

Buttsworth Mill, Wilberforce, New South Wales

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A landmark for over seventy years, Buttsworth Mill with its impressive chimney stack once stood at the approach to the town of Wilberforce on the northern bank of Buttsworth Creek. Constructed for Henry Buttsworth of locally quarried Hawkesbury sandstone, reputedly by John Stephens of Ebenezer in the mid 1840s, the mill replaced an earlier timber structure which had been in existence since the mid 1830s.

Henry Buttsworth arrived on the convict transport *Guildford* in January 1812 and was assigned to Sarah, the youngest daughter of Thomas Rose, whom he married in November 1813. Henry and Sarah acquired about 115 acres on the banks of the Hawkesbury at Wilberforce in 1828.

By 1830, twenty-six of the forty-six grain mills in the colony were located in the Hawkesbury district. Buttsworth saw the potential of establishing the milling industry in the Wilberforce district where many acres had been given over to grain crops such as wheat, maize and barley.

In conjunction with the mill, a wharf was constructed to facilitate the transport of grain and the shipping of the resultant flour or meal. Whereas most of the mills in the district were water-powered, Buttsworth's Mill was driven by steam which required large quantities of both water and fuel, the most efficient being coal which was transported by coastal vessel from Newcastle.

Following the death of Henry Buttsworth in 1853, ownership of the mill passed to his son, William. Unfortunately, the anticipated growth of the milling industry was not to be realised as by the 1860s, along with most coastal communities, the Hawkesbury wheat crop had been permanently decimated by the spread of the fungal infection known as 'rust'.

Taken together with the devastating floods of the same decade, the prosperity of the milling industry in Hawkesbury was over. Buttsworth Mill, faced with little competition, continued to operate at a reduced capacity for many years. On the death of William in 1876, ownership then passed to his brother James Rose Buttsworth who repaired the boiler and associated equipment and put the mill back in business in the 1880s. James appeared to do well, securing three first prize medals at the Hawkesbury Show, a silver medal at Sydney in 1887, and the highest order of merit at Melbourne in 1889.

In February 1901, however, James advertised for sale the mill with adjacent cottage and seven acres of land. The property was purchased in 1902 by James Hancock of East Kurrajong, and expecting to do well, he set about putting the mill in 'good order' for the production of quality maize meal supplying local stores.

By 1913, the mill property was again up for sale and this time was purchased by Amos Turnbull. In February 1915, tenders were called for the demolition of the mill and associated buildings and the stone was used to construct a home for Bruce Bowd which still stands at the end of Rose Street, Wilberforce.

The nearby two storey brick Buttsworth family home built about 1850, later known as Inglebrae Guesthouse was demolished in 1942.