

NEWSLETTER

The Friends of St. John's Stroud Inc

September 2009

Patrons:

The Rt Revd Brian Farran
Dr Jonathan King
Mr E C (Ted) Merewether



Cowper visitors with Jonathan and Jane King (second and third from right) outside Stroud House

Friends join in Country Fair

St John's Church will be bright with flowers on the Labour Day holiday weekend. Joining in the Stroud Country Fair on the Saturday 3 and Sunday, 4 October, the Friends are organising a competitive floral arrangement display. Members of the Friends will also be offering guided tours of the church to the many visitors expected in Stroud on both days.

The fair organisers' aim is to "celebrate and promote the local community, its people and produce". They intend Stroud to offer a main street lined with market stalls, music in the open, special events for children, open gardens, and a mock trial in the old courthouse. On Saturday morning the St John's parish will present a Teddy Bears' Picnic for children in the church grounds, an event linked to a school art contest. On Sunday afternoon local and visiting performers will give a concert in the School of Arts.

There will be services in St John's on both days of the fair:

Saturday 3 Oct
Eucharist 5 pm

Sunday 4 Oct
Morning Prayer 8.30 am

Family honours life of first St John's rector

To mark 200 years since the Revd William Cowper arrived in New South Wales, 50 members of the family he founded in Australia gathered in St John's Church on 1 August. They came to remember and give thanks for the work of his son, William Macquarie Cowper, first Australian-born Anglican priest and first rector of St John's (1836-1856).

The Cowpers' Stroud visit was the first of a series of events in August celebrating the achievements of the senior Cowper and the influence of his descendants in the nation's church, political, legal, military and business life. William Cowper came from Whittington, Lancashire, to serve as assistant colonial chaplain. As Australia's first parish clergyman, he served as rector of St Philip's, Sydney, for 49 years. At a civic thanksgiving service at St Philip's, Archbishop Peter Jensen described him as "a sensational nation builder", pivotal in institutions such as the Benevolent Society and Bible Society and valiant for truth and love towards the aboriginal people at a time when "extermination and murder were practised".

Stroud's W. M. Cowper was born to William Cowper's second wife Ann Barrell in Sydney in 1810. After private education in Sydney his father sent him to England to prepare for ordination. He came to Stroud in 1836 as chaplain to the Australian Agricultural Company and stayed as Stroud's minister for 20 years.

On moving to Sydney he accepted temporary appointment as acting principal of the newly-formed Moore theological college. He enrolled as the first students three men who had formerly been his pupils at the parsonage in Stroud. He went on to be Dean of Sydney, a post he held for 44 years until his death in 1902.

In St John's on 1 August, the Revd Pam Fraser, 21st successor to W. M. Cowper as Stroud's parish priest, spoke of the faith learned within his family that sustained his remarkable ministry, and the faith that has helped the Cowper family to stay and work together.

Speaking of families as blessings, she said: "We remember and give thanks for the lives of those who have built this community, especially William Macquarie Cowper and those who have formed our families and made us who we are today."

After the service the family members walked across the rectory garden that W. M. Cowper knew so well to the RSL Memorial Hall in Church Lane. Here members of the Friends of St John's served lunch.

In welcoming the guests, the Friends' president, Daphne Dobbyn, recalled the valuable help given by the Cowper family in the founding of the Friends in 1996, including the use of the Cowper mailing list in recruiting members.

Numbers of the visitors were intrigued by the Friends' display of note cards in the hall showing the Stroud of Cowper's time as depicted by Conrad Martens. They found special significance in the wide water colour picture which includes rectory, church and schoolhouse (now Quambi museum), the heart of Stroud in the mid 19th century as they still are today.

Most of the party later walked along Cowper Street to Stroud House, another landmark of Cowper's time, where they were welcomed by the owners, Jonathan and Jane King. The Australian Agricultural company built Stroud House for senior officers. Jonathan's great grandfather, Philip Gidley King, appointed superintendent at Stroud in 1842, lived there for a number of years.



After the Cowper service Mrs Jennifer Cleary (nee Cullen), of Canberra stands beside the gravestone of her great great grandmother, Sarah Elizabeth White.

Stroud conservation fund moves ahead

From the president:

The Friends are making steady progress towards our objective of a Stroud Heritage Conservation Trust to give long-term support to conservation and restoration.

While the formal structure has still to be put in place, contributions to our interim trust fund account now total \$55,000. The Australian Agricultural Company sent \$25,000 in May as first instalment of a promised \$50,000. Last month we received a second contribution of \$10,000 from the Duralie Coal Mine Community Infrastructure Fund administered by Great Lakes Council. The Friends have paid the first \$10,000 of a \$50,000 commitment.

Two basic documents have been drawn up by Sparke Helmore Lawyers, of Newcastle, who are giving pro bono advice. The first is the deed under which the trust will receive and hold funds to generate income to help care for St John's Church, rectory and parish hall and for Quambi House, owned by Great Lakes Council. The second is a set of rules for a new incorporated body which will manage the trust as its trustee. Both have been approved by Great Lakes Council and the Diocese of Newcastle.

The accountants Ernst and Young, also advising us without fee, have been working through the documents with the Federal Treasury and the Australian Tax Office. They are seeking to ensure that the new incorporated body has tax-free charitable status and that the trust will be in a form that allows it to accept tax-deductible gifts. The trust will be formally brought into being once these issues have been settled.

We have had sympathetic advice from Treasury, an officer having been assigned to look at our case after representations by our Federal MP, Bob Baldwin.

Members will remember that we originally proposed to call the new fund body a foundation. We have now substituted "trust" in the title because the registering authorities reserve the term foundation for institutions much more substantial than ours.

Daphne Dobbyn

Growing up in Stroud

Beryl Bowden paints a vivid and affectionate picture of community and family life in Stroud, from the 1920s to the 1940s, in a newly published book, *Growing up in Stroud*. More than 100 were present for the launching at the Stroud School of Arts on 8 August. With its attention to details of a vanished era of simple pleasures (and some hardships), complemented by 100 photographs, the 128-page book will be valued long into the future for its contribution to Stroud's social history. Beryl was born in Stroud in 1925, youngest of the five daughters and one son of Leslie and Pattie Bourke. St John's has always been central to her life and some of her stories reflect this.

Growing up in Stroud, published under the imprint of Stroud Writers, Fellowship of Australian Writers, is available by writing to Beryl at 12 Church Street, Stroud, 2425. Price: \$15 plus \$4 p.p.



Rectory grant sought

The Friends deferred plans to restore damaged brickwork on the west and south walls of St John's Rectory on learning in May that we were not to receive a supporting grant from the NSW Heritage Office. Funds were sufficient to approve only 49 of the 117 applications under the 2009-2011 program. We were invited to try again late in 2010 when the next round of grants will be considered.

In July, however, George Souris, our State MP, pointed us to another possible new source of funding in the NSW Community Building Partnership. This scheme aims "to stimulate employment and the economy at a local level through the delivery of improved community facilities". Every State electorate is to receive \$300,000, with an extra \$100,000 for electorates with high unemployment rates. We have proposed \$20,000 worth of brickwork restoration, the cost to be equally shared by the Friends and the partnership program. A decision is due at the end of November.

Our heritage tourists

The Friends of St John's and the Stroud Historical Society have collaborated this year in giving two groups of travellers a memorable experience of Stroud's heritage.

Fifteen tourists from Brisbane, led by Isabel Bauer of Bauer Tours, spent most of 19 April in Stroud on their way to the Hunter Valley vineyards. They began with tours guided by the Historical Society of Stroud Courthouse and Quambi Museum, built in the 1830s as Lady Parry's School. Members of the Friends then took over to show them St John's Church and Stroud House, the old dwelling of senior AA Company officers. Next, on Listening Hill, above the village, the Friends provided lunch accompanied by a tasting of Mill Creek Vineyard wines.

Many of the visitors expressed surprise at finding an early settlement where so much of the original character had been preserved. Later, from Brisbane, came a letter of thanks describing Stroud as "Australia's best kept secret".

On 27 May some 90 participants in Gloucester's annual Veterans' Week of Golf took a day off from the course to be guided in Stroud by Friends and members of the historical society. After Quambi, St John's Church and the St John's graveyard they were guests of Helen Gillard for lunch at her Mill Creek Vineyard.



Martens card offer renewed

Many buyers of our Conrad Martens cards last Christmas sent word that they were delighted by the quality. Some sent repeat orders.

Because of this, in good time for Christmas 2009, the Friends are again offering these packs of notecards and Christmas cards. They carry reproductions of Stroud, drawn and painted by Martens in 1841 and 1852 at a time when he was Australia's foremost artist.

Conrad Martens works are among the treasures of the Mitchell Library in Sydney and form a priceless record of the colony during his lifetime. With the library's permission the Friends of St John's have reproduced these images on sets of cards to be sold to members and supporters to aid restoration funds.

The cards may be ordered blank inside for use as notecards or with the printed message: *May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you and yours through the coming year.*

The clear-packaged packs of the blank version make attractive small gifts.

Packs are ready for posting now. An order form is enclosed.

Committee

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Maureen Rivers
Tony Rivers
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Revd Pam Fraser, P-i-C
(ex-officio)

Correspondence

To:

Mrs Dorothy Ingram, The Friends of St. John's Stroud Inc., c/- Rectory, Cowper St., Stroud NSW 2425