



Paul Caleo

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~ Gathering at the gravesite of Andrew Thompson, St Matthew's Anglican Church cemetery, Windsor, Wednesday 29 June 2022 ~

On Wednesday 29 June Defenders of Thompson Square, joined by representatives of Hawkesbury Branch of the National Trust and Hawkesbury Historical Society, gathered at St Matthew's Anglican Church to celebrate the life of Andrew Thompson. We were joined by special guests Annegret Hall, Susan Templeman MP and Councillor Shane Djuric.

The gathering, hosted by Reverend Chris Jones, came about as a result of a conversation between Grant Gerrish and Annegret Hall. Grant invited Annegret to attend the gravesite of the subject of her book, Andrew Thompson.

The gathering commenced at 4:00pm outside St Matthew's Anglican Church, and those gathered listened to Reverend Chris Jones and Annegret Hall as they spoke about Andrew Thompson, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, the Reverend Samuel Marsden and St Matthew's Church. Reverend Chris had earlier opened the church and invited people to enter and look inside. A small group of people were offered the chance to climb the steep eight flights of stairs up to the landing below the beautiful windows in the bell tower end of the church and to view the heritage conservation work now underway on the windows and the church.

The group then exited the church and examined the foundation stone of St Matthews's Church, laid by Governor Lachlan Macquarie on the 11th of October 1817.

Proceeding along the Moses Street and south facing side of the church, the group made its way to the gravesite of Andrew Thompson. This is located a short distance in from the Greenway Crescent boundary of the cemetery. Francis Greenway was the designer of St Matthews's Anglican Church and was Australia's first Government Architect under Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Like Andrew Thompson before him, Francis Greenway arrived in Australia as a convict.

Reverend Chris spoke at Andrew Thompson's gravesite about the significance of the words inscribed on the gravestone. Defenders of Thompson Square is currently undertaking a project to have the original words reproduced on a bronze plaque, seeking the necessary approvals and advice on the appropriate placement of the plaque.

Reverend Chris acknowledged the work of Grant Gerrish, his character and passion. He then invited Annegret to read, from her book, the words inscribed upon the gravestone which was laid on his grave in the presence of Lachlan Macquarie and his wife Elizabeth in July 1813, almost three years after Andrew Thompson's death.

Grant Gerrish spoke next about Andrew Thompson and emphasised it has taken over 200 years for a book to be written on his life and his legacy. After some comments from Susan Templeman, Jan Barkley-Jack invited the group to cast their minds back and not look at this site as it is now, but to see it as a paddock, with the one grave of Andrew Thompson in its specially chosen location. From here we have a view out across the valley, with sight lines then unimpeded by the present line of trees.

Susan placed flowers onto the gravestone, noting in particular the inclusion of rosemary for remembrance within the bouquet, which is what we are really here to do. Susan then acknowledged and expressed gratitude for the historians who have educated her on the Hawkesbury, and the wisdom amongst this group and the generosity in sharing it. Susan said she is delighted to know more and thanked Annegret for pulling it all together in her book. Susan spoke of her hope that we can build on this and educate the wider community about the contribution of Andrew Thompson. The kids at school need to understand who the founders were and understand the character of those people and the capacity for redemption for individuals that this community offered. The flood experience is also a powerful message. Susan extended her arms and gestured to the group as she acknowledged that here is a sample of people who care deeply about Windsor. Next Susan turned to Reverend Chris and stated that he brings so much to the preservation of what is here and has spread his care beyond what happens inside the church, to his parishioners, to the much wider community, and that makes it easier for all of us to be able to keep the spirit that sits here alive. Grant interjected at this point that this 'inspires us', to which Susan agreed and went on to acknowledge Grant's relentlessness around raising awareness and refusing to give up on this stuff, and being a great instigator for a whole lot of things. To keep these things carrying on year after year you need people who are not exhausted. Susan next acknowledged Shane Djuric for attending as a councillor, for caring about this as council has a big part to play in preservation, for which she thanked him. In closing Susan thanked Annegret for helping us to " ...shine another light on the unique history that we have here, which is important not just for this area but for all of Australia. We're so very grateful." The group applauded.

Shane then spoke briefly about growing up in Hawkesbury, developing an interest in history and as an adult, fully appreciating the valuable heritage the area has to offer.

Annegret's book 'Andrew Thompson - From Boy Convict to Wealthiest Settler in Colonial Australia' can be purchased from a number of book sellers.

One source is the Hawkesbury Historical Society Bookshop section at the Hawkesbury Regional Museum. Profit on the sale of books goes to support the work of the Hawkesbury Historical Society and the Hawkesbury Regional Museum. They also operate online:

<https://www.hawkesburyhistoricalsociety.org>

Links to this and other book sellers can be found at Annegret Hall's website, together with support material to the book:

<https://www.annegrethall.com>

(Images by Paul Caleo)