

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAND AT UPPER HALF MOON REACH, HAWKESBURY RIVER

Compiled by Michelle Nichols (1995)

The original inhabitants of the Hawkesbury district were the Dharug tribe of aborigines. The river, which they called Venrubbin or Deerubin¹ was essential to their lifestyle. They hunted and fished, and the ridges adjacent to the river were their sacred sites. Amongst the sandstone outcrops and shelters, and along the riverbanks, the Dharug tribes engraved pictures into the rocks, and sometimes left behind evidence of their daily lives. Following the settlement at Sydney Cove in 1788, Governor Arthur Phillip set out to make the penal colony self sufficient, as quickly as possible. Due to its isolation, it was vital that a successful food supply be established and that fertile land with a fresh water supply be located swiftly. Phillip led a successful expedition in 1789 and travelled the length of the Hawkesbury River. Although it was Phillip who planned it, the Hawkesbury settlement was established by Lt.-Gov. Major Francis Grose, after Phillip returned to England in 1792. The exact date of settlement is not known but David Collins reported in January 1794 that the settlers had chosen for themselves allotments of ground.²

The rich fertile plains quickly produced crops and it was the major contribution of the Hawkesbury that allowed the colony to stabilise. By 1795 the settlement had stretched along both sides of the riverbanks and the population grew quickly. A number of skirmishes between the settlers and the aboriginal tribes in the district were reported, with deaths occurring on both sides. After a numerous confrontations between the local Dharug aboriginal tribe and the settlers, a detachment of the NSW Corp was sent to safeguard the area. The detachment remained permanently in the district for over half a century.

In 1802 Governor King interviewed several natives from the Hawkesbury, and they stated: that they did not like to be driven from the few places that were left on the banks of the river, where they alone could procure food. King promised not to establish any more settlers lower down the river, in return the aborigines promised to be amicable.³ However there were still problems a few years later.

On the 24th August 1804, Private Thynne Adlum(sic) was discharged from the New South Wales Corps. He had enlisted in Britain and arrived in the colony in 1792. On the 11th August 1804 Adlam was granted 80 acres on the Upper Half Moon Reach of the Hawkesbury River. Forty other grants were recorded in the Register for the Hawkesbury District on the same day. The grant stated that : Feen Adlam - 80 acres in the District of Mulgrave Place, bounded on the west, east and south by the river and on the north by a line west 20 ° south 36 chains - Quit Rent two shillings after 5 years. The grant was signed by Governor Phillip Gidley King and witnessed by John Palmer and David D. Mann.⁴

On the 12th April 1805 three settlers, including Feen Adlam were murdered by aborigines led by the notorious "Branch Jack". The farm house was burnt and Adlam and his servant came to an unfortunate end. It was reported "*...they had shared a merciless fate, a part of their Relicks being found among the ashes, and the remainder scattered piecemeal...from which circumstance it is probably conjectured, that after the ill-fated people had been inhumanely murdered, their limbs were severed and wantonly scattered*".⁵ Sergeant William Day administered Adlam's estate and he sold two of Adlam's properties in November 1805. Buncker's Farm of 25 acres was sold to Reverend Samuel Marsden for £55, and Adlam's Farm of 80 acres was sold to James McGlade, the amount on the original document is illegible.⁶ James McGlade was reported in the newspaper in 1806 as being convicted of stealing promissory notes valued at £14 and was sentenced to death. Fortunately he was reprieved but absconded from custody five months later.⁷ Sometime between McGlade's purchase in November 1805 and 1808, Adlams Farm was acquired by John Pendergast.

¹ Windsor & Richmond Gazette, 21 July 1888

² Collins, D. (1975) An Account of the English Colony in NSW. p. 285

³ HRNSW, Vol. 5, p. 513

⁴ Land Grant Register, Book 3 p. 158. Land Titles Office, Sydney NSW

⁵ The Sydney Gazette, 21st April 1805. p. 2b

⁶ Old Register *No. 1 from commencement*. Vol. 1 no. 653 - 654. Land Titles Office, Sydney NSW.

⁷ *The Sydney Gazette*, 14 Sep 1806, p.4; 28 Sep 1806 p. 2; 12 Oct 1806 p. 1 & 15 Mar 1807 p.1.

John Pendergast was a convict who arrived on the *Minerva* in 1800. He was convicted in Dublin in 1798 and was sentenced for a term of seven years for his misdemeanour.⁸ According to the 1802 Muster, Pendergast was renting 30 acres in the District of Mulgrave Place with James Clark, a fellow convict from the *Minerva* and was achieving reasonable results.⁹ By 1806 he is listed with a purchase of 115 acres, employing two indented prisoners and Jane Williams as his housekeeper.¹⁰ Jane was also a convict arriving on the *Nile* in 1801. She was convicted in Bristol for stealing women's clothing. There is no record of John and Jane marrying but they lived together as man and wife. The Pendergast's had five children all born in the Hawkesbury district, James born 1803, Thomas born 1805, Sarah born 1806, William born 1808 and twins Bridget and Charlotte born 1810. John's eldest son, also called John, was born in 1800, however his mother is not known.¹¹

In 1806 Hawkesbury River flooded three times and losses were extremely high. The whole district was plunged into debt and Pendergast, like many of the small settlers experienced financial difficulties. The Provost Marshall was instructed to sell by Public Auction in 1808 ...Two Farms, situate contiguous to Cornwallis known by the name of Pender's ; containing 60 acres more or less, with about 40 acres of growing wheat thereupon...Likewise a farm situate down the Hawkesbury River, formerly Adlam's Farm, The whole the property of John Pender.¹² He obviously came good with the money, as neither of the properties were sold.

Prior to his death, John had a several "Deed of Gift" documents drawn up, transferring various properties to his family. He gave his son James two farms on the Hawkesbury River including Adlams Farm of 80 acres on the 27th March 1827.¹³ He transferred other land to his sons John and William plus his grandson John,(son of Thomas) only a month before his death.¹⁴ There is no record he left anything to his son Thomas, who was living in the Monaro district, who had large tracts of his own land. John Pendergast died on the 29th January 1833 aged 73 years, and is one of the first buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Windsor.

Part of the property was cleared and farming, usually the growing of wheat and maize, was carried out on the site from the early 19th century. The land was also used for the grazing of hogs and cattle. The land was also utilised for religious purposes and the small cemetery still in existence bears testimony to the diverse use the land has experienced.

The Pendergast family were Catholic and were closely involved with the establishment of the Catholic Church in the colony. James provided 2 acres of land for a Catholic School to be built at Lower Portland in 1838. There is no record that the school was built but perhaps it was the chapel known as St. Rose or St. Rose of Lima which was built near the Upper Branch of the Hawkesbury (Colo River), and doubled as a schoolhouse during the week. St. Rose of Lima was opened by Bishop Polding on St. Rose's Feast Day on the 30th August 1840.¹⁵ Although there is no substantial evidence of where the church was located, it would seem obvious that it was near the little cemetery that still survives on the site. A newspaper article in 1917 quotes a Mr J. Liddy of Leet's Vale who said he attended the last Holy Mass...at the close of 1865. Father Maher from Wollombi celebrated.¹⁶ The church apparently was washed away in floods, perhaps the 1867 Flood which was the largest flood ever recorded. Records at St. Mary's Archives apparently reported that the family of Pender(gast) always owned the land the church was built on, it would be interesting to follow this through.¹⁷

⁸ *Principal Superintendent of Convicts : Bound Indents 1799-1801*, SR Fiche 625 (Loc. 4/4003) pp. 355, 363 & 367

⁹ (Ed.)Baxter, Carol (1988) *Musters and lists NSW and Norfolk Island 1800-1802*.(Sydney : ABGR) p. 84

¹⁰ (ed.) Baxter, Carol (1989) *Musters of New South Wales and Norfolk Island 1805 - 1806*. (Sydney : ABGR) pp. 57, 71, 83.

¹¹ Nichols, M. (1984) *The Pendergast Family*. (Unpublished thesis for Dip. F.S., Sydney : Society of Australian Genealogists) pp. 1-3.

¹² Barkley, J. & M. Nichols (1994) *Hawkesbury 1794 - 1994*. (Windsor, NSW : Hawkesbury City Council) p.24 & *Sydney Gazette*, 23 Oct 1808 p. 1

¹³ *Memorial for Registering*. No. 206 Book A (27.3.1827) Land Titles Office, Sydney NSW.

¹⁴ *Memorial*, Book E no. 836. Land Titles Office, Sydney NSW.

¹⁵ Ross, Valerie (1981) *A Hawkesbury Story* (Sydney : Library of Australian History) p. 158; Article : *A Bend in the River for the Wild Geese - the lost church of St. Rose of Lima* by G. M. Cashman, *Australian Catholic Directory* 1841 p. 26 plus correspondence dated 24.10.1984.

¹⁶ Freame, William, *Some old River History No. 5 More about St. Rose* in *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* 7 September 1917.

¹⁷ G. Cashman (now deceased) wrote St. Mary's Archives reported *that the family of Pender(gast) always owned the land the church was built and they did not remain Catholic*. The majority of the Pendergast families did remain Catholic and subsequent contact with the St. Marys Archives has revealed little information. Detailed research is required to follow this up.

The cemetery located at Half Moon Farm covers an area approximately 7 x 11m and there are 18 headstones surviving. Several burials are known to have taken place in the graveyard, according to burial certificates.

Headstones include :

John Pendergast son of James & Sophia Pendergast died 30 August 1830 aged 5 weeks.

James Nash died 5 July 1842, aged 55 years.

Hugh Whalen died 13 June 1839 aged 39 years.

Joseph(sic) Reilly died 19 April 18-0. (Possibly 1850)

Hugh Whalen died 1839 (includes footstone HW)

Michael Lamb died A.D. 1849 aged 26.

Ann Reed no date

Mary Hern.W no date

Research undertaken by Coralie Hird < Email : cdhird@optusnet.com.au > family historian of Dee Why NSW shows at least 7 additional persons buried at the cemetery. They include :

Jeremiah SULLIVAN died 27 February 1862 aged 67 years.

Son of Daniel Sullivan and Ellen nee Conners.

Elizabeth SULLIVAN died 7 December 1873 aged 73 years.

Elizabeth was the wife of Jeremiah Sullivan and the daughter of William Stubbs and Sarah Wingate.

Ellen REILLY died 20 June 1875 aged 14 years, 6 months and seventeen days.

Ellen was the daughter of Edward Reilly & Ellen Hearne, born at Webb's Creek and died of diphtheria.

John HEARNE (Heron on certificate) died 23 May 1860 age 84 years. John Hearne was found dead at St. Albans 23 May 1860 and was buried at St. Rose of Lima Cemetery (possibly with his wife Mary)

Michael LAMB died 12 July 1860 aged 86 years. The father of Michael LAMB with the headstone, was buried at St. Rose's. Michael Lamb (the father) was born abt 1772 Dublin arrived 1791 "Queen" convict.

Catherine MORAN died 13 November 1862 aged 60 years. Catherine HOWE, convict, arrived "City of Edinburgh" 1828, was first married to James HARRISON and then to James MORAN.

Henry James WOODS died 4 June 1866 aged 2 days.

Henry was the son of Thomas Woods and Ann Jane Smith of Lower Portland.

On the 28th September 1863, James Pendergast purchased 40 acres, Portion 3, at a Sale by Auction of Crown Lands in Windsor. The Land Purchase was registered on the 4th December 1863 and the Crown issued a Certificate of Title under the new legislation regarding land.¹⁸ James Pendergast passed away on the 17th October 1865 at Pitt Town and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Windsor. He had led a very busy life marrying twice and fathering twenty one children! According to his Will dated the 1st August 1865, he left Adlam's Farm, in trust for his two daughters, Sophia Catherine Pendergast and Margaret Elizabeth Brown nee Pendergast and then in equal shares in trust for their children.¹⁹ His wife Susannah was to receive any rent and profit from his real estate. James left the Half Moon Farm properties in trust, with his wife and her brother James Augustine Cunneen as executors. Cunneen, died in 1889 and Susannah died in 1902, her eldest son, John Joseph Pendergast was appointed as the Trustee. Margaret Elizabeth Brown died in 1881, leaving her half share to her six children. Sophia Catherine Pendergast died in 1915 aged 78 years. Sophia, a spinster, left no issue and under the term of her father's will, her half share reverted to his heirs, thirteen of his remaining children. Sophia was living at Half Moon Farm, with her two nieces, at the time of her death. The Trust was wound up after Sophia's death and the property sold, the estate being divided into twenty parts.²⁰ The eight page conveyance of the property lists details of most of the members involved in James Pendergast's will, including dates of marriage and death, a boon for family members.

The property was sold to Myra Brown and Mary Wiseman Hancy Brown for £1040, they had each received £126/13/4 as their payment. A Certificate of Title dated the 17th November 1915, gave the 40 acres, Portion 3 to Myra Brown (born 1867) and Mary Wiseman Hancy Brown (born 1873), half shares, transferred from their Uncle, John Joseph Pendergast, trustee. The original Adlam's grant remained under the Old Systems Titles, whereas the 40 acre property was issued as Torrens Title. The sisters, also spinsters, had lived on the

¹⁸ *Crown Grant* Vol. 3 Folio 192 granted to James Pendergast 4.12.1863 Land Titles Office, Sydney NSW.

¹⁹ Office copy of *James Pendergast's Will* dated 24.7.1865 William Walker Collection, Hawkesbury City Council Library.

²⁰ *Conveyance* dated 17-11-1915. No. 870 Book 1072 (Indenture) Land Titles Office, Sydney.

farm with their Aunt Sophia, possibly from the time of their mother's death in 1902. The farm was reported to have been operated as an orchard with the assistance of orphaned children. Remnants remain on the site of a packing shed. A wharf was located on the bend in the river and the fruit was loaded onto the riverboats to be transported to the Sydney Markets. The wharf was also used for the store boat which brought supplies from Windsor up until the early 1950s. (It is still quicker today to travel to the property by river, the road is still little more than a track.) The land was mortgaged to Margaret Lindsay Dick, spinster of Windsor on the same day as the Title was dated and discharged in 1929.²¹ The sisters disposed of the Farm in 1938 to a solicitor who died intestate shortly after.

The three portions of the property were sold to a number of persons over the next fifty years and the main function of the property was sand extraction (which is used for the building industry) and to a lesser degree for grazing. The final transfers have been set in chronological order within the Portions, and at most times, all three were owned by the same people.

In 1980 the owners were Elizabeth & Joyce Tallon and they were interested in establishing a private sporting and recreation club. Although it was approved the property was put up for sale in 1984.²² During the 1980s the only house remaining on the property was rented and occupied by a group of hippies. The house dates from about the 1940s using some recycled material off the site. Sand was still being excavated near the river.²³

The property was advertised to be sold at Auction by L. J. Hooker & was sold on the 31st October 1984. The Hawkesbury City Council and the NSW Department of Planning jointly purchased the 45 hectares to form part of the "regional open space" system.

Several studies of the site have taken place including a survey at Half Moon Farm which was undertaken as part of an investigation of Aboriginal sites in the Hawkesbury in 1988. The survey was not very successful due to the dense vegetation and ground visibility although one open site and one isolated artefact were located. Six large shelters were encountered but did not contain art or occupied evidence.²⁴

A Natural Habitats Study took place at Half Moon Farm in 1989. The report pointed out the significance of the site which includes 2.4 kms of river frontage. Diverse fauna, scenic value, conservation and historic value. Vegetation communities identified were the River edge...extensively modified with little original vegetation surviving...the Floodplain land...mainly altered by agriculture and sand extraction...(most of this floods frequently)...the Wetland areas...two lagoons...close to natural condition...and Dry sclerophyll woodland...slightly modified. Habitats include those of various native fauna and bird species.²⁵

Hawkesbury City Council adopted the Plan of Management for Half Moon Farm in 1993 and is now in the control of Hawkesbury City Council to care, control and manage.²⁶ A Heritage Grant paid for restoration work at the cemetery which was completed in November 1994. Graves were restored and a picket fence was put up around the site to protect the monuments from animals.

²¹ *Certificate of Title* Vol. 270 Folio 212,213; Vol. 4926 folio 125; *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* 12 Feb 1915; (1992) *Half Moon Farm Regional Park : Plan of Management* May 1992. p. 5

²² Vol. 14253 Folio 75

²³ Letter from Gavin Cashman 21.10.1984.

²⁴ McDonald, Josephine (1989) *Hawkesbury Aboriginal Sites Study : Final Report - March 1989*. (Drummoyne NSW : Brayshaw McDonald Consulting Archaeologist for Hawkesbury City Council) pp. 32-35.

²⁵ Clark, Stephen, F. Dominic Fanning & Diane G. Stevens (1989) *Natural Habitats Study: Half Moon Farm, Hawkesbury River - October 1989* (prepared for Department of Planning & Hawkesbury City Council)

²⁶ *NSW Government Gazette* No. 54 (3.6.1993) p. 2684.

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- Windsor & Richmond Gazette
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II. LAND TITLES OFFICE, SYDNEY NSW

Memorials Book A, No. 206; Book E no. 836, Book 1832 No. 424, Book 1918 No. 193, Book 2463 No. 434, Book 2830 No.s 524-525, Book 3312 No. 155, Volume 3 Folio 192, Volume 2701 Folios 212-213, Volume 4926 Folio 125, Volume 6262 Folios 189-190, Volume 6650 Folio 81, Volume 6941 Folio 13, Volume 14253 Folio 75 & Plan DP 744433

III. OTHER MATERIAL

- Cashman, G. M., A Bend in the River for the Wild Geese - the lost church of St. Rose of Lima, plus correspondence dated 24.10.1984.
- Nichols, Michelle (1984) The Pendergast Family. (Unpublished thesis for Dip. F.S., Sydney : Society of Australian Genealogists) plus various family papers.
- Principal Superintendent of Convicts : Bound Indents 1799-1801, SR Fiche 625 (Loc. 4/4003)
- St. Matthew's Catholic Church, Windsor (Parish Registers)
- William Walker Collection, Hawkesbury City Council.
- Hird, Coralie (1999) Correspondence & documentation of St. Rose of Lima Cemetery, Half Moon Farm. (Copy held Hawkesbury City Council Library)

**MEMORIAL FOR REGISTERING
NO. 206 BOOK A (27 March 1827)**

Date of instrument : 27th day of March in the year of Our Lord one thousand and twenty seven.

Nature of instrument : Deed of gift of two farms situate at the Lower Branch of the Hawkesbury River

Names of parties :John Pendergrass to James Pendergrass

Names of Witnesses :Josh Bradley, James Derbyshire & James White, all of Sydney

Description of the lands or property conveyed:-

Two farms - one granted to Edward Farley by his late Excellency Governor Macquarie situate in the District of Mulgrave Place near the Lower Branch of the Hawkesbury River containing 60 acres the other farm granted by His Excellency Philip Gidley King to Fean Adlam situate on aforesaid and containing 80 acres.

Consideration and how paid :--

Any other particulars that the case may require:

This deed of gift is given by John Pendergast to James Pendergast to him and his heirs lawfully begotten not to make away or dispose of the same but to be for the benefit of his Posterity.

John Pendergast X His Mark

Joseph Bradley of York Street Sydney in the Territory of NSW maketh oath and saith that the above Memorial contains a just and true account of several particulars therein set forth.

Sworn before me at Sydney this 27th day of March A.D. 1827

Josh Bradley G. G. Mills

Registrar and Commissioner of the Supreme Court - Pendergast to Pendergast Memorial received this 27th day of March 1827 from Josh Bradley at a quarter before 1 o'clock in the afternoon - attested by Joseph Bradley, James Derbyshire and James White, all of Sydney.

[LAND TITLES OFFICE, SYDNEY NSW]

MEMORIAL - Book E No. 836

Date : 27 December 1832

Name of Instrument : Deed of Gift

Names of Parties : John Pendergast of Cornwallis, Farmer to John Pendergast & William Pendergast sons of said John Pendergast to themselves and to them as Trustees of John Pendergast grandson of the said John Pendergast the grantor.

Names of Witnesses : George Cooks, William Cribby

Description : INDENTURE BOOK 68 NO. 387

This indenture made 2nd August 1860 between James Pendergast of Pitt Town yeoman and William Walker of Windsor Trustee for Bridget Reid. Parcel of land 10 acres County Cumberland Parish Cornelia Hawkesbury River situated about 1/4 mile south of E. Yarley's 60 acres bounded on the north west by a line bearing south 58 ° west 7 chains and 95 links on the south west...which parcel of land was by a deed poll dated 28th March 1843 granted by the Crown to James Pendergast and his heirs and assigns forever together.

William Walker and his heirs upon trust for and to the sole and separate use free from marital control and impeachment for waste of Bridget Reid of Lower Portland Widow and immediate after decease of the said Bridget Reid upon trust for and to the absolute use of Ann Reid and Louisa Reid said daughters of the said Bridget.

James Pendergast X his mark
William Walker

13th August 1860

LAND GRANT

Feen Adlam - 80 acres in the District of Mulgrave Place, bounded on the west, east and south by the river and on the north by a line west 20 ° south 36 chains - Quit Rent two shillings after 5 years as the design &c "to consent"

In testimony &c this 11th August 1804

Signed Phillip Gidley King

Signed and sealed in our presence

John Palmer

D. D. Mann

The above is a true extract from the Surveyor's return and abridged "in Formula"
G. Blaxcell

[LAND TITLES OFFICE, SYDNEY NSW]