

POST JOHNSTON REUNION NEWS

December 2013

Hello Everyone

“I should start by apologising for the delay in writing about our great Johnston Reunion very successfully held at Bathurst during Easter. I really don't know where the time has gone but am VERY glad I wasn't trying to help organise the Reunion this year..... and not just tying up a few loose ends. The months leading up to Easter were really exciting and rewarding when contact was able to be made with so many families. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, many of you were very disappointed at not being able to attend – to those with serious health issues, I do hope good progress is being made and you are all feeling much better. For others, perhaps if we can get more organised about the planning of our next Reunion, you might be able to work your lives around the date and place and make a super effort to come and meet many old and new family members.

Love from Margaret Bottom”

At this stage, we hope that younger, enthusiastic people will volunteer to plan and organise a Reunion for 2017 around the time of William & Isabella's arrival 200 years ago in Sydney (Maybe the October long weekend?) It really doesn't have to be the role of some of the younger family members but we were delighted to meet so many of the 5th & 6th generation descendants from William & Isabella at Bathurst and most of them seemed very keen to follow up with another gathering in the not too distant future. At this stage no actual date has been considered other than to celebrate the 200 yr anniversary, at Wingham or Port Macquarie, with Wingham being the most popular choice we feel. There is absolutely nothing to see at Bringelly where our ancestors lived prior to moving to Bathurst so with accommodation being a consideration, it would probably be better to choose either of the abovementioned places.

PLEASE GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION to volunteering and contacting Margaret Bottom either by email or phone (no landline number available – Mobile is 0408 368 308). Margaret is very happy to share the process/ideas from the 2013 Reunion – you may have completely different ideas and that would be quite acceptable too, **so please**..... contact Margaret now.

We were delighted that 73 Johnston's from Victoria, NSW and Queensland (with a majority from the Sydney and the North Coast of NSW) shared the weekend. We acknowledge that many people travelled very long distances by car and trains, and thank you all for coming. We didn't quite get to do as much as we wanted and feel that some of the time on Good Friday could have been made more use of. About 20 family members gathered for an evening meal at the Kelso Hotel on Good Friday which was fun. We were delighted to have Mark and Pam Williams from Shanghai attend – they are descended from Adam and Hannah. Quite a few family members gathered at the Chinese Restaurant for dinner on the Sunday night for a farewell dinner, and were impressed by the impromptu entertainment provided by a staff member of the Restaurant!!!

The Isabella & John Valentine Gorman family line was the only one of William & Isabella's children (who married and had children) who was not represented at the Reunion. This family was **EXTREMELY** difficult to find but just a couple of weeks prior to Easter we did manage to make contact with two different family members but, unfortunately, they had other commitments and couldn't make the weekend, so we hope to see you at the next Reunion.

Some very interesting stories came out of the reunion. One being.... It is funny how family paths cross!!! Two Sydney ladies who regularly meet at their local Bridge Club were quite amazed to find that they were actually related to each other (cousin's we think!!!).

Margaret Chaffer discovered that she had been a very close neighbour to Annette Bonnefin.

During the lead-up to the Reunion Margaret Bottom discovered that her Dad's Best Man (in 1930) was actually his cousin and not just a friend as she had previously thought. This man's grandson, Mick Lucke, was in attendance at the Reunion and Margaret actually has a photo of his Grandfather, which is something he didn't have in his family records (and still hasn't got, but will) !!!

Immediately prior to the Reunion, Robyn Wray was given information that William Johnston actually had stud pigs brought to Australia and was one of the first breeders of pigs in Australia. The location is believed to be in front of the Bathurst McDonald's outlet!!! Robyn also sourced some very interesting information about William and Isabella's residence and work in Bathurst. Thank you Robyn

Since the Reunion, Lyn Johnston has had major breakthroughs with some family lines which were assisted by the Reunion contacts. Even more recently via the internet we have been able to add quite a number of the Snodgrass and Oakes family members. Anyone having any information on these families would be most welcome to contact Lyn as we have some conflicting information to clarify.

Margaret Bottom was browsing through Don Ward's photo albums and discovered a photo of her Mother's cousin (Elma Tayles) – yes, she and Don have a connection through their Mother's sides of the family and would never have known except for that photo!

Margaret and Geoffrey Chaffer were thrilled that all of their children and grandchildren were able to attend the Reunion. These families are the grandchildren and great grandchildren of our inspiring Margaret Garside, whose book "A Branch of the Johnston Clan" was such a valuable contribution to the gathering of "OUR" Johnston families. We organised a gift for Margaret Garside so that she would know we missed her from our gathering and recognised that she was too frail to attend. She is now aged 98 and unable to travel.

Stewart Connor was a great MC for the weekend, especially when assisted by Lyn Johnston for the Johnston Family Trivia (based on Margaret Garside's book) held after dinner on Saturday night. We think that Margaret Chaffer's table, and Margaret Bottom's table might have had an advantage with answering so many questions and perhaps should have been "barred".....!!! It turned out to be a 'tie' between these two tables but Margaret Bottom's table were the winners of the large Toblerone chocolate!!!! Yum!!!

Betty Ware from the Central Coast was our oldest descendant. The Reunion cake was cut by Betty Ware and Vincent Brophy (who is youngest great grandchild of Margaret Garside). Mark & Pam Williams travelled the furthest to attend coming from Shanghai. Unfortunately Margaret Chaffer's twin sister was unable to come from the UK as she had planned, however she air lifted a beautiful floral decoration depicting English, Scottish and Australian flowers for the top of the lovely Reunion cake contributed by Margaret Chaffer and her family. Thank you to these special people for their contributions.

Thank you to Margaret and Geoffrey Chaffer for organising a Piper to attend the Memorial Wall in Bathurst and pipe some great Scottish tunes prior to the dedication of the Johnston plaque.

Since the Reunion Margaret & Bill Bottom were able to meet up with the late Harvey Allen's daughter, Juanita. What a thrill that was, especially as Lyn had made a posthumous Appreciation Certificate for the work Harvey had carried out creating the huge family tree that some of the Johnston's have. Unfortunately Harvey's files were destroyed and/or damaged by water and mould and unusable but perhaps the next organisers may be able to find a way through the technology maze and have Harvey's charts copied. There are actually two versions available so we need to see if there is any interest in copies being made for the next Reunion.

The other issue is that Lyn and Margaret, with the help of Julie Lucke, were unable to complete the Index of Margaret Garside's family book so if anyone has any expertise in this direction it might be worth contacting Margaret Bottom and discussing future production, as we would really like to have it

completed for all those who now have a copy of Margaret Garside's book. I believe Margaret Chaffer may still have spare copies available of this valuable book.

The Management and Staff of the Kelso Hotel were absolutely fantastic and did everything they could to give us space and convenient usage of their facilities during the whole time we were there. We would recommend their facilities for any function.

The unveiling of the plaque on the Heritage Wall in Bathurst was a lovely occasion with just a minor hiccup with the arrangements for the Scottish flag not being brought to cover the plaque but we made do! The parkland behind the Heritage Wall was a lovely place for the family photo to be taken – thank you to Robyn Wray for her help with this aspect of the Reunion. If you would like a copy of photos taken over the weekend, I think Robyn might be able to organise a copy for a small cost.

We are sure that those of you who were fortunate enough to go out on the Sunday to visit the Johnston properties on Easter Sunday would have gained an insight into what William and Isabella's life must have been like with all those children at the time. It was quite an emotional and humbling experience for most of us in attendance.

While thinking of it..... Margaret Bottom came home with 2 plates that someone must have put their cake or slice on for morning/afternoon tea at the Kelso Hotel. Please contact Margaret to try and arrange for you to get them back.

We are sure that those who attended are looking forward to a bigger and better *Johnston Reunion* in 2017..... so please think about volunteering to assist with organising it!!!

Warm Christmas and New Year greetings to all.

Until we meet again..... Jean Gillies, Judy Henderson, Lyn Johnston, Margaret Chaffer, Stewart Connor and Margaret Bottom