

The Berkeley Pioneer Cemetery Restoration Group

by Dr A Ball

The Berkeley Pioneer Cemetery which sits in the "*Hills of Berkeley*" located on Investigator Drive, Unanderra, NSW was originally established by the Jenkins family who set aside one acre of land in the Berkeley Estate for a church and burial ground in 1862. The cemetery was transferred to the Church of England and then in 1989 to Wollongong City Council. This beautiful, picturesque pioneer cemetery, now set against the backdrop of a growing industrial estate area, has important connections with the early history of the Colony of NSW, Wollongong and Illawarra. There is a strong growing interest in the Cemetery held by many local families who have ancestors buried there and by others who have a keen interest in its history and heritage.

This beautiful, picturesque pioneer cemetery owes much to the efforts of the *Berkeley Pioneer Cemetery Restoration Group*, a local community support group formed in 1986 to carry out restoration and conservation work at the cemetery. This Group, along with the support of local residents, non-profit organizations, local businesses, volunteers, state government and Wollongong City Council have been a strong driving force in making the cemetery the splendid site it is to-day. This work includes restoration of gravesites and headstones along with many other projects such as (to list a few) the memorial gardens, the historic gates, the pergola at the entrance, a picnic table setting, seating from convict bricks and the centenary archway at the front of the cemetery.

The twentieth anniversary of the Group was marked by a special fundraising dinner recently held at Wollongong TAFE Food School to celebrate the achievements of the Group and its supporters. A presentation was given by Dr Tony Ball, great, great, great grandson of Robert Jenkins, who in 1817, was one of the first five land grantees in Illawarra (calling his grant Berkeley). Both Robert and his wife Jemima along with many other members of the Jenkins family are buried in the cemetery. Tony is presently preparing a publication about the cemetery including a historical background and a record of the achievements of the Group and its supporters over the last twenty years.