

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 2019/2020:

President: Jan Barkley-Jack

Snr Vice President: Ted Brill

Jnr Vice President: Dick Gillard

Secretary and 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

Committee members: Sean Flavin, Ellen Jordon, Peta Sharply

HHS Collection Committee: Carol Carruthers, Hawkesbury Regional Museum Director – Kath von Witt, Hawkesbury Regional Museum Manager and Curator – Rebecca Turnbull

Publications Committee: Jan Barkley-Jack, Jan Readford and Ellen Jordon

MEETINGS

Thursday 27th February 7.30 pm

Thursday 23rd April 7.30 pm

Saturday 27th June 2.00 pm

Saturday 22nd August 2.00 pm

Thursday 22nd October 7.30 pm (AGM)

Hugh Williams Room

HAWKESBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM

CONTENTS

• General Meeting – Topic: Photographic Heritage Collection.....	1
• Dates for the Calendar	2
• Meet the HHS Office Bearers for 2020	3
• Remembering Daphne.....	4
• Invitation: Macquarie Schoolhouse Bicentennial	7
• Murder of Mary Ann Wright	8
• Did You Know?	10
• Upcoming at Hawkesbury Regional Museum	11
• More Local Newspapers Online (Trove)	12

General Meeting

of the Hawkesbury Historical Society

Thursday, 27 February 2020 – 7.30pm

Hugh Williams Room, Hawkesbury Regional Museum,
Baker Street, Windsor

AN EVENING NOT TO BE MISSED

Guest Speaker: Neville Dehn



Join us for a sneak preview of part of the new collection of photographs Hawkesbury Historical Society has just finished collecting.

It was the Society's 2019 project to photograph all the heritage items on Council's Local Environment Plan that are located on the eastern side of the Hawkesbury River, and Neville Dehn will be our guest speaker to show us these most special buildings.

With only scant help, Neville snapped over 1,000 photographs of the 380 heritage listed sites, and is presenting a selection of the best and most interesting of buildings the Hawkesbury has to offer, along with a commentary on each of the properties chosen, and on his adventures along the way.

If you join Neville for this treat, you will find a very knowledgeable commentary encouraging a lively discussion and the opportunity to hear and perhaps join in an interesting sharing session by those in the audience who know about particular buildings.

If you live in an old house you may learn more about its history, if you're game! If you know anyone new to the area, bring them along for here is an excellent opportunity to find out about our heritage. Discover how much you really know about Hawkesbury district.

For example, arguably one of the most mysterious houses in the district, the Doctors' House in Thompson Square, will feature for sure, since some of our Society members are known to have had experienced the foibles of this 1844 building first hand. Ghosts have been actively acknowledged to live there by past much-respected community residents and the tales of the hauntings and goings on generally will mean you never quite look at some local old houses in the same way again.

Struggling early farmers' cottages, like that of the Blackman family, had begun in the main street of Richmond in the Macquarie era, and still to be found on the Blackman town grant. It was finished by the prosperous John Bowman. Other dwellings like the existing two-story house of colonial Surveyor George William Evans in Percival Street, behind the RAAF Base and of free settler John Dight in Inalls Lane, have sections which date to around 1806. They are remarkable Hawkesbury survivors. Evans was the surveyor of the first road over the Blue Mountains, and his neighbour, William Cox built the first road across them to Bathurst.

The Cox's remained prominent residents of the Hawkesbury for several generations, even though William Cox Snr's house is no longer standing. Fortunately *Hobartville*, the beautiful Georgian mansion of his son, William Cox Jnr, still graces Richmond. Neville's interest lies particularly in Cox houses like *Hobartville* and *Fairfield*, because he is a descendant of William Cox.



A photo of one of the buildings (Lynwood) at Pitt Town

Hawkesbury Historical Society invites members and non-members alike to join Neville as he takes us on a virtual tour of important Hawkesbury heritage, so feel free to bring a friend. You can be sure there will be excellent photographs that will give an opportunity to finally identify many of those houses you see in your everyday life, about which you may have wondered about concerning their story or their mysteries.

Remember, all are welcome and supper will be served before the meeting proper commences.

The presentation commences at 7.30pm Thursday 27 February.

DATES FOR THE CALENDAR

Thursday, 27 February 2020 – 7.30pm

HHS General Meeting

Speaker: Neville Dehn

Topic: Photographic Collection Project - Heritage buildings listed in the Hawkesbury City Council Local Environment Plan and east of the Hawkesbury River

Thursday, 23 April 2020 – 7.30pm

HHS General Meeting

Speaker: Judith Dunn - Parramatta Historical Society
Topic: *More details to follow*

Saturday, 27 June 2020 – 2pm

HHS General Meeting

Speaker: TBC

Saturday, 22 August 2020 – 2pm

HHS General Meeting

Speaker: TBC

Saturday, 29 August 2020

Rex Stubbs Commemorative History Day

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, 3-4 October 2020

Macquarie Schoolhouse Bicentennial

See advertisement on Page 16.

Thursday, 22 October 2020 – 7.30pm

HHS Annual General Meeting

Speaker: TBC

Meet your HHS Office Bearers for 2020

Committee Members

 <p>President</p> <p>Society and committee member since 1973 and has promoted history and heritage by conducting historical tours and talks and in the role of a previous honorary curator of Hawkesbury Museum for over 20 years. Jan is also an ex-Chair of the National Trust Hawkesbury Branch.</p>	<p>Jan Barkley-Jack is a professional historian and author. She co-authored the Hawkesbury City Council's Bicentennial Book, <i>Hawkesbury 1794-1994</i>, published a major book, <i>Hawkesbury Settlement Revealed</i> in 2009, <i>Toongabbie's Government Farm</i> in 2013 and co-authored with her late husband, Ian Jack, <i>St Matthew's Windsor: an Anglican Landmark celebrating 200 years</i> in 2016. Jan has been a member of Hawkesbury Historical</p>	<p>Ted Brill moved to the Hawkesbury district with his wife Sue and young family when he became the principal of Ebenezer Public School. Decades later he still lives in Ebenezer and is currently fully involved in the life and activities of historic Ebenezer Church. His main historical interest is the fifteen families who built Ebenezer Church and the extensive contribution they and their descendants made to Ebenezer, the Hawkesbury and the colony at large.</p>
 <p>Jnr Vice President and Web Administrator (Dick) Treasurer / and Bookshop Manager (Heather)</p> <p>completion of the School's Education program. Richard was Bishop for Australia for a small Christian Faith community operating out of Independence Missouri in the USA.</p>	<p>Heather and Richard Gillard have been members of the Hawkesbury Historical Society for over five years joining the Executive Committee in their second year. Richard's forebears were early settlers in the Hawkesbury Region. Heather is in her fifth year as Treasurer and is also responsible for maintaining the Society's Book Shop at the Hawkesbury Regional Museum and has organised a number of successful book launches. Heather ran her own Accounting Business focused in the Building Industry for some forty years. Richard has just been appointed Junior Vice President. He has completed the Society's web site and is nearing</p>	 <p>Neville Dehn has lived in the Hawkesbury region for 30 years at Wilberforce and Richmond. He has strong links with the Hawkesbury as he is a descendant of William Cox of Clarendon and William Cox Jnr of Hobartville. He loves to travel both overseas and within Australia and has travelled to many places with connections to his early family, particularly in England and the Upper Hunter Valley. Neville is a graduate of Hawkesbury Agricultural College and Macquarie University. He has been Secretary of Hawkesbury Historical Society since 2013 and recently completed a project to photograph the Heritage buildings listed on Hawkesbury City Council's LEP and east of the Hawkesbury River.</p>
 <p>Newsletter Editor</p> <p>the Society of Australian Genealogists, Nepean Family History Society and Historic Houses Trust, her interests are in family, local and international history. Jan's forebears were early settlers in the Hawkesbury, arriving in the First and Second Fleets.</p>	<p>Jan Readford has been a member of the Hawkesbury Historical Society since 2006, and Editor of its bi-monthly newsletter since 2010. Jan has edited and produced the Society's Journals, No.2 (2011) and No.3 (2014), the Society booklet, <i>The Hawkesbury: A Handy History</i> (2015), and is currently reproducing Doug Bowd's books: <i>Macquarie Country</i> and <i>Hawkesbury Journey</i>. A long term member of</p>	 <p>Rebecca Turnbull has had an interest in all things historical from an early age which led to her becoming a Museum Curator. She has had the pleasure of working in various house museums, regional and specialised museums, and collections for almost 20 years. Rebecca enjoys learning the deep connections with colonial people, places and events, and is very fortunate to be able to combine her passion into her career. She is a reviewer for the MGNSW Standards Programs which involves her assisting and advising remote and regional museums throughout NSW. In her spare time, she enjoys playing netball and travelling, especially to visit historical places and museums with her husband and her dog Arthur (named after Captain Arthur Phillip of course!).</p>
 <p>pleasant area in which to live. He now resides in Windsor Country Village. Following this move, he discovered the Hawkesbury Astronomical Association, the Hawkesbury Historical Society, and last but no means least, he found Delores Yrure, which goes to show, Sean believes, that retirement places are not the end of the world. Sean has introduced the delights of astronomy to the Hawkesbury Historical Society at the historical observatory of John Tebbutt in Windsor.</p>	<p>Sean Flavin has pursued astronomy as a hobby since his teenage years and continues with this interest happily, recently celebrating his 84th birthday. Originally from Ireland, he came to Australia in 1959, working here mostly in the electrical mechanical field. He served in the RAAF in the 1960s as an instrument fitter, later working for OTC which in time became part of Telstra. Retiring in 1998, he recalled from his air force days that the Hawkesbury was a</p>	 <p>Ellen Jordan was born in Brisbane in 1938 and lived there until 1975, although spending the years 1961-64 and 1971 in London with an academic husband. In 1975 she moved to Newcastle where she remained until moving to Windsor in 2006. Throughout her adult life her main work has been teaching - the full range from Kindergarten to PhD supervision. Additionally, in the 1970s, Ellen became deeply committed to historical research into women's work in nineteenth century Britain. Ellen is still researching and publishing in this area, with her main focus, at the moment, being the careers of women writers.</p>
 <p>Peta Sharpley has been interested in local history since she was in high school when she completed a history project on James Tobias Ryan of Emu Hall, who helped fund the construction of Victoria Bridge over the Nepean River. Peta has enjoyed visiting many historic homes and now proudly lives in a beautiful historic home in Windsor. She has studied calligraphy in the past and collects antique dip pens and ink wells. Her main hobby, apart from visiting and learning about historic houses, is photography, which has taken her to some beautiful places both here in Australia and overseas. At present Peta is investigating revamping Hawkesbury Historical Society's Facebook page.</p>	<p>Hon Curators HHS Collection and the HHS Collection Committee</p> <p>Carol Carruthers is a retired accountant whose love of history led her, some 25 years ago, to break out from the repetitive life of an accountant, to pursue a degree in Australian History. She moved from the City to the Hawkesbury to give her children a better lifestyle. Carol is a life member of the Hawkesbury Historical Society and a regular contributor to their newsletter. A member of the Hawkesbury Regional Museum curating team, Carol still assists the museum on a weekly basis as a volunteer consultant. Over the years Carol has been guest speaker to many diverse groups, such as the Australian Garden History Society, various Historical Societies, Museums and the U3A.</p>	 <p>Rebecca Turnbull (also see above)</p>

Remembering Daphne

By Jan Barkley-Jack

10 February 2020

Daphne Kingston's passion and love for old buildings is well-known around the Hawkesbury River area and other historic Sydney settlements, because her sketches of these cherished buildings are detailed, enduring and inspiring. They record the homes and farms of the ordinary settlers who were our pioneers and ancestors. They have hung in gallery exhibitions all over Sydney and her valuable photographic record of the changing fortunes of those same buildings gave a new perspective and record of what was happening to vernacular buildings over the latter decades of the twentieth century and the early 2000s. Thoughtfully Daphne donated much of this record to Hawkesbury Library and Hawkesbury Museum.

I first met Daphne in her 'artist' mode when she produced her initial charming book of sketches of vernacular wooden buildings in this district in the late 1970s. I saw a copy of the book advertised, and instantly rang her number which she had furnished inside the book for orders. She offered to bring my copy with her on a tour she was doing of the Hawkesbury, so we met up briefly. She was a quietly smiling, sunny and generous person and as I met her over the years again and again at history functions we became firm friends.

When Ian Jack, my late husband and I got together, we discovered that Daphne was a treasured part of our shared worlds, although Ian had known Daphne a little longer than me. So more and more we enjoyed her company as a couple. Daphne was always sending us cuttings about a whole series of early buildings which she knew intimately from her sketches and which works kept flowing into several more books. Keeping track of the slab cottages and barns throughout Sydney, but particularly in the Hawkesbury, became Daphne's mission, as they aged and increasingly became neglected and some were unloved. Regularly she would tour around and do drive-bys of each of them, keeping note of those under threat and urging all of her friends to get involved in saving them.

In 1988, when I was in charge of the European Bicentenary projects of the school at which I was teaching, one was to be a very large mural of the progress of the district over its life stages, of which every child was to paint a portion. Daphne became an eager and generous participant in the project, sketching authentically from pictures, the early farming landscape the middle scene would present. She brought to life the farm built by Governor King's grandson, John King Lethbridge of 'Tregear' for the children, whose school was built in its paddocks; and when duly painted, it graced the assembly hall walls for all to see.

Microscopic mould stuck me in a devastating world of chronic fatigue, limiting me sometimes to bed or a wheelchair for months at a time, over many years, yet

Daphne always visited when in the district and would relate her adventures and her current enthusiasms. Hers was a wonderful, empathetic friendship, which I valued very much. Finally, when it was discovered what was causing my problems, and I recovered, Daphne was driving less, so Ian and I would go across to her and picnic and talk endlessly. We kept in touch when Daphne went to New Zealand to live near her daughter. Daphne died on 30 October 2019, just short of her 91st birthday and only weeks after Ian.

In 2016, at one of Daphne's last gallery exhibitions at the National Trust of Australia (NSW)'s 'Erwin Gallery', Ian Jack gave the introduction and it is reprinted here in memory of Daphne and her work for heritage.

Ian said:

For forty years Daphne Kingston has improved my life. I first got to know Daphne in 1976, when Maureen Byrne and I devised an Adult Education class at the University of Sydney which studied the colonial archaeology of the Upper Hawkesbury valley. The enthusiastic group which formed in 1976 became a legend in the world of adult education, for after the three years of the course ended with a series of radio programmes early in 1980, two dozen of the participants chose to go on meeting regularly, to organise study trips to the Hawkesbury, to give lectures and to publish extensively, while playing a leading role in a number of local historical societies. And they did this for the next twenty-five years.

Daphne was a pivotal element in this remarkable group. Already a distinguished artist, she published a critically important book in 1979. This book, *The Changing Hawkesbury*, contained 60 exquisite drawings of vernacular houses and barns in the valley, executed between 1977 and 1979, and carefully dated so that the images remain a practical resource for the historian as well as an aesthetic delight. This was Daphne's first pictorial record for posterity.

She added to this book of drawings, the first, and still the only, bibliography of art works representing the Hawkesbury from 1788 until 1938, arranged chronologically and scrupulously annotated. Her own drawings are worthy successors to the works of Conrad Martens or Ure Smith or Julian Ashton, at whose famous Art School she had studied.

When a book was produced containing the radio programmes of 1980, Daphne not only wrote the section on slab barns but also provided the most charming of small illustrations for every chapter. I kept all the pen-and-ink originals and they are now a valued acquisition at the Caroline Simpson Library down at The Mint.

Daphne had a profound affection for the modest colonial scene in the County of Cumberland, but,

as she showed in her *Hawkesbury Sketchbook* of 1994, she was eclectic and did not flinch from painting great buildings, like St Matthew's Anglican Church in Windsor or Philip Charley's Belmont Park. She was even prepared to do her own inimitable take on Streeton's 'The Purple Noon's Transparent Might'.

Already, nine years before, Daphne had published a much more specialised work, *Early Slab Buildings of the Sydney Region*, with 100 meticulous, dated images of the most vulnerable vernacular structures. Few of us can give a precise date to these buildings, but we and our successors can all know what they looked like between 1977 and 1985. Just as she did in *Sydney's Hidden Charms* in 1987, showing 135 suburban charmers from corner shops to a James Barnet police station; and as she did in 1999 in her *Highways and By-Ways of the Sydney Region*, with leaning barns and evocative ruins among another 70 pencil drawings.

In these six books Daphne has published no fewer than 455 of her topographical drawings. All of them are identified with precise locations, comment on their context and relevant historical information. This is only a part of her dedicated output over the last forty years: there are also other genres, but others can speak of these with more authority than I can.

It is, however, immensely important to recognise that throughout this long period of creative drawing and painting, she was also making a photographic record in colour slide and black-and-white print of an extraordinary number of colonial buildings, many of which were under threat. All the photographs were identified and precisely dated; many are of small details and some are of interiors of ruinous structures. Daphne and I have always shared an impatience with restrictive laws of trespass when a doomed building is crying out for help.

Daphne's dedication and pertinacity have been as extraordinary as her artistic gifts. Her portfolio has centred on the Hawkesbury, but is by no means limited to that region, as this exhibition shows. Over decades, week in, week out, Daphne has travelled the byways of the early settlement in her comfortable old Rover. She has cajoled owners and occupiers, braved cows and bulls, sheep and irascible dogs. She has developed an enviable expertise in vernacular architecture.

And all the time she has retained a social conscience and a practical common-sense. For she

and I, like the Historic Houses Association, know that there is a finite life for many structures. In her *Highways and By-Ways* Daphne quoted a poem by Tennyson, which ends:

Come away: no more of mirth
Is here or merry-making sound
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.

In fact, Daphne seldom drew a *pisé* building, but she knew that wood and brick shall also 'fall again to ground' and that it should be recorded before it falls. Her magnificent corpus of topographical art, supplemented by a complementary collection of photographs and press-cuttings, is a life's work which any artist, historian, archivist or curator, would be proud to acknowledge. I am delighted that this exhibition has been mounted, delighted that Daphne is able to be present and I thank her with all my heart for forty years of friendship.



Other tributes to Daphne Kingston

Extracts from another talk given by Ian Jack at the Regional Hawkesbury Gallery in 2018.

On another occasion, Ian repeated much of his first talk, but added important details to further highlight the valuable contribution Daphne's artworks and photographs have made to the Hawkesbury district. It may be of interest to those of you who own Daphne's books or who browse regularly in Windsor Library. Perhaps it may encourage you to re-visit Daphne's legacy.

In these extracts Ian re-visits his happy days with the 'Class of 77' and Maureen Burn, an archaeologist, who became his partner before her tragic death soon after.

Ian explained:

Daphne's Changing Hawkesbury is not just a book of drawings. It is also the first, and still the only, bibliography of art works representing the Hawkesbury from 1788 until 1938, arranged chronologically and scrupulously annotated. This list of drawings and paintings is an absolutely essential reference work for the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery and also for the Friends of Hawkesbury Art Community and Regional Gallery who have been instrumental in collecting so much important local material like the Clint Collection. Daphne's own drawings are worthy successors to the works not just of Ure Smith but also of Conrad Martens, the doyen of 19th-century topographical artists.

Some things in *The Changing Hawkesbury* have disappeared: the boat under the barn in Wilberforce (p.45) and the three-chimney slab house there (p.47). The blacksmith's shop outside Pitt Town (p.23), still in use in the 1980s, is now derelict. The Chinese market-gardener's house on McGraths flats (pp.14-15) has only a few uprights left today.

But there are happy stories too. Stannix Park at Ebenezer, shown as a sad semi-ruin in *The Changing Hawkesbury* and on the cover of *A Colonial Scene*, was soon to be bought by Max and Lorna Hatherly and splendidly conserved by Clive Lucas, and the ‘Class of 77’ often met there in the 1990s to enjoy the Hatherly’s hospitality.

Daphne had published a much more specialised work, *Early Slab Buildings of the Sydney Region*, with 100 meticulous, dated images of the most vulnerable vernacular structures. It is a splendid addendum to Graham and Carol Edds’ subsequent study of slab barns in Hawkesbury City. And it holds small surprises. For example, on p.63 Daphne meticulously shows the magnificent barn called Pittsmoor which still has an arresting presence on Pitt Town Bottoms Road. To one’s surprise, she shows that many of the vertical slabs on the front were missing in 1985, while the wooden ramp leading up to the open door of the loft is intact. If you drop in at Pittsmoor today, you will find that the slabs have all been replaced, but the ramp had been allowed to become impassable while the loft door is securely shut. Who would have guessed?

By contrast, the fine barn with a big external stone chimney shown opposite on p.62 has gone without trace from Pitt Town Bottoms Road. I have mixed memories of that house-barn, because forty-

two years ago Maureen and I drove in there and we were out of the car chatting amiably to the old lady who still lived there when her cattle dog just hurtled out and was pulled up short by its chain just 10 centimetres from my leg. Daphne’s books have all sorts of overtones.

As in all her books, some of the features shown in the *Hawkesbury Sketchbook* have since disappeared. At the very end (p.79), there is a coloured view of the Anglican Church in Church Lane, Castlereagh: but the church bell which many of us remember so well hanging in the nearby tree and which Daphne makes sure we do not miss in her painting, is no longer a feature of the charming 1878 church. On p.39 there is a view of one of the high barns along Pitt Town Bottoms Road: already in disrepair in 1994, only a few gaunt uprights now survive. On the other hand, the view on p.44 of St Joseph’s Catholic Church on the Macdonald River records its ruined state before it was restored to its present happier condition.

Daphne’s final publication came in 1999 in an edition of only 500, each numbered. It is nostalgic. Entitled *Highways and By-Ways of the Sydney*

Region, its 70 pencil drawings, all done in 1997, 1998 or 1999, are arranged in wandering circuit of Daphne’s favourite places in Sydney suburbs, the Hawkesbury, the Nepean and the Cowpastures, with leaning barns and evocative ruins. Some of the items have gone since 1999, not least the fine slab hut at Agnes Banks on the Springwood road (p.54-55). This iconic hut was also shown in happier state in her 1985 sketch in *Early Slab Buildings* (p.76). But on the other hand some dilapidated buildings shown in *Highways and By-Ways*, like the barns at Bona Vista in Pitt Town (p.40), have been given a new lease of life. Life is not all doom and despair.

In my introduction to this 1999 book, I described Daphne’s drawings as themselves highly significant heritage items. The recognition of her work accorded by such bodies as the Heritage Office of New South Wales [now the Heritage Division- additional note by Jan: now Heritage

NSW], the Historic Houses Trust [now Sydney Living Museums and the Historic Houses Association of Australia] or the Royal Australian Historical Society is a reflection of Daphne’s role in awakening an informed consciousness of a whole category of neglected heritage. (p.7).



Ian and Daphne, c. 2017.

There is one other work that I should like to

highlight, one that no one else has seen. It is this volume of 35 original pencil drawings by Daphne. She prepared it as a surprise present for me in 1986. All the drawings were done in 1985 or 1986. It is an omnium gatherum of scenes meaningful to us both in a variety of ways. It begins with drawings of details of my flat at St Andrew’s College, built by Sir John Sulman in 1892. Then there are two splendid details at Bella Vista farm, followed by the Hessian slab house at Nelson to which I took the Historic Houses Association party enroute to the opening of this exhibition on 29 July. Then slab huts at Agnes Banks and Castlereagh, followed by the Castlereagh Anglican church bell up the tree and some other wooden houses in that area.

Changing direction, Daphne then made meticulous pencil copies of sepia pen and wash drawings of the Hawkesbury done in the 1840s by W.A. Mills, an illegitimate son of King William IV. The volume then concludes with lovely drawings of details of the grotto at Elizabeth Bay House, a stone house on the Macdonald and finally sketches of Iron Age houses in Denmark. ■

Bicentennial
3-4 October
2020

Macquarie Schoolhouse

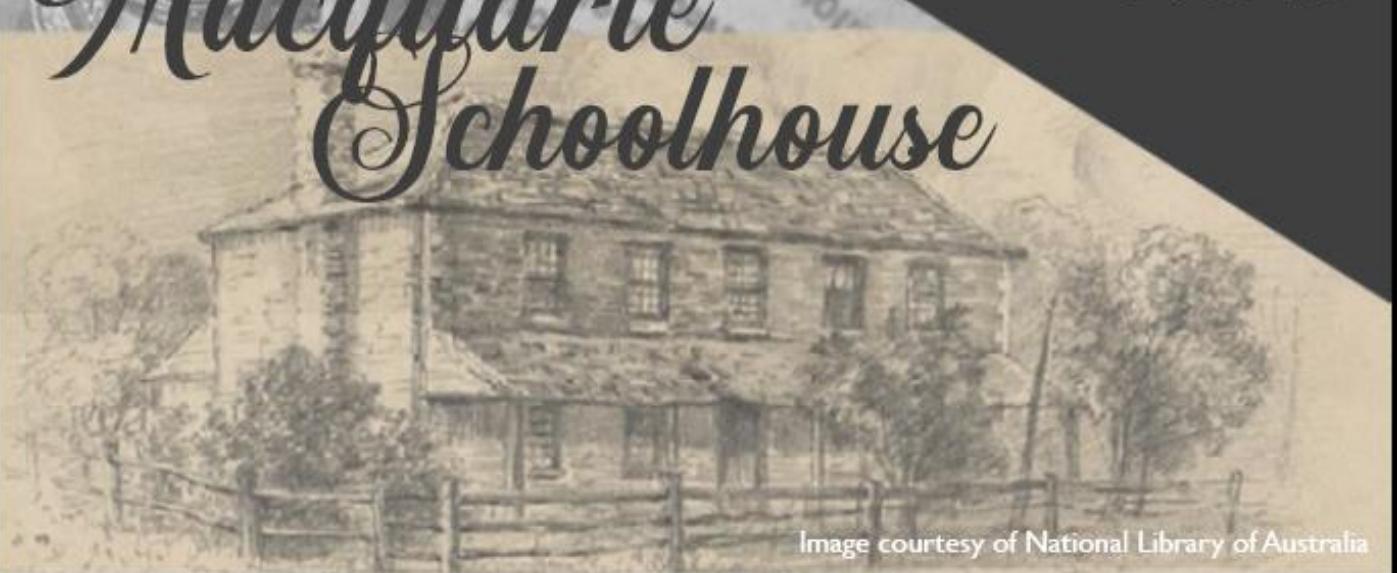


Image courtesy of National Library of Australia

**Enjoy this historic weekend on the grounds of
St John's Anglican Church,
43 Macquarie Rd, Wilberforce**

Saturday

10am - 3pm

- Food stalls
- Live performances
- Kids activities
- Local and family history stalls
- Historical displays
- Church and graveyard tours

7pm

- Movie - Amazing Grace

Sunday

9.30am

- Commemorative service with speaker Dr. John Dickson
 - Morning tea
- 1pm**
- Gow family reunion

www.macquarieschoolhouse.com.au

The Murder of Mary Ann Wright

By Rebecca Turnbull

When at the tender age of just five years old, Mary Ann Turnbull journeyed to the Colony of NSW on the ship *Coromandel* in 1802 with her parents John and Ann Turnbull, older brother Ralph and younger siblings James and Jessica, no one could estimate that a bloody end was in store for her.

The Turnbull family settled on the banks of the Hawkesbury River at Portland Head (Ebenezer) on 100 acres. John and Ann had three more sons and proved to be industrious in the production of pigs and peaches.

Life carried on for the Turnbull family, their eldest son Ralph married into the neighbouring Cavanough Family (he married the daughter of First Fleeters - Owen Cavanough and Margaret Darnell) and next at 17 years of age, Mary Ann married soldier Joseph Hartley, a Private in the 73rd Regiment. They married at St Matthews Church of England in Windsor on 22 December 1813 (Mary Ann signed while Joseph marked with an X). The 73rd Regiment had arrived in Sydney on 1 January 1810 with the Governor Lachlan Macquarie and took over duties from the New South Wales Corps (102nd Regiment).

Early in 1814, shortly after their marriage, the 73rd's tour of duty in the Colony of NSW and Van Diemen's Land concluded, Joseph was posted to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Mary Ann accompanied him. They sailed to Ceylon on the ship the *General Hewitt* on 6 April 1814. While there Mary Ann gave birth to their son James, but sadly only 6 months later in Colombo on 21 November 1814, her husband Joseph died suddenly from illness. (Most deaths in the regiment during its tour of duty in Ceylon were from tropical diseases rather than military combat).

Far away in Ceylon, a widow with a small child, and still only 19 years of age, Mary Ann had no option but to return to her parent's farm on the Hawkesbury. She returned in late 1815 after a disastrous return journey on the ship the *Kangaroo* which had unscheduled delays and stops and took 170 days from Ceylon to Port Jackson (previous journey's had taken only 117 days).

On her return, a grief stricken Mary Ann struck up a relationship with one of the convict workers on her father's farm -James Wright. James had arrived on

the convict transport *Indian* in December 1810, he had been sentenced to life for horse stealing, later commuted to transportation. He had been selected as an assigned convict by John Turnbull to assist with horse breaking and had arrived at the farm at Portland Head mid-1814, after Mary Ann had left. This dalliance resulted in a pregnancy and a hastily ordered marriage. Mary Ann married James Wright on 11 November 1816 again at St Matthews Church of England, signing her name as Mary Hartley and again her husband with an X.

Their child Jane was born a few months later on 23 March 1817, then followed Thomas in 1821, and Mary Ann in 1822. Evidence points to James Wright reoffending in some capacity and spending time at Newcastle between births of their first and second children.

Mary Ann and James set up their own farm on land leased from William Everingham, which was next door to Mary Ann's older brother Ralph and his wife and family on the First Branch of the Hawkesbury River (now known as the Colo River). James had received his ticket of leave and their farm had 7 acres under wheat, 5 under maize, half an acre potatoes and half an acre of orchard, but things were not as peaceful as they seemed.

On the morning of 5 February 1825, the eldest son James Hartley cried out to their nearest neighbours that his mother was killed, and that father had run away.

The following is an account of the event from the Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser on 6 April 1825.

The following may be depended on as too true an account of the direful deed glanced at in our last:—On Saturday morning, the 5th Feb, between 8 and 9 in the morning, a most barbarous murder was committed on the body of Mrs. Wright, a daughter of Mr. Turnbull's, Portland-head, by her husband.—This dreadful event took place in their own house, on the first branch of the River Hawkesbury. The first notice of it was given by one of the children. On entering the house a shocking scene presented itself. The woman was lying on the floor covered over with the bed, bathed with gore, and quite speechless. On examination she was found to have received several mortal fractures upon the head, besides several bruises in other parts of the body. The axe, which had been the instrument of inflicting these wounds, was lying, at a little distance covered with blood and hair. Medical aid was procured with the utmost despatch; but it was unavailing—the poor

woman died on Monday. On the Coroner's Inquest it was ascertained that the woman, as well as her husband, had been seen only a few minutes before the deed was perpetrated. The children had been sent to their customary employments; the eldest, a boy, to mind the pigs; the second, a girl, to frighten away the cockatoos from the maize, who had also to nurse the youngest child, an infant about a year old. There was only this difference; that the father sent away the least boy with some bread to his elder brother, which was an unusual thing. There was no evidence of any domestic quarrel either that morning, or the preceding night; nor of the intoxication of either of the parties.— Some conversation, however, of rather a singular nature, occurred on Friday evening. The woman, on telling her son that she should go with him in the morning to the place where he took the pigs, that she might get some peaches, added—"If I live till the morning, for I may die, or I may be killed;" on which her husband said—"Killed! Why, who is to kill you if I do not?". She replied, "No, there is no one to kill me if you don't." The Coroner's Inquest was wilful murder against the husband; who has not yet been found, though several persons think they have seen him prowling about in the neighbourhood. By others it is conjectured, as he took his razors with him, that he has destroyed himself.

James Wright aware of the gravity of his actions went on the run but he hid in the nearby bush of the area, presumably to find out what had happened to the children, maybe perhaps thinking he would find sympathisers in the local community. But this was not the case and he was apprehended 16 days later by Thomas Gardiner another convict, who ended up receiving a ticket of leave for his part in apprehending the perpetrator.

Mary Ann survived for two days before succumbing to her fatal injuries. She was buried next to her mother in St Johns Church of England cemetery at Wilberforce.

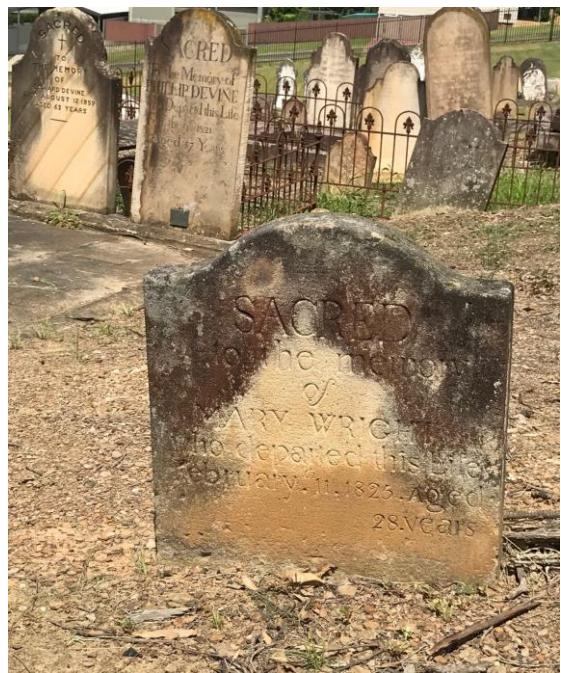
The murder trial was held in the Supreme Court of NSW on 20 May 1825. Witnesses were called including Major West the surgeon who attended to Mary Ann's injuries, John Howe the coroner, and James Hartley at just 11 years old.

As reported in the Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser on Thursday 2 June 1825:

James Wright was indicted for the wilful murder of his wife, Mary Ann Wright, in the district of the Hawkesbury, on the 5th of February last.

It appeared in evidence, that the improper conduct of the deceased had been a constant source of disquiet to the unfortunate man; and was eventually the cause of his committing the dreadful act, for which he stood his trial. He confessed to the Magistrate, after he was apprehended, that having had reason to suspect the deceased of an adulterous intercourse with a man named Cavanagh, he spoke to her on the subject, when she told him that—"he knew she had been common both before and since he married her, and that she would be so to any man she pleased;"—in the unguarded impulse of the moment, he seized an axe which was at hand, and committed the dreadful act, which deprived the wretched victim of existence. He declared, that he had no desire to escape from justice, and only absconded for the purpose of gaining time to pray to God for forgiveness.—He was described by William Cox, Esq. a Magistrate at Windsor, who had known him for some years, to have been a quiet industrious man, somewhat irritable in temper, and of quick and sensitive feelings.—No defence being set up, the Jury returned a verdict, without retiring, of guilty.— Sentenced to die on Monday; on which day the unhappy but penitent man expiated his direful offence by the untimely forfeiture of his life. May such awful exits be attended with lasting benefits to that society which crime has thus ignominiously deprived of another member!

James Wright died on 30 May 1825 executed to the scaffold for the murder of his wife.



And what of the children who had now became orphans?

James Hartley went to live at Portland Head with his grandfather and uncles including Uncle Bligh

(William Bligh Turnbull) who was only 5 years older than him. He married Jane Armstrong of Wilberforce at Pitt Town in 1830 going on to have 11 children, the last when he was 57 years old!

Jane Wright lived with fellow Coromandel settlers James and Jane Davison (nee Johnston) on their farm. Jane married William Douglas from Richmond just after her 14th birthday. She went on to have 10 children and lived until she was 81 years old.

Thomas Wright went to live with his Uncle George Turnbull after his parents deaths. At 14 he was

sentenced to cattle stealing but due to his young age was saved from transportation. He never married and died in 1868.

The youngest of Mary Ann and James Wright's children was Mary Ann who was just 1 year old when her mother was brutally murdered. She was taken into the care of her Uncle Ralph and his wife Grace (nee Cavanough) who lived on the adjacent farm from where her mother was killed. She married Joseph Yates in Wilberforce in 1839 and went on to have 11 children. ■

Did you know?

Ex-convict and Hawkesbury Inn keeper, John Harris, who had been praised for his earlier work as a Sydney policeman, became a radical who supported the ideas of the French Revolution in Hawkesbury by 1798. His inn was practically on the site of the present Windsor Court House. His corn grew in the dip between the inn and the Government House and when the pigs of Anthony Fenn Kemp, the Commandant, began eating it, Harris set his dogs after them. This was a brave move, because Kemp was known for his temper. One of Harris' favourite phrases, being a supporter of the 'Rights of Man' in 1798 was that 'he was free and a Citizen of the World – if he was not free of this Country he was free of Aldgate [prison]'. This threw Fenn Kemp, the Commandant, into a rage and he illegally imprisoned Harris in the watch-house in Thompson Square. Harris became the first ex-convict to take an officer to Court in NSW and Harris won his case. This gave ex-convicts firmer ground to claim their rights, and made Hawkesbury the home of the 'fair go'. [John Harris against A. F. Kemp, CIV, May-June 1799, SRNSW, CY1093 evidence: p. 47 Samuel Marsden 10.6.1799].

Contemporary view (below) from ex-convict John Harris' 1798 lease to the site of the Commandant's house (the Government House). This is where the Harris' corn was planted and where Harris had the audacity to set his dogs on the Commandant's pigs.



Mr Alfred Perry, Richmond tailor, whose house is now in the Australiana Pioneer Village at Wilberforce, was a Councillor and that the Magnolia tree outside Magnolia Mall in Richmond was planted by Mr Perry?

[Australian Pioneer Village submission for State Heritage Listing]

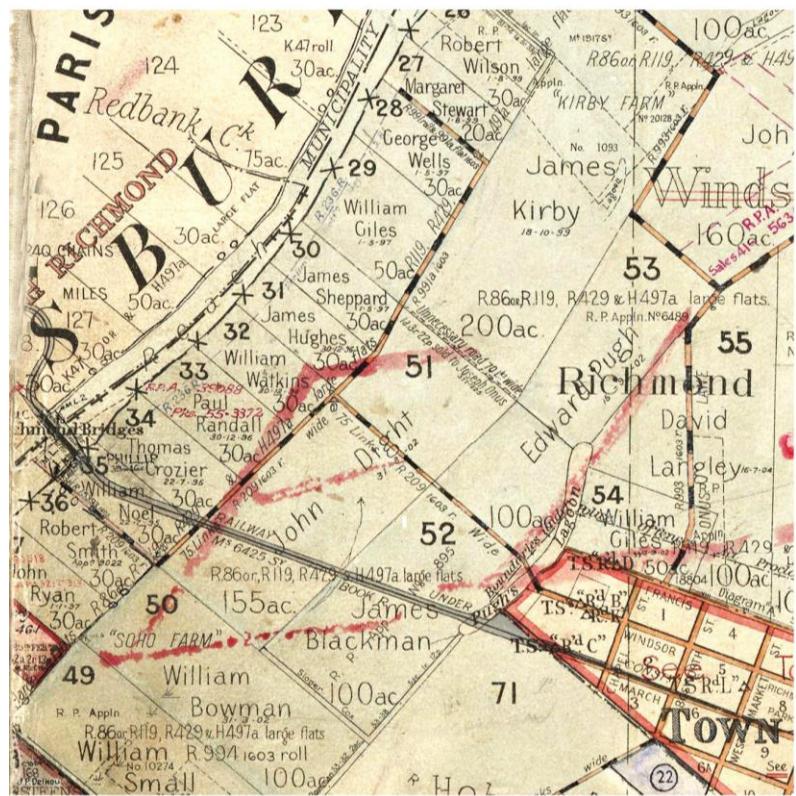
Hawkesbury district had at least three midwives by 1802? Sarah Cobcroft was living in the area of present-day Wilberforce by 1794, Ann Blady settled by 1797 in the South Creek area and Margaret Catchpole came to the Richmond Hill District (which district covered both sides of the river from Richmond Hill itself to Cornwallis) by 1802. All were respected in their communities for their roles supporting women giving birth on the frontier.

The wedding of 20-year-old Elen Ferguson to Joseph Suffolk, a widowed English migrant, was just one of 15 conducted in St Matthew's Anglican Church in 1839. Nothing marked it as special at the time. Elen and Joseph moved to the South Coast where they farmed, cut cedar and raised six children. But for us today it has become special, for Elen's blue-green silk wedding gown survives. Hand-made, it had piping on the plunging waistline narrow ruffled sleeves, a boned bodice and a full gathered skirt. For 180 years Elen's family has cherished and kept her gown and today, amazingly you can see it for yourself. It is on display in the Hawkesbury Regional Museum, Baker Street, Windsor.

Did you know?

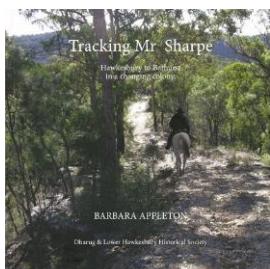
Ham Common Map

Six settlers were definitely given farms in the vicinity of today's Richmond in 1794, the first year of settlement at the upper Hawkesbury River, by Acting Governor Grose. They were James Hughes (Atlantic 1791), William Watkins (either William and Anne, 1791 or Pitt, 1792), Paul Randall (Admiral Barrington 1791), James Shepherd (Pitt, 1792), John Ryan (Neptune) and William Giles (Pitt 1792). What has confused people about this up until now is that none received their documents of registration until 1796 or 1797. However, it is possible that Thomas Cozier, William Noel, Robert Smith, Robert Weathers, James Thomas, William Reynolds and William Rowe were also promised land on the Richmond Lowlands in 1794. There is uncertainty because the six had already registered their land when Governor Hunter began listing those who remained unregistered. So it is probably, but unprovable, that present-day Richmond began with almost the entire Upper Reach south bank being promised for farms during 1794, the same year that the earliest Windsor-Pitt Town grants were promised.



The earliest Richmond 1794 grants shown on the Ham Parish map, County of Cumberland, NSW Land Registry Services, PMap MN 03, Sheet 1, 14091401.

UPCOMING AT - HAWKESBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM



TRACKING MR SHARPE

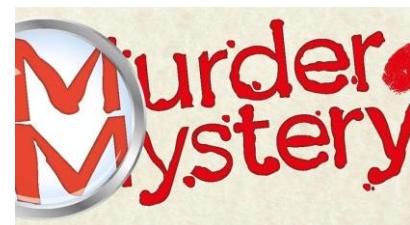
Saturday 29 February 2-4pm

Author Barbara Appleton talks about her new book 'Tracking Mr Sharpe' which explores Bathurst to Hawkesbury in a changing colony. Hear about the diaries of the Rev. Thomas Sharpe and what life was like in the colonies in the 1830s. **FREE ENTRY.** All Welcome. Refreshments provided.

RIVERSIDE MURDER MYSTERY DINNER

Friday 13 March 7-9pm

The old inn at Thompson Square looks a right friendly place to quaff your rum and eat your victuals, but beware! Dark passions stir in the hearts of all you meet, and crimes abound throughout the colony.



Help us solve these evil deeds- theft and fraud and murder most foul – in the midst of the Rum Rebellion and under threat of the 1809 flood. You can wear your Regency outfits, military redcoats, broad arrowed smock and all, as you turn historical detective – looking, listening, and ever seeking the truth. Just remember – all storytellers are liars.

\$80 – BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Dinner and drinks provided. 18+ only. Notify us of any dietary requirements on booking.

TALK – The 10 Plagues of Sydney

Saturday 21 March 2-4pm

For years the settlement of Sydney was protected from epidemics by the buffer of distance. But more ships brought diseases. Over the decades we have faced these ‘plagues’ and the consequent panic. But learnt from these mistakes? Come along to this attention-grabbing presentation to find out more.

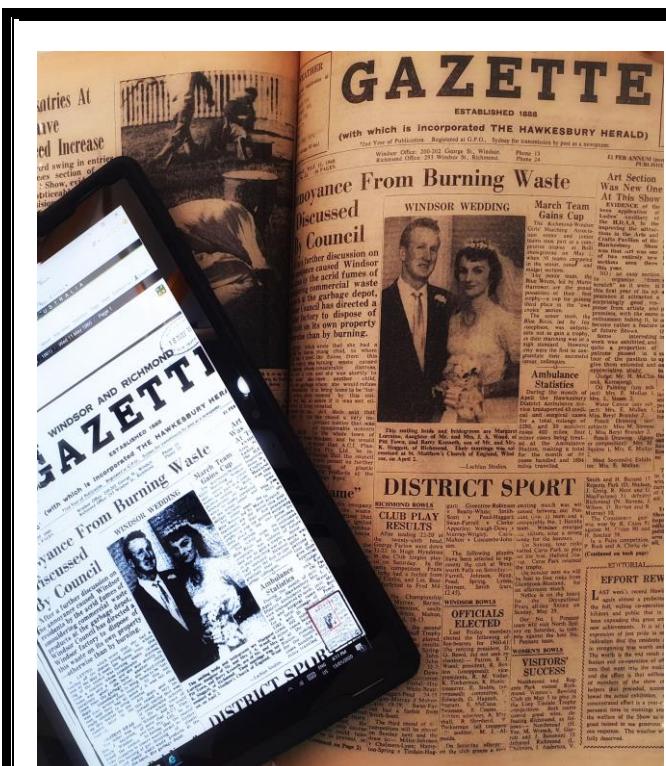
\$5 – BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Refreshments provided.

CANDLELIT TOUR

Friday 17 April 6-7.30pm

Discover Howe House by candle light and hear local tales of death by fire, flood, knife and pestilence, of opportunities seized, and hopes dashed, of multiple marriages, true love, and past lives kept secret until now. But be warned because these are true stories!

\$25 per person –12 years and over. **BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL.**



Hawkesbury City Council
media release

Tuesday, 14 January 2020

More local newspapers online

More local Hawkesbury newspapers were recently added to Trove newspapers, an extensive collection of digitised historical Australian newspapers. Information located from newspapers is often unique and not found anywhere else. They are an important source for both local and family history research.

Collaborating with the National Library of Australia, Hawkesbury Library Service scanned and digitised further issues of the Windsor & Richmond Gazette as part of the Trove newspaper project. The dates originally covered 1888 to 1955 and have now been extended to 1961 and cover events within ‘living memory’. The Windsor & Richmond Gazette, now known as Hawkesbury Gazette, was established in 1888 and is the longest running newspaper in the district.

Trove provides access to over 18.5 million pages from more than 1000 Australian newspapers and is freely accessible online at <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/> The latest additions complement existing holdings of local Hawkesbury newspapers on Trove, as follows:

- Australian: Windsor, Richmond & Hawkesbury Advertiser 1873 - 1899
- Hawkesbury Advocate 1899 - 1900
- Hawkesbury Chronicle 1881 - 1888
- Hawkesbury Courier 1844 - 1846
- Hawkesbury Herald 1902-1945 (Incomplete)
- Windsor Express 1843 - 1844

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