

## **PRESS RELEASE – Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

To put an end to all the speculation regarding the closure of my small business The Morpeth Ghost & History Tour, let me say from the start that the Anglican Church had no intention of shutting down the tour. This was my personal decision as I would not be comfortable in taking people on a tour that would not live up to the good reputation it had garnered over the past 2 ½ years due to restrictions being put on the church grounds, in particular the back of the church and the rectory side of the church which was the climax to the tour. It was also becoming difficult for me not knowing who was going to reverse their 'site access permission' next. I'd already lost access to historic Closebourne House due to new owners and construction works, and the church restrictions were the final straw.

As for the current media circus...it wasn't me who contacted the media. It was a concerned body of Morpeth locals who were trying to give me a helping hand. In fact, the first to contact me was The Maitland Mercury to whom I explained that I wasn't interested in causing any trouble and declined the interview. Next I was contacted by The Newcastle Herald and with the intention of letting the public know within a wider field that the business was closed to stop the 'guilt by association' tag I have had to deal with lately when other groups of people conducted ghost hunts around the town.

What you must understand is that this was a HISTORY TOUR at night with GHOST STORIES, not a ghost hunting expedition, and St James Church was my last accessible link to the towns initial land grant holder Edward Close who had the church built after making a promise to god when fighting as a soldier in one of the Spanish wars in his younger years. His image was the face of the tour. Not to say there were no ghosts in the church grounds, but I never mentioned the columbarium or anyone resting there. The ghost stories related to the church & rectory were in fact told to me by the previous Rector Roger Sharr from whom I originally had permission to be on the site and the stories were about Bishop Tyrrell who was there in 1848 and a servant girl that used to live in the rectory (also the 1800's). I used to also talk about the Memorial Window which was paid for by the people of Morpeth and installed in 1872 to say thankyou to Edward Close for having the church built. He never saw the window. He died in 1866.

What started all this controversy? I guess I'm at fault on two fronts here.

#1 – I didn't formally introduce myself to the new Rector when she arrived. I thought it best not to inform her of the possibility of the rectory where she 'lived alone' being haunted. I took this same tact with residents living above the haunted shops on Swan Street as well.

#2 – On the evening of Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011, there was a movie night in the grounds of the rectory and one of my tour members took it upon himself, even though both myself and his wife were telling him to come back, to walk over to the front door of the rectory with an EMF Meter. He didn't take a photo as has been stated in one online comment from obviously a church member attending the church function. His wife had the camera and we were standing 3 metres from the church at the time. He was told by the new rector that it was private property, and rightly so. But from that night on I always

told the tour groups not to approach the rectory. No one from the church contacted me about this incident and I didn't contact them, for I had made the required adjustments to the tour operations so this wouldn't happen again.

[Three months on]

What happens next is what I tried to explain to the media, but they edited out.

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011, myself, leading a tour group of 22 people were abruptly stopped mid tour at the back of the church by one of the church's male Clergy, to be informed that the grounds at the back of the church and the rectory side of the church were now 'private property' and that I had been sent a letter informing me of this. I told him I hadn't received a letter and when I asked him to whom it had been sent the response I got was 'YOU'. I asked him was it emailed (the email address being on my promotional material around the town) or was it sent in the post? He didn't know, so I made a point of telling him to make sure I receive another copy. On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011 the letter arrived at my home address. Anyhow, my wife noticed the letter was postmarked Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011, so how on earth could I have known not to be in that area of the church grounds on Friday 13<sup>th</sup>. It sure was embarrassing having the episode play out in front of 22 people.

Attached here is the letter that was sent to me by the Anglican Church. What you will find is it doesn't mention any public complaints like was stated in the Newcastle Herald article. Then with the NBN News footage the church representative (Rector) says I wasn't banned from the site; that it was mostly about people's safety and the sensitive areas on the site. What's ironic is that the area that they wanted to confine my tour groups to, would mean that we would have had to stand on unmarked graves. I not sure if the Anglican Church is aware of these historic unmarked graves. Local historians know about them. In any case, I always made my tour groups skirt this area as a sign of respect.

One last hurrah regarding the way my tour was run. I had the required Public Liability Insurance; I had tour members sign a waver prior to the tour; I gave receipts; I had an ABN; It was a registered business; I informed tour members that no alcohol or smoking was permitted on the tour; I had a First Aid Kit on hand; we had torches; and I always operated the tour with the utmost respect as the afterlife is a sensitive topic. The tour also provided Morpeth with free security at night. If only the Rector had attended the tour herself.

Finally...Thankyou to everyone that attended The Morpeth Ghost & History Tour. You all know it wasn't a threat to anyone in the town, it was an asset. The local restaurants benefited, the towns accommodation benefited, and it was fun while it lasted... also, I never accused the church of being 'mean spirited', I didn't accuse them of anything. That was the media.

Troy Murphie

**Note:** Scroll down to read the church letter.



St James' Morpeth

P.O. Box 80, Morpeth NSW 2321

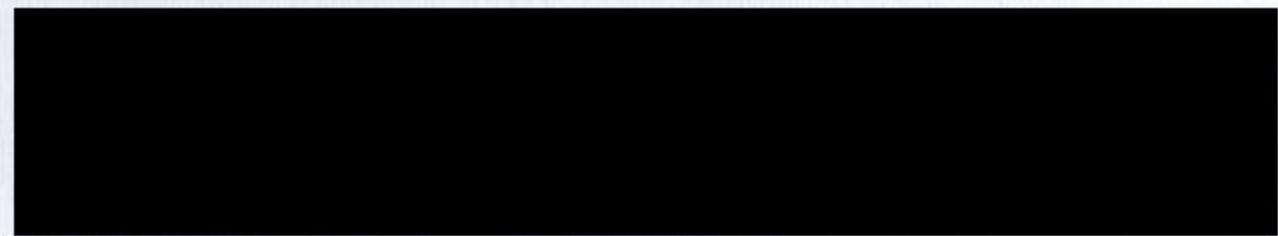
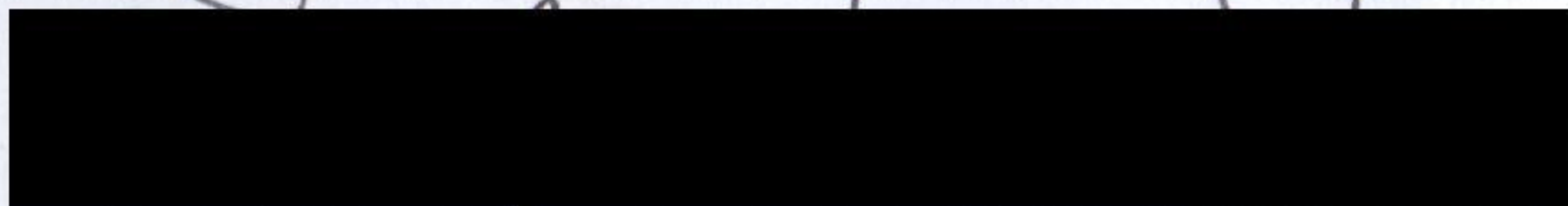
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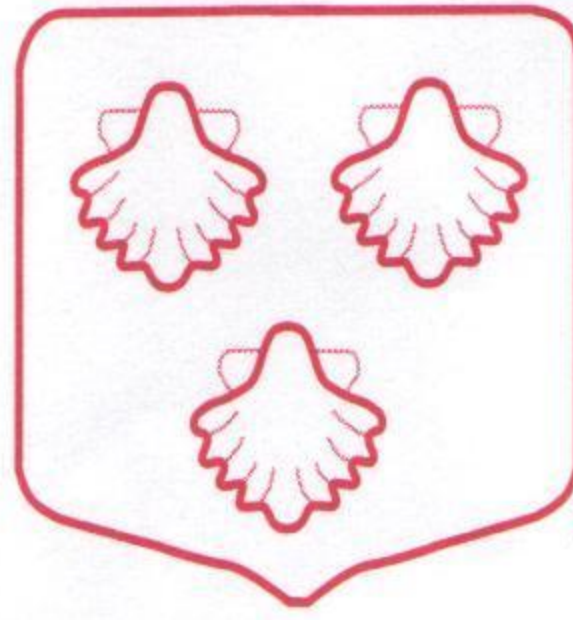
AUSTRALIA 60c

Mr Troy Murphie  
Manager, Morpeth Ghost Tours



NSW





## *St. James' Morpeth*

10 May 2011

The Manager  
Morpeth Ghost Tours

Attention: Mr Troy Murphie

Dear Sir,

We are aware of your enterprise of conducting 'Ghost Tours' through the township of Morpeth and we are also aware that you escort your tour onto the private grounds of St James' Anglican Church, located on the corner of Tank and High Sts, Morpeth.

We would like the following attended to by both yourself and anyone else on your guided tours:

- Remember that the property you are on is private and your tour should conduct themselves appropriately
- The church, and in particular the columbarium and memorial garden located at the eastern end of the church building, are sacred areas and as such, there is to be no access to this area during your tour
- The residences located along the eastern boundary, and the rectory located at the southern side of the church, are all private residences and tour access is not permitted, and your tour should conduct themselves appropriately
- At all times while touring on our property, you and the members of your tour are confined to an area not to exceed 6.00m from the perimeter of the church's outer walls.
- Your tour is not permitted to be conducted if there is any service or parish function within the church, rectory or surrounding grounds.

Appropriate behaviour includes passive, quiet behaviour and not leaving litter, empty bottles and the like, on the church grounds.

In addition to this, we would like to receive copies of your certificate of currency for public liability insurance. The certificate of currency should list specifically the Trustees of Church Property, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle as a nominated party, and needs to be for a minimum of \$10,000,000.00 cover.

We continue to wish you well in your enterprise and would encourage you to consider a financial contribution to the parish, for the ongoing maintenance of the church and its grounds, that you are using in your business venture. Cheques should be made out to "Anglican Parish of Morpeth" and posted to the address as indicated on the letterhead.

Yours Sincerely

Annette Robertson  
Secretary, Parish Council