



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### **Bro. CAPTAIN JOHN PIPER (1769 - 1851)**

The Colony of New South Wales was just four years old when John Piper, at the age of 19 years, first set foot on Australian soil. For the next 59 years he was to be closely identified with its development.

Born at Maybole in Ayrshire, he was the son of Dr Hugh Piper. There is evidence that the Pipers were a military family and it was probably due to the influence of his uncle (also named John), that young John Piper was appointed an Ensign in the New South Wales Corps on 20 April 1791.

In 1788, Governor Phillip had brought with him in the First Fleet a detachment of marines known as the Marine Corps. As a garrison they rendered valuable service in assisting to found the Colony and in implementing its first laws.

They were replaced in 1790 by detachments of the New South Wales Corps, a military regiment which had been specially recruited by Major Francis Grose in England for service in Botany Bay by which name the colony was then known.

The Commandant of the regiment, Major Grose, did not arrive in the colony until 1792. He arrived aboard the ship, *Pitt* and was accompanied by 200 officers and men among whom was Ensign John Piper. Also on board were 300 male and 50 female convicts. In that year, the population of New South Wales was only 3,000 and on Norfolk Island there were about 1,000 inhabitants.

On 14 February 1788, the *Supply* under the command of Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, sailed from Sydney for Norfolk Island for the purpose of settling the island. They arrived there on 29 February but it was to be five days before a suitable place could be found to land their provisions. Lieutenant Ball returned to Sydney on 19 March and reported a safe landing and the establishment of the little settlement on the island.

Little did he know it then but John Piper was to play an important role in the administration of Norfolk Island in years to come.

Piper was first acquainted with the colony of New South Wales as a penal settlement, but he was to witness its emergence, especially under the administration of the Governor, Bro. Lachlan Macquarie, into a free and prosperous country. He was also to watch the growth of Freemasonry from isolated instances of activity to its establishment in 1820 as an organised body under constitutional authority.

There is extant documentary evidence of isolated instances of Masonic activity in Sydney as early as 1797, and other evidence strongly points to a Masonic Lodge having been formed on Norfolk Island about the year 1792, the year of Piper's

arrival in the colony. This lodge was known as the Lodge of St John No. 1, but it is not known if it possessed a warrant from a Grand Lodge and, if so, which Grand Lodge or whether it had simply been started by a small number of enthusiastic masons resident on the Island.

We do know for certain that "The Masonic Lodge of St John, No. 1," was at work at Norfolk Island in the year 1800, and we know, too, that in 1807 a letter was addressed to Captain John Piper on behalf of the brethren.

Probably among Piper's earliest recollections of events in the colony would have been the arrival of the *Philadelphia* at Port Jackson in September 1792, the first independent trading vessel to enter Sydney Cove, an event which marked the beginning by the officers of the New South Wales Corps, of the infamous 'rum trade.'

Piper would have been present when the New South Wales Corps was paraded on the 10 December 1792, to farewell Governor Phillip, who on that day returned to England on board the *Atlantic*.



Captain John Piper

After Phillip's departure, the officers of the New South Wales Corps, led firstly by Major Francis Grose, ruled the Colony until Governor John Hunter arrived in 1795. Grose had inaugurated a policy of trade monopoly which was combined with the acquisition of land and a ruthless exploitation of the convict and emancipist classes. He changed the judicial structure set up by Phillip.

Phillip had refused to make land grants to officers who were still active in their regiments, nor would he assign convict labour to any private individual. Grose however freely made land grants to his officers, and he caused to be withdrawn from public and other important works, convict labour to be used as free labour by them. The civil magistrates were replaced in their function by Courts presided over by military officers.

In 1794, Major Grose placed the first 22 settlers along the banks of the Hawkesbury River and others at Liberty Plains, now Homebush, where recently, a new housing development named Liberty Grove was opened. He left for England that year leaving Captain William Paterson to assume the government of the Colony. In his administration, Captain Paterson followed closely the pattern woven by Grose. Prosperity was now clearly in the hands of the officers and the remainder of the inhabitants were deprived even of hope.

Before Major Grose left Sydney to return to England, he appears to have been not unmindful of Ensign John Piper and gave him a grant of land of about 100 acres at Parramatta.

Ensign John Piper was a mere youth and readily acquiesced in the policy of both Grose and Paterson. Like all his fellow officers, Piper had come to the Colony with the definite object of becoming wealthy as quickly as possible and returning to England. His salary was small, and he proved to have no idea of economy. In his new situation, and because of his outlook, he did not hesitate to avail himself of opportunities to increase his income through trade.

In 1793, Ensign John Piper was transferred to Norfolk Island, apparently at his own request, and stayed there against the urgings of his friends beyond the usual span of duty. His move could have been of a financial nature - there was little chance of spending money - or it is highly probable that there was a romantic matter of a broken heart. Under Major Robert Ross of the Marine Corps, conditions on the Island had greatly deteriorated. However, in 1793, King had returned from England and when Piper had arrived at Norfolk Island, everything was again working smoothly. It was recorded by his superiors, that whilst on the Island, Piper carried out his duties in a satisfactory manner.

Piper returned to the mainland in 1795, received his promotion to Lieutenant, and at the end of 1797 went to England on leave, returning to Sydney again in 1799. In 1800, Piper was promoted to the rank of Captain.

By 1799, however, when Piper came back to Sydney, the stage was set for the quarrel that was to disrupt the life of the infant community and Piper could no longer shelter behind his junior rank but had to align himself with one of the opposing sides. It was natural for him to join his friends against the Governor who sought to check the depredations of the military set. The New South Wales Corps had by now so entrenched themselves that they were the dominant power, overriding even the Governor.

Piper had also fallen under the spell of the most forceful man in the colony, Captain John Macarthur, who had emerged as the leader of the New South Wales Corps.

When Macarthur challenged his superior officer, Colonel Paterson, to a duel, John Piper acted as his second. Colonel Paterson chose Captain Neil Mackeller to act as his second. The duel took place on 14 September 1799 and Paterson was severely wounded. Governor King ordered the arrest of all concerned except Paterson, whose condition was considered too dangerous for him to be moved. The result was that Macarthur was sent to England to be tried for his part, Paterson was severely censured and Piper and Mackeller were tried by their fellow officers and acquitted.

Piper, however, was now under a cloud; he could never again be on easy terms with Governor King, his old commandant and friend of Norfolk Island. He had lost those friends who had taken sides with Colonel Paterson, and Paterson himself, his commanding officer could only treat him with disdain.

A man so genial as Piper could find nothing but discomfort in this atmosphere of

hostility, and, after another encounter with Governor King, he was glad to seek the seclusion of Norfolk Island again, and King was glad to get him out of the settlement.

In 1804, Captain John Piper returned to Norfolk Island. He was now 31 years old and it was 11 years since he was first associated with the Island. He had not acquired much wealth, Major Grose had given him one land grant, Governor Hunter had given him two grants and he had purchased another 30 acres. It appears that he lost all this land to Lieutenant William Cox for money he owed to that officer.

John Piper is described as "the romantic rather than the hard business type of man." He was regarded as very companionable, "little children loved him" and he was very popular with the ladies.

At Norfolk Island, Piper was again made aware of changes in conditions. In 1800 Major Joseph Foveaux was appointed Commandant of the Island. He was a very hard man yet careless in his administration. By 1804 conditions were generally very depressed. The buildings, like the morale of the people, were in a poor state.

Joseph Holt, who was an exile and not a convict, but who was suspected of taking part in the Irish Rebellion at Castle Hill in February 1804, was unjustly sent to Norfolk Island, where Foveaux wrongly ordered him to work in the chain gang. Holt had been employed as Manager for Captain Cox at his 'Brush Farm' in New South Wales.

Holt described Norfolk Island at this period as "the dwelling house of devils in human shape, the refuse of Botany Bay, the doubly damned." He further records "the convicts' working day began two hours before dawn, when they were aroused and had to carry their bedding out into the court-yard of the barracks where it lay all day exposed to the weather. They breakfasted in the dark and then went to work. Often they did not return until ten at night, too tired to break the fast that had lasted all day, ready only to sink down on their beds which were often sopping wet. Grumbling was rewarded with the triangle."

Holt adds, "it would have been far more merciful in those days to have hanged all those who violated the laws of their country than have them sent out to New South Wales and its dependencies, subject to the unmerciful treatment of human tigers, who tortured or killed those within their power according to the caprice of the moment. I saw many fine men die in misery, inch by inch, from the oppression they experienced, the most cruel of all deaths."

Notwithstanding all the oppression and torture of human life which Holt describes on Norfolk Island during this period of its history, there was functioning there the little Masonic Lodge of St John, No. 1. What a haven of refuge from all the turmoil and wretchedness of the Island the little lodge must have proved for its few members. After their lodge meetings they would, no doubt, depart for their homes, fortified by the teachings of Freemasonry to live above all the misery and oppression. It is believed that Captain John Piper already belonged to the Craft but whether he was a member of the Masonic Lodge of St John, No. 1, or ever attended its meetings, is not known.

It was certainly a happy day for the Island when Major Foveaux departed on sick leave and Captain John Piper was appointed Acting Commandant.

Holt writes "the new Governor had the goodwill and respect of everyone, for he had always conducted himself as a Christian and a gentleman."

Captain Piper released Holt from his unjust labour in the gangs and increased the flour ration from four to eight pounds per week for each adult person. His rule was just, and left no marks of cruelty.

In February 1805<sup>1</sup>, Major Foveaux resigned his Governorship of Norfolk Island and Captain Piper was formally appointed to the post.

Shortly after return to Norfolk Island in 1804, John Piper had met a 15 year old girl by the name of Mary Ann Shears who afterwards became Mrs John Piper. Her father, James Shears, was a 'First Fleeter' who had accompanied Lieutenant King to Norfolk Island in 1788. There he married Mary Wilson, another 'First Fleeter', who had arrived on the *ship, Prince of Wales*. One authority says that Mary Ann was their daughter, born in 1790. If this was so, she would have only been three years old when Piper first went to Norfolk Island and fourteen when he returned to the Island in 1804. She could not therefore have been the mother of Piper's eldest daughter, Sarah, who married John Thrupp in 1814. It seems most probable - and fragments of letters bear this out - that Piper had formed an attachment with some woman, whose name has been lost, when he first came to the colony; that his more worldly-wise friends prevented him from marrying her; that Sarah was her child; that Piper took the whole affair to heart and that he voluntarily went into exile on Norfolk Island while his friends wound up the affair and that, unlike many of his more callous associates, he accepted full responsibility for Sarah. Mary Ann Shears brought up Sarah as a sister of baby John, born in 1805, and of Hugh, born two years later. In a letter of 1811, signed Mary Ann Shears, she refers to Sarah and "our two dear little boys."

Probably while Piper held a commission it was impossible for him to marry the daughter of a convict, but there is plenty of evidence to show that he never considered the union a casual one. As soon as he could, without the sacrifice of his own career, he married Mary Ann. He took her and the children with him to England in 1811. There is a letter from her dated from London, October 1812, and signed Mary Ann Piper. Hence it would appear that the marriage took place just before leaving Australia or immediately after their arrival in England. Mary Ann and John Piper managed to found a mini-dynasty of ten children.

Mary Ann Piper was to prove herself, in the years that followed, a woman of charm and character, able to win her own place in society and retain it.

Whatever the truth of this tangle may be, it speaks well for Piper that, easy-going and given to following the main stream of life about him, in this matter of marriage he could run directly counter to the prejudices of his class and rigidly exclusionist society of Sydney.

Piper was the first inhabitant of Norfolk Island's imposing Government House, built by Foveaux, and he and his family lived there in grand style.

Among the Captain's more colourful 'guests' were more than 60 Irish dissidents, the ring-leader of whom was Bro. Sir Henry Browne Hayes, the Irish knight who had been transported originally to Botany Bay, allegedly for abducting a Quaker heiress but possibly also for political reasons. Sir Henry was wealthy and well-connected and thus better treated than most. He had asked Governor King for permission to hold a Masonic meeting in Sydney. King refused but Hayes went ahead and held the meeting anyway. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced to a term of hard labour in Van Diemen's Land. He filled in his time whilst waiting for a ship to transport him by buying 42 acres of land at Vaucluse, building a magnificent home and planting hundreds of fruit trees on the property which is now known as Vaucluse House.<sup>1</sup>

Back on the mainland, Governor King had been recalled, and the notorious Governor William Bligh had arrived in 1806.

The evacuation of the settlement at Norfolk Island had been 'in the air' since 1800 and only King's love for his first home in the Antipodes had saved it till now. It became Piper's unpleasant duty to carry out the Government's plan and uproot the convicts and settlers and transport them either to Port Dalrymple or the Derwent. Life closed in fast on the Island. On 18 December 1807, consequent upon the decision to evacuate the inhabitants, the following letter was addressed to Brother Captain John Piper on behalf of the Masonic brethren:-

Sir,

Impressed with a lively sense of Gratitude for the Patronage and generous protection which we in our collective capacity as Free and Accepted Masons have experienced under your authority; we now beg leave to request your acceptance of our sincerest acknowledgements.

It is an Axiom, founded on the Pediment of the Masonic Institution, that a Mason's conduct should be orderly, regulated by strict adherence to the Laws, and particularly obedient to regular legislative Authorities; we humbly presume from the affability of your demeanour and the politeness of your attention to us as a Collective Body, that our Conduct has received your approbation; and consequently that no Impeachment of a deviation from good Order can be attached to our small community; and as Circumstances require our departure from this Island, and from your Jurisdiction (under which we have received such marks of liberal protection) we request you may be pleased to recommend that His Honour Lt. Governor Collins, our general demeanour, and secure to us under his Command, a Continuance of that Patronage, we have received from you, and we shall studiously exert ourselves by the Regularity of our demeanour, to prove that your kind indulgences shall never be impeached by any impropriety of conduct on the part of, Sir,

Your ever grateful servants,  
JAS. MITCHELL, MASTER.  
THOS. LUCAS, P.M.  
W. ATKINS, S.W.  
For the Brethren.

The three Senior Officers of the Masonic Lodge of St John No. 1, who signed the letter to Captain Piper left Norfolk Island and became settlers in Van Diemen's Land, and the Lodge was at one time, believed to have been re-formed and working there in 1817.

In September 1809, Captain John Piper left Norfolk Island and returned to Sydney. Fifteen men were left behind on the Island with Martin Tims, the Provost Marshal, in charge. Piper, to quote Bro. Lachlan Macquarie, "had governed Norfolk Island with great credit to himself and the satisfaction of the Governor-in-Chief of this territory."

Back in Sydney in 1810, John Piper was impressed by the fact that his brother officers had made, or were making their fortunes. "They and their families were living at ease and lording it up as they could never have done in England." He saw, as did Governor Macquarie when the latter first arrived on 31 January 1809, a community, apart from military officers, depressed by poverty and threatened with famine; public buildings were in a state of dilapidation; the morals of the people in the lowest state of debasement and religious worship almost non-existent. Under Macquarie's rule a great transformation in the social conditions of the Colony was to take place.

In 1811, Piper left for England in the ship *Providence*, taking with him his wife, his daughter, Sarah and two sons, John and Hugh. Writing to the Earl of Liverpool, Governor Macquarie described John Piper as "an officer of highly respectable character, and to him I am much indebted for useful information and able assistance, in the arrangement and liquidation of the claims of the Norfolk Island Settlers."

Piper retired from the New South Wales Corps and on 17 May 1813, Lord Bathurst appointed him to the post of Naval Officer at Sydney, New South Wales. With this appointment and his return to Sydney in February 1814, the second great phase of his Australian life began.

Returning on the same ship, the *General Hewitt*, was a young man named Alfred Thrupp who fell in love with Piper's daughter Sarah, and whom he later married in Sydney. Piper was able to have his son-in-law appointed his assistant and arranged for him a grant of 700 acres of land for farming at Neutral Bay. Today, the name of 'Thrupp' is perpetuated by a street name in the suburb of Neutral Bay in Sydney.

In 1813 while Piper was in England, a road across the Blue Mountains had been found and the Colony under Macquarie's able administration had become generally prosperous. Bro. Captain John Piper did not hesitate to take full advantage of the general prosperity to advance his own interests. His allowance as Naval Officer of £400 per annum was increased to over £4,000 as he was paid a commission of 5% of all monies collected by way of customs and other charges.

To add to the dignity and importance of his combined duties of Customs House, Harbour Trust and Water Police Officer, Piper designed a uniform for himself and occupied his official residence on the west side of Sydney Cove.

The Thrupps had moved to a modest house at Vaucluse called 'The Retreat', where they spent their honeymoon. John Piper had leased 'The Retreat' from Bro. Sir Maurice O'Connell, the Commander of the 73rd Regiment. In 1822 Piper bought the freehold from Captain Robert Lethbridge, R.N. This was the historic house built at Vaucluse by the celebrated Bro. Sir Henry Browne Hayes. The property, now

known as 'Vaucluse House,' eventually became the home of Bro. William Charles Wentworth, explorer, statesman and poet, who had been born on a ship heading for Norfolk Island, the son of Surgeon D'Arcy Wentworth.

In 1816, Captain John Piper received a grant of 190 acres of land on a headland then known as Eliza Point. The area is known today as the suburb of Point Piper, overlooking Sydney Harbour. By then, Piper had become one of the most wealthy men in the Colony and decided to build a large home on Eliza Point befitting his position.

In 1814, Governor Macquarie's 73rd Regiment, which succeeded the disgraced New South Wales Corps, left the Colony. They were replaced by the 46th Regiment which, under the command of Bro. Colonel George Molle, had come from Ireland. North and South Molle Islands off the coast of Queensland are named after him.

Attached to the 46th Regiment was the Masonic Lodge of Social and Military Virtues No. 227. The Lodge had a Travelling Warrant issued by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. Bro. Captain John Piper became a member of this Lodge in 1816.

Bro. Captain Piper invited the Worshipful Master of the Lodge, Wor. Bro. Captain Edward Sanderson, and the members to perform the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of his intended new house. This ceremony took place on 2 November 1816 and is notable as one of the earliest public Masonic ceremonies ever held in Australia.

Extracts from the official report state:-

"At Eleven O'clock the Brethren took boats, and on passing down the Harbour were saluted by seven guns from the merchant ship, WILLERLY, Commanded by Brother CROSSET, who flew a Masonic Ensign from the masthead."

"When they arrived at Eliza Point, a Lodge was formed and opened in a retired spot. Then the Master of Ceremonies, Brother Grant, marshalled the procession, led by Brother Hetherington the Junior Tyler and closed by Brother Drummond the Senior Tyler, both with swords. In all over thirty Masons took part in the procession, including Brother Colonel Molle, the Lieutenant-Governor, and the Right Worshipful Master, Captain Edward Sanderson.

"The band of the 46th Regiment attended and played appropriate music. Each of the Brethren carried appropriate Masonic emblems, including Candlesticks, Globes, a Box of Coins and a Charity Box, a Banner, the Roll, a Basket of Corn and Pitchers of Oil and Wine, the Bible, the Square and Compasses, the Columns and the Charter supported by a Cushion."

"The procession moved towards the West, gave Grand Honours, moved thrice round to view the Square of the work, and passed under a Triumphal Arch. Then the Worshipful Master advanced towards the East between the ranks of the Brethren, ordered the Charter of the Lodge to be read and announced the purport of the meeting. The foundation stone, on which the Bible and the Square and Compasses had been placed, was ordered to be raised beneath the Triangles, The Right Worshipful Master at the same time giving an appropriate prayer.

The coins collected in honour of the ceremony were then inserted in the proper Receptacle, the Stone let slowly down, Grand Honours being given and the band playing "Pleyel's German Hymn."



The Right Worshipful Master then scattered corn, and poured Wine and Oil over the Stone, giving three strokes with his mallet. The Brethren then gave Grand Honours and the Band played "God Save the King."

The Right Worshipful Master then delivered over to the architect the plan and implements required for the building. The architect having made an appropriate reply, a suitable oration by Brother Grant as Master of Ceremonies was delivered. At the conclusion the charity box was passed round, a sum of £6/14/- being collected and placed on the Stone for the relief of the poor and needy.

The Concluding Prayer was given by the Right Worshipful Master, the Band played "Burns Masonic Farewell," and the solemn Benediction was silently given by all the Royal Arch Masons present, over the Stone, after which, the Right Worshipful Master standing thereon, and Wine being served round, the following toasts were honoured: "Our Good Old King," "Our Illustrious Brother the Prince Regent," and "Our Respected Brothers the Governor (Macquarie) and Lieut.-Governor of the Colony (Molle)."

"The Lodge then closed, and the whole company, consisting of the Brethren and the most respectable of the Ladies and Gentlemen of the community sat down to a fine repast."

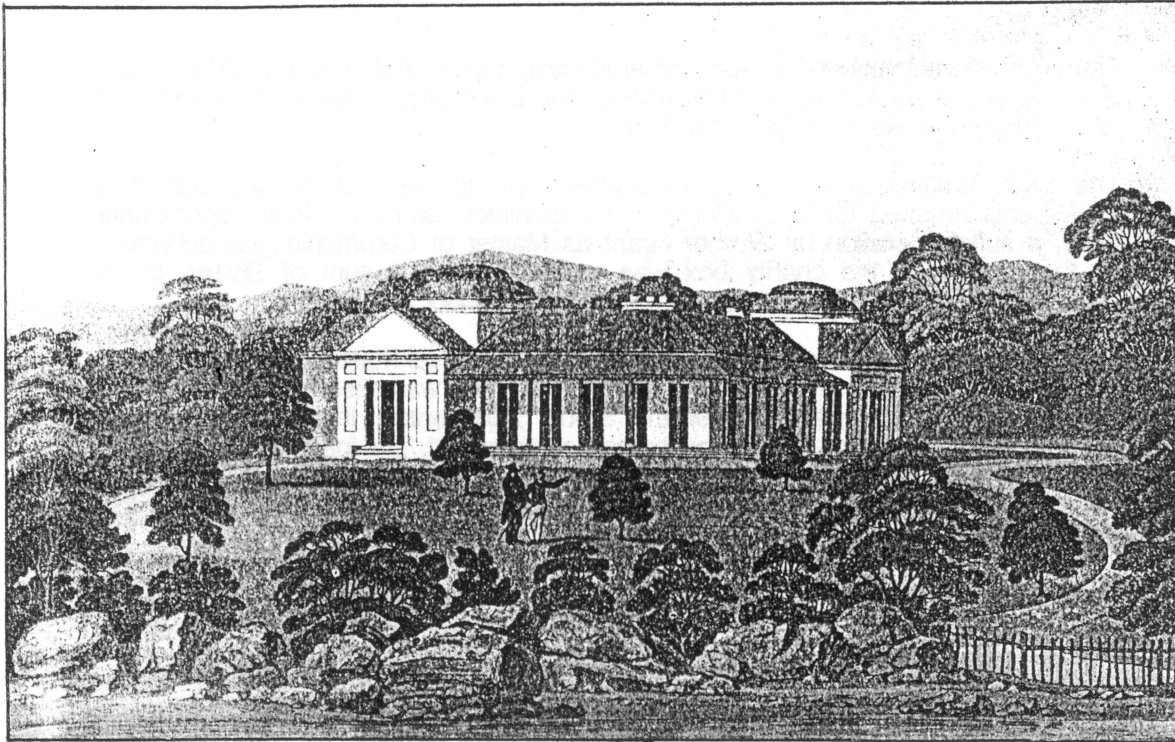
The translation of the Latin inscription on the box placed on the Foundation Stone of Bro. John Piper's house, 2nd Nov., 1816, reads:-

By the Blessing of T.G.A. of the  
Universe, in the Reign of George the 3rd,  
and during the Government of  
L. Macquarie, Esqr.,  
The Foundation Stone of this Mansion  
erected by  
JOHN PIPER  
was laid  
by  
Edward Sanderson, M.,  
of the Lodge of  
S.M.V. No. 227  
in 46 Regt. of Foot  
and an Assembly of  
BRETHREN  
on 2nd Novr., A.D. 1816  
of Masonry 5820.

The house took nearly four years to build and cost over £10,000. It was described as a Naval Pavillion, was of one storey and built of stone. Its outstanding feature was a domed ballroom in the shape of a St Andrew's Cross. The name chosen for the house was "Henrietta Villa." In September 1817, Captain Piper gave a *fete champetre* in the grounds which were the last word in elegance.

Everybody of note was invited from the Lieutenant-Governor down. One hundred and twenty officers and their ladies attended, and were 'wafted' from Farm Cove to Eliza Point in decorated boats and barges. The Band of the 46th, borrowed for the occasion, greeted them with music, and they were entertained with an elaborate and sophisticated picnic.

It was not until 1822, after Macquarie had been replaced as Governor by Bro. Sir Thomas Brisbane, that the Piper family moved into their new house. It was described as the finest house in Sydney, with one of the best views in the world.



Bro. Captain John Piper's House, Eliza Point (Point Piper), Sydney.

The whole place was a triumph of beauty. Trees and plants had been specially imported from England and on the lawn was placed a row of small brass canons with which the Captain saluted his friends on their arrival and departure. His special boat crew were trained as musicians, and it was part of their duty to act as bandsmen. Entertaining became the main business of Piper's life. Dinner parties, balls in the great domed ballroom, water parties, picnics de luxe followed one another. The house at Eliza Point was the centre of Sydney's social life.

One admirer wrote:

"He has laid out immense sums upon it and no expense has been spared to ornament this fairy palace. He does the thing properly for he sends carriages and four, and boats for those who like the water, and returns his guests to their homes in the same manner. He keeps a band of music and they have quadrilles every evening under the spacious verandahs. At the table there is a vast profusion of every luxury that the four quarters of the globe can supply . . . . ."

Wor. Bro. Sir John Jamison of Regentville was his only rival in the social world, and they did not compete, for Sir John lived in manorial state beside the Hawkesbury River whilst Piper reigned in the city.

Captain John Piper was now at the zenith of his career. By grant or by purchase he owned land not only at Point Piper, but at Vacluse, in George Street, at Petersham, at Neutral Bay, at Parramatta and elsewhere. He and his family received one of the early official grants made beyond the Blue Mountains - 2000 acres in all, at Alloway Bank, near Bathurst. Piper's property continued to increase and he never paused to consolidate. He was content to believe that the miracle would go on forever.

One of his friends admiringly called him "The Prince of Australia." He was *persona grata* at Government House, President of one of the tables of the Governor's mess, a light in the sporting world of horse racing and aquatics. Macquarie had appointed him a magistrate and, as well as this, he was Chairman of Directors of the Bank of New South Wales, President of the Scots Church Committee and was highly regarded by Governor Brisbane. He was always helping people, lending money, finding jobs for worthy young men and genteel young ladies and assisting those in poor circumstances. There are many heartfelt testimonies to his benefactions on record.

But the golden age could not last forever. In 1825, his son Hugh was killed and mourning put an end to gaieties that were never renewed, for in 1816 black and irretrievable disaster came.

In that year, Governor Darling replaced the easy-going Brisbane and was soon in conflict with his Naval Officer. The new Governor showed himself dissatisfied with the conduct of the Naval Officers Department and became anxious about the position of the Bank of New South Wales, of which Piper was the Chairman of Directors.

Although he had mortgaged his estate for £20,000, it was not suspected by Piper's numerous friends that he was now in dire financial difficulties. Aware of his impending crash, Piper invited some of his friends to a dinner party. After dinner he made an excuse to leave them on official business. He ordered his barge and told the crew, who were also his band, to bring their instruments with them. In the middle of the harbour he ordered them to play and then hurled himself into the waves to the accompaniment, of what is reputed to have been, Handel's Water Music. As arranged, the musicians rescued him and his return to his home caused great sensation.

Governor Darling suspended him from office and ordered a full investigation of his department, and into the affairs of the Bank of New South Wales. The accounts of his department were found to be in chaos; many duties had not been collected at all and Piper had given his friends credit over long terms.

The investigations proved that Piper's difficulties were the result of nothing more than neglect and mismanagement.

The Governor held the Captain responsible for all the amounts, totalling some £13,000, and first suspended and then superseded him in office.

The news of Piper's crash came as a bombshell to the Colony. Offers of assistance were made by friends to help Piper over his troubles but when such offers were put to the test, they were found to be of little, if any, value. *The Australian* newspaper, controlled by Wentworth, referred to Piper as "the best man in or out of Christendom." "Captain Piper is out of office without having resigned or without being shown to be guilty of defalcation."

When all the emotional excitement had died down, nothing could save the Captain from ruin. He had to sell all his Sydney properties including the great house at Point Eliza and its contents, and transfer himself and his family to 'Alloway Bank',

his property at Bathurst. A second property there, adjoining 'Alloway Bank' called 'Westbourne', was made over to him in part payment by Bro. William Charles Wentworth for the house at Vacluse. Piper's humiliation was complete. He saw the whole fabric of his life torn apart. At fifty-four years of age he had to make a new start and so the third phase in the life of Bro. Captain John Piper began.

With the new beginning, Piper again aligned himself with the new phase of life upon which the continent was embarking. Circumstance seemed always to make him follow the trend of life. When the military caste held sway he was a soldier; when Macquarie changed the military colony into a civil state he was a civil officer; as the great pastoral age dawned he set his face westward and became a pioneer, crossing the Blue Mountains and "marching west towards progress." He was determined to be a grand seigneur in the bush and to build up his new life there as closely as he could in the image of his old one at Point Piper. Bathurst in the 1820's offered him some chance of doing this. The town began as an almost perfect example of an arisocratic feudal community, large landholders, supported by a military caste, cultivating their land with assigned servants. In coming to Bathurst, Captain Piper found himself among friends - all the retired military gentlemen.

In a very short space of time, Piper had largely recovered his former economic and social status and life for the family at 'Alloway Bank' was accompanied by almost the same splendour they had known at Eliza Point. The homestead at 'Alloway Bank' took three years to build, and was described as a miniature mansion. It became, as Henrietta Villa had been, the centre of social life and gaiety. The farm servants, instead of his naval crew, became his musical band to welcome and entertain his guests. He had dragged his brass cannons over the mountains with him, and he fired the old salutes on the appropriate occasions.

The Governor and his wife paid Piper a visit, thus demonstrating that the Captain's reputation was still intact.

In 1831, Piper was again appointed a magistrate and gave much of his time to public duties. Money was again going out in all directions - in entertainment, in the breeding and racing of horses, in the largesse which still sprang from the Captain's good heart.

At 'Alloway Bank' the Piper's youngest children were born, Jane and Henry. Most of their children were not yet married so the Pipers' house was full of the young life which kept him happy.

Now Bathurst was his life. He became chairman of the committee which established the Presbyterian Church there; he secured the improvement of the road over the mountains and attended court. The good life lasted for thirteen years under unclouded skies.

In 1844 the whole Colony was caught up in a severe depression. The Bank of Australia failed and many families were ruined. Misfortune was again the lot of Bro. Captain John Piper. He was forced to sell 'Alloway Bank' and the Pipers had to move to their last refuge, 'Westbourne', the property which Wentworth had traded in for the Vacluse estate. Fortunately, Wentworth had funds in trust for Mrs Piper

and the children, so their last refuge was secured to the family beyond the reach of the Captain's amiable extravagance. The family was smaller now, the elder sons had their own properties and the elder daughters had married.

The Captain was an old man now, and this last failure was the end. There are no more records of gaieties, presents or benefactions. At last, the bitter wind of reality had reached him and he and his wife settled down to a comparatively retired life at 'Westbourne' on the banks of the Macquarie River.

On 8 June 1851, at the age of 78, Bro. Captain John Piper died. He was interred in the Presbyterian section of the general cemetery close to town. Twenty years later, Mrs Piper died and was laid to rest beside her husband.

Captain Piper's death caused hardly a ripple. His friends and contemporaries were nearly all dead, his 'naval villa' at Point Piper had been pulled down and little remained to call him to mind. He died on the verge of a new age, an age that began when he died. Gold had been discovered at Bathurst and new life was pouring into the country, a new life that was to dissipate the old colonial dream in which he had lived. He was among the best of all the early pioneers of New South Wales. Like his contemporaries he had weaknesses but never-the-less he possessed all the attributes of a good Mason.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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