond which was reasonably close to Sarah at Wilberforce. Susannah passed away on the 23rd of November 1832 and was buried at the St. Peter's Burial Ground Richmond next day. Susannah left Sarah 30 acres of land in Richmond in her will. Sarah later transferred the title to this land to her daughter Susan- nah in 1845. Sarah required permission from her husband John for this transaction to proceed.

Sarah would never have imagined what her future life would be like when at the age of approximately 17 years, she boarded the *Neptune* to set sail to a new land which had only been settled by England in 1788. Sarah lived through many hardships during her early years in Australia, establishing the *Cobcroft Farm*, facing floods and drought, Australian Aboriginal conflicts, raising a family and meeting with resilience all that society and nature threw at her. Sarah was the rock that stood behind John Cobcroft, enabling him to make a significant contribution as one of the early settlers on the Hawkesbury, to the success of the colonization of Australia.

Sarah passed away on the 31st of May 1857 and was buried on the 2nd of June with her husband John Cobcroft and son.

James in the family vault in the Wilberforce cemetery, Wilberforce<sup>22</sup>.



Figure 9. Cobcroft Family Vault Wilberforce Cemetery, Wilberforce, New South Wales.  
Photograph by Josobel-findagrave.com/memorial/155623302/Sarah Cobcroft. Accessed 24 January 2021



## Endnotes

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**Hawkesbury Courier and Agricultural  
and General Advertiser  
(Windsor, NSW : 1844 - 1846)  
Thursday 8 January 1846 Page 2**

**To the Editor of the Hawkesbury Courier**

SIR,—Having been very kindly allowed to inspect a sample of Mr. Fitzgerald's present season's growth of wool. I must say that it does great credit to the superior manner of getting it up, as well as to its texture, and pronounce that it reflects great credit on him as a Grazier and promoter of the best interests of the Colony. Would we had many such friends.—Your s, Sir, &c,  
**A GENERAL OBSERVER OF EVENTS.**  
Windsor, 7th Jan.

**Mr. H. H. Morant (the beautiful "Breaker") is in South Australia, and a Hawkesbury man came in contact with him there recently. It was given out that Morant went to England when he left sunny New South Wales, but he did not get any further than South Australia.**

# Book Store Update

By Heather Gillard

The Hawkesbury Historical Society operates a bookstore at the Hawkesbury Regional Museum, Baker Street, Windsor. Profit from the sale of books help fund the Society and the Hawkesbury Regional Museum. Currently the Book Shop has over 160 titles mainly focused on history of the Hawkesbury Region and early Colonial History.

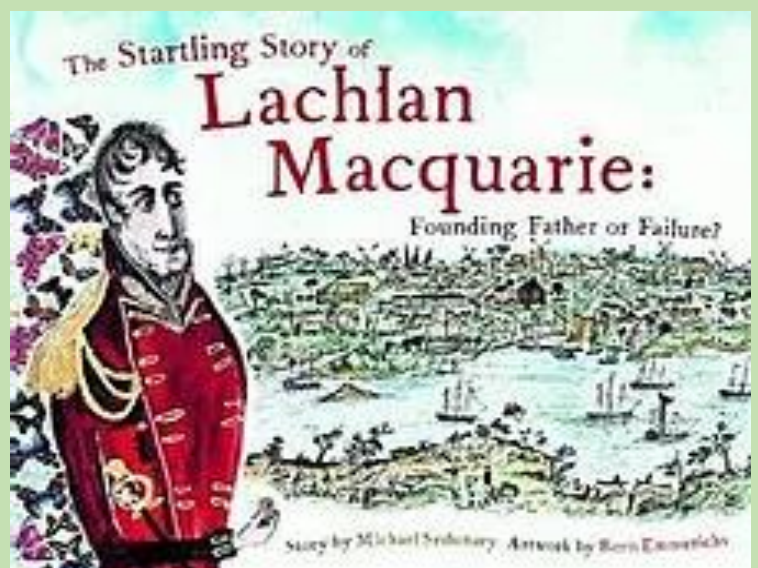
All books are now available to be purchased on-line via the Hawkesbury Historical Society's web site ([www.hawkesburyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.hawkesburyhistoricalsociety.org)). The web site has details of every available book and the purchase price. Postage costs are added to the cost of the book. Credit cards can be used to make a purchase and the book will be posted to you. If you do not have access to a computer, you can order a book by contacting the Hawkesbury Regional Museum during their office hours. Postage costs are added to the price of the book and you can pay by credit card.

## Children's Books



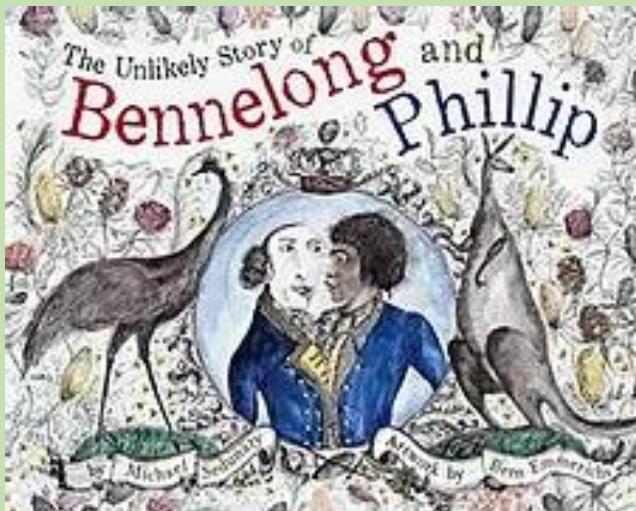
**The good, the bad and the silly** peeks into the intriguing history of Australia

**The Story of Lachlan Macquarie** is an important story in the history of modern Australia that has been largely lost to the current generation of school children. Whilst we've all seen many things named after Macquarie, few realise the important role he played in the Australia we know today.





# Book Store Update

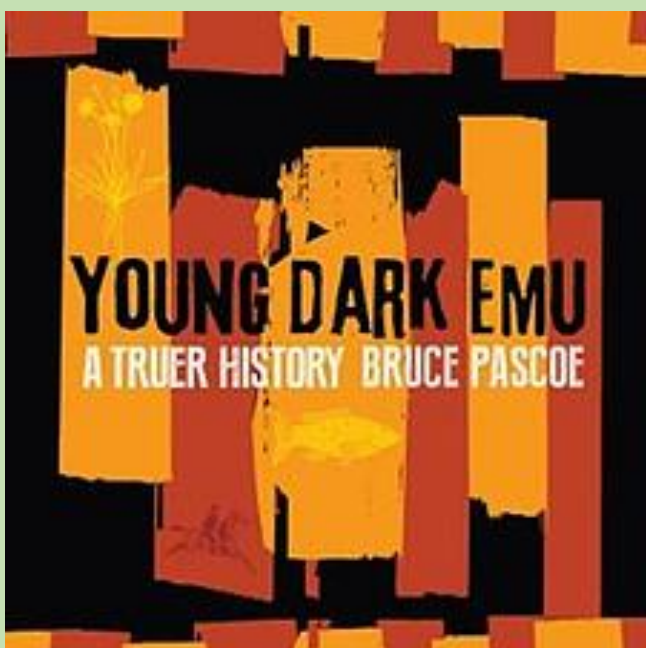


This extraordinary story about the friendship between Captain Arthur Phillip and the Aboriginal, Bennelong, is one of Australia's most important and intriguing stories, yet remains largely unknown.

The background of first settlement in Australia (when the first fleet arrived) heightens the polarity between the two worlds of these two people – traditional Aboriginal culture and values versus European culture and values.



A stormy story of tempestuous times unveils the layers of some of the most incredible circumstances in Australia's colonial history. Some people may have heard of the famous mutiny on the bounty; others may have heard of the rum rebellion coup; but the details in and around these events are largely unknown and truly extraordinary. This is precisely what the latest book reveals.



Using the accounts of early European explorers, colonists and farmers, Bruce Pascoe compellingly argues for a reconsideration of the hunter-gatherer label for pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians. He allows the reader to see Australia as it was before Europeans arrived – a land of cultivated farming areas, productive fisheries, permanent homes, and an understanding of the environment and its natural resources that supported thriving villages across the continent. **Young Dark Emu – A Truer History** asks young readers to consider a different version of Australia's history pre-European colonisation.

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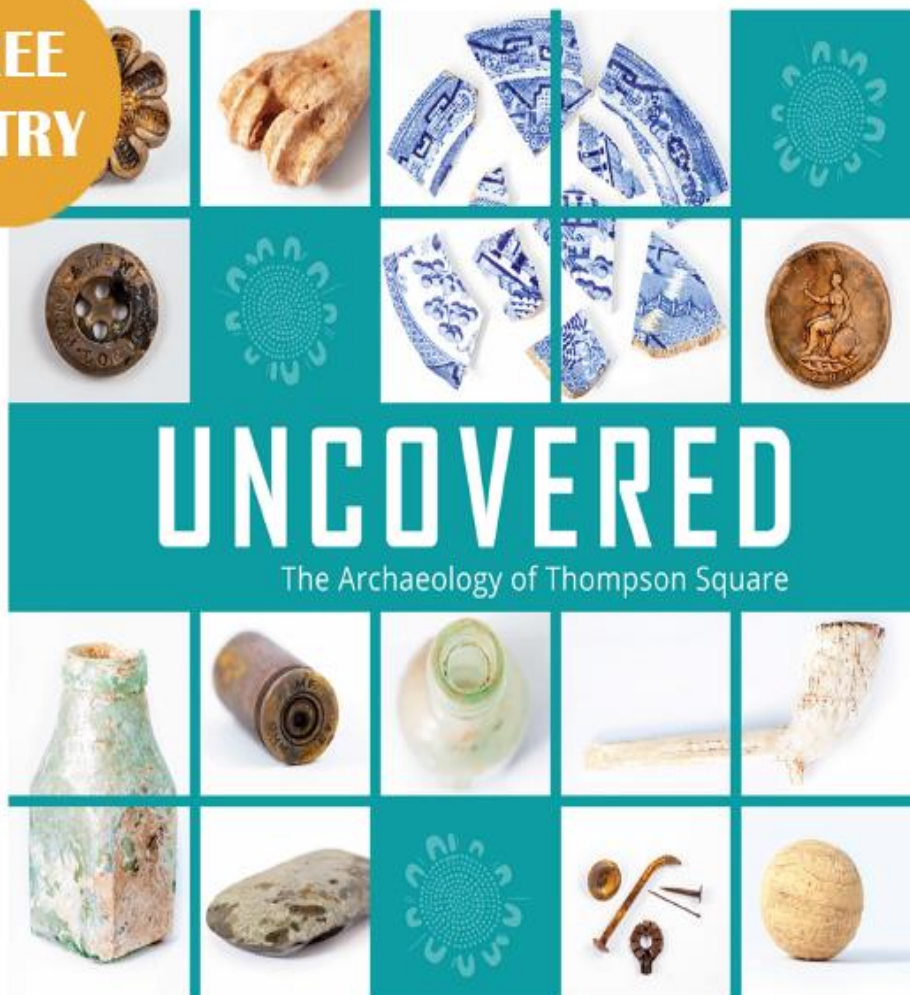
The  
remarkable  
objects in this  
exhibition  
range from  
Aboriginal  
stone  
artefacts,  
such as tools  
for hunting  
and fishing, to  
maritime  
objects such  
as sailor's  
pipes, as well  
as every day,  
discarded  
items of  
colonial life,  
including  
china and  
glass bottles,  
coins, buttons  
and jewellery.

Also included  
in this new  
exhibition are  
sections of  
the brick  
drainage  
system dating  
to 1814-1816  
and a digital  
recreation of  
a colonial  
carvel built  
vessel, based  
on some of  
earliest timber  
boat remains  
found in  
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