

PENSHURST RSL TRAVEL CLUB

EBENEZER CHURCH THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2022



Weather was fine, but there was to be the odd heavy shower during the day. 24 of us, plus Malcolm our driver, departed Penshurst at 8.30 am. For the first time (and probably the last), our coach was able to drive straight out of Connelly Street onto Forest Road! Ah, the delight of school holidays, although traffic further on was as usual.

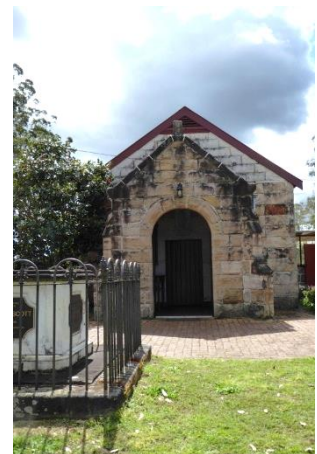
After passing through Beverly Hills, it took some time before we turned left onto the M4, then to Richmond Road. Malcolm explained the new development in the area - Elara, originally an old dairy farm - was soon to be home to 50,000 residents. Fortunately, the property's original homestead is protected from demolition.

We'd arrived in Windsor by 9.45, driving over the new(ish) Windsor Bridge, to be greeted by several turf farms which appear to be gradually replacing vegetable produce. There's more money in turf apparently. At Wilberforce, we turned right at The Australiana Pioneer Village for the short ride to Ebenezer and the Church. Here, we were greeted by some lovely ladies and Ted Brill, our guide, who gave us time to wander the pretty grounds and some very old graves on the banks of the Hawkesbury, before we were rounded up for a delicious Devonshire Tea (proper scones and genuine cream) and piping hot tea/coffee in an outbuilding called The Pavilion. These people were so welcoming and nothing was too much trouble.



Inside the church, a beautifully built, plain stone structure, Ted Brill gave a talk on its beginnings which are too extensive to write about here. In brief, a few families who came from the border region of England/Scotland, but were working and living in London, emigrated to Australia in 1802. In 1803, these pioneers were settled on 100-acre grants of land along the Hawkesbury River in the area now known as Ebenezer. They and seven other families in the district, all of different denominations, joined together in worship with

the first service held either outdoors or in one of their homes in 1803. In 1808, it was agreed to build a church and school, and the small congregation with limited financial resources banded together to raise over £400. It was ready in 1809 with one room used as the church and the other as a classroom. In 1824, it became the first Presbyterian Church in the colony and these days it is the oldest existing church in Australia, holding regular services, weddings and baptisms as a Uniting Church. More information is available from Ted's extensive 32-page book 'The History of Ebenezer' which many of us purchased.



After a little more free time, we headed back over the Windsor Bridge to Pitt Town and the heritage-listed Bird in the Hand Inn for a two-course lunch. However, none of us were particularly hungry after those scones!! However, we managed to devour their plentiful meals of sausages, mash & peas/fish & chips with cake and tea/coffee to follow. A few beers and wines were enjoyed also. Outside, we attempted to take photos of the pub (apparently constructed in the late 1840s), but weren't terribly successful due to parked vehicles and vegetation restricting the view. Afterwards, Malcolm treated us to a cook's tour of Pitt Town, passing their quaint old

Anglican Church which the Travel Club visited some years back.

On the way home, we travelled through Box Hill (selling its new prestigious estate, Hills of Carmel, plus the adjoining suburb of Gables), Rouse Hill, Bella Vista, Camellia and Rosehill Gardens.

Two members received Lucky Seat prizes, and we were back in Penshurst by 3.30 pm. A very relaxing and pleasant day!