



"Nurungi"

Remembered

Official Newsletter of the City of Canada Bay Heritage Society

email: heritage@canadabayheritage.asn.au

www.canadabayheritage.asn.au

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MARCH (2), 2013

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CITY OF CANADA BAY MUSEUM

1 Bent Street, Concord

Open Wed & Sat
10am to 4pm

Guest Speaker
on 1st Saturday of each
month at 2:00 pm

Phone: 9743-3034
during museum hours
or email

museum@canadabayheritage.asn.au

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Painting the Town Red – The Wunderlich Story

Ernest Wunderlich arrived in Sydney, aged 26, on his honeymoon in 1885. He was a business agent for a variety of European manufacturers, among them producers of sheets of stamped zinc.

At first, the young man was not very successful in his enterprise but his luck was to change. One evening a friend who was a master builder came to dinner. During a visit to the nursery he picked up a catalogue from the floor which contained illustrations of a pressed zinc clad mansard window. He instantly placed an order for their supply and the Wunderlich empire was born.

Although Ernest Wunderlich was to make a fortune out of roofs, all his life he remained more interested in cultural matters, especially music, than outright moneymaking. The two pursuits combined in 1887 however, when the new Sydney Town Hall was nearing completion.

Originally an ornate plaster ceiling was planned for the main hall. Ernest believed that the powerful vibrations emanating from the huge organ would cause the plaster ceiling to collapse. After interviewing the architects he called on Mayor John Harris and managed to persuade him to change the ceiling to pressed steel. The contract allowed him to bring skilled metal workers from Germany and rent a workshop in nearby Kent Street where the ceiling was assembled.

This major coup turned the tide of early popular prejudice against pressed metal and the following year it was used on the turrets and domes of Sydney Hospital in

Macquarie Street.

Soon Wunderlich was asked to install ceilings in piano showrooms in Sydney and from this time on business boomed.

Originally the pressed metal sheets were made of zinc but later they were produced from thin sheet steel.

In 1887, Ernest had been joined by his younger brother Alfred, and by 1893 they were manufacturing ceilings locally, having bought out a Melbourne company's interests in a firm of zinc manufacturers at Redfern. Their first catalogue was produced that year.

In 1892 Ernest Wunderlich bought the first cargo of terracotta tiles from Marseilles landed in Sydney. The original consignee had been unable to finance them. In this way relations were opened with the Marseilles tile manufacturers and regular shipments were made with an extensive turnover of the French product in Australia. The company gained the sole agency for the terracotta roofing tiles in 1894 and two decades later, Wunderlichs had imported enough tiles to roof more than 40,000 houses.

As the company said themselves, in a somewhat self congratulatory history of Wunderlich, Wunderlich literally *Painted the town red*.

"The suburbs have now assumed a rich red hue that harmonises with the dark green of the eucalyptus. To the Wunderlich brothers belongs the credit of this transformation. Indeed, this striking innovation showed Australians how to make their homes bright



Sydney Town Hall: Wunderlich made the pressed metal ceiling.

DIARY DATES

MARCH 2nd: John Fowler, "Dr. Menzies of Seacombe Private Hospital, Drummoyne"

APRIL 6th: DVD full length movie - "Codgers" (details back page).
Bookings essential.

MAY 4th: Mark St Leon, "Circus: The Australian Story"

JUNE 1st: Mark Dunn, "Henri L'Estrange, the Australian Blondin who walked across Middle Harbour"

and colourful outside; the Wunderlichs had always shown how to make them refined and aesthetic within."

In 1900 the third Wunderlich brother, Otto, formerly a London physician, and thought to be the brains behind the company's success, joined the family business and Wunderlichs embarked upon a period of streamlined efficiency. The end of the first decade saw factories in New Zealand, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Launceston.

In 1914 the far-sighted Otto introduced a non-contributory employee benefit scheme which allowed all the employees to share in their company's financial good fortune. The spirit of the early days of Wunderlich is perhaps best encapsulated in the following anecdote.

The company had filled a large order of tiles for a big building site on the banks of the Parramatta River. As payment was not forthcoming and repeated requests for the return of the tiles were ignored, one Saturday afternoon the Wunderlich brothers decided to act. Combining business with pleasure, they hired a steam tug and six barges, chose twenty employees and provided them with entertainment in the form of a band and beer. By the time they arrived at the site everyone was happily high and thought nothing of climbing the back wall, repossessing the tiles, loading them onto the barges and merrily making their way home again.

Despite the enormous success of the company, for Ernest Wunderlich, music formed the central core of his life and the creation and location of the Conservatorium of Music owes much to his cultural spirit and sheer

determination. It was he who persuaded the Government to renovate and decorate the old empty Government House stables overlooking the Botanic Gardens and Sydney Harbour to house the State Conservatorium of Music.

Although music was Ernest's greatest passion it was only one of his many cultural interests. He donated his archaeological library and much of his vast private collection to the Australian Museum of which he was a trustee for thirteen years. The small observatory built on his property at Port Hacking was another one of his gifts to the State.

Today Wunderlich no longer exists. It was sold to CSR in 1969 but proved to be financially unviable, was closed down and the site sold for commercial redevelopment. However, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, greatly aided by a \$20,000 grant from CSR, embarked on a project to record and reconstruct the remarkable history of Wunderlich and an article describing this project will be in next month's Nurungi.

(Ed. This article was printed in the *Heritage Conservation News*, Vol.3, No.21, 1985)



A fine example of a domed Wunderlich pressed metal ceiling in a local 1900's home.

Rainy Days

It rained and rained and rained.
The average fall was well maintained.
And when the lawns were simply bogs,
It started to rain cats and dogs.

And after a draught of half an hour,
There came a refreshing shower.
And then, the most curious thing of all,
A gentle rain began to fall.

A little cloud went floating by
Letting down a deluge from the sky
That wetted people to the skin,
And after that the rain set in.

Folks wondered what they next would get,
They got, in fact, a lot of wet.
But sometime soon we'll have a change,
And then, perhaps, we'll get more rain.



Faces in the Street Project

We are still waiting for your stories for this Seniors' Week project.

Have you been telling your friends and neighbours about it. We need their stories too.

It will be very disappointing if this project is a failure.

Your Museum Committee can only plan these events - we need the help of our members to make them a success.

Wunderlich Limited

The first large company to move to the Concord area was Wunderlich Limited, which manufactured pressed metal ceilings. During the war, sheet metal was needed for war supplies rather than ceilings, and asbestos sheet was developed as a substitute. The company purchased two hectares at the northern end of Phillip Street, then a dirt track, and a factory was constructed to produce Durasbestos. Materials for the building of the factory were brought to the site in horse-drawn wagons.

Production began in 1917 and by the early 1920s the factory employed some fifty people. Asbestos was brought along the river to the company's jetty and cement came by wagon, and later lorry, from the Burwood Railway Station. The finished products were shipped out by barge.

In the 1950s Wunderlich moved its factory to Rose Hill and the site was purchased by the Southern Can Company, which was later incorporated into Containers Limited. This packaging company used the site to produce cans for fruit and vegetable processors and beverage manufacturers until 1982 when the land was sold to the neighbouring Wellcom Australia Limited.

(Extract from *Concord: a Centenary History* produced by Sheena Coupe for Concord Council)

Raffle Tickets

There are still quite a few books of tickets outstanding in our Nursery Rhyme raffle.

As a registered charity we are required to account for all raffle tickets issued.

If you are one of these people with a book still outstanding would you please return it, together with any money and unsold tickets **URGENTLY**.

If possible please deliver to the museum. There's a green letterbox just outside the entrance door, where they can be dropped in. If this is a problem give the secretary a phone call and she'll try to get them picked up if you're local.

The advertised date for the draw is next Saturday so this is now extremely urgent.

Please give this your immediate attention.

Grandma's Laundry

I remember Grandma's laundry with a basket made of cane
And lines that stretched from wall to wall to hang things when it rained.
There used to be a copper out where Grandma used to toil
It used to take forever to wash when twater reached the boil.

There were twin tubs made of concrete with a wringer in between
A wringer in a laundry now is hardly ever seen.
Upon a shelf a little box of starch called "Silver Star"
Kero tins for buckets, remember back that far?

A dipper with a handle to help our Grandma cope
And a little wire basket with a piece of Sunlight Soap.
She used to have a washboard for scrubbing out the clothes
You must be getting on in years if you used one of those.

A saucer on the windowsill with bags of Reckitt's Blue
To make the white clothes whiter still and good for bee stings too.
Some sandsoap and a scrubbing brush, for scrubbing all the floors
And some firewood for the copper in a box behind the door.

A tin roof and some guttering with a funny sort of sag
And a heap of wooden dolly pegs in a homemade hessian bag.
And out the back a clothes line not the kind that spins around
But a clothes prop held the clothes up high from dragging on the ground.

I wonder what would Grandma say if only she could see
That wash-a-matic marvel where the copper used to be
The dryer in the corner the tubs of stainless steel,
Hot water pouring from the taps - I wonder how she'd feel.

I think that Grandma would approve the changes made and yet
There were things in Grandma's laundry that I simply can't forget.

(A Way of Life that Many Recall. This poem was printed in the Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin of February 2013. They in turn 'borrowed' it from the Caboolture Catholic Parish News of 29 July 2006. It carried the words, "by Archie Bigg". A search of Books of Norfolk Island describes him as, "one of Norfolk Island's Finest Bush Poets".

(Ed. note: Except for the hessian peg bag this is a complete description of "our laundry". We'll just have to get that peg bag!)

We need your help!

We are a new Society with a new beginning and we need your help to make sure our records are all up to date.

Enclosed with this issue of Nurungi is a Members Record form which we would like you to complete and return to us so that we can check our current records.

Also, on the back of this form is a Skills Audit questionnaire. Our museum needs members with many skills to be able to function on into the future. Currently our small Museum Committee is often struggling to get jobs done in areas where they have no expertise.

We would be most grateful if you could share your expertise with us. We are not seeking regular volunteer time from you, a lot of the skills would only be needed a few times each year.

For example - do you have a skill for preparing grant applications? This is one way in which we can obtain money to carry on our work. There are only about four grants each year for which we apply.

Research is another area that can easily be done at home, in your own time, if we have a particular person or place about which we need more information.

We would be most grateful if you would complete both these forms and return them to us as soon as possible.

Nursery Rhyme Display

This has proved to be our most successful endeavour to date, with large numbers of visitors on each day. They have come from distant suburbs as well as our own area.

It was not only children who came but about half of our visitors were unaccompanied adults. Everyone's comments have been most complimentary.

As a result we will be leaving it up until the end of March.

Also, on Thursday, 26th February we had a delightful group of 35 children and 15 adults who came from St. Andrew's Kindergarten, Abbotsford. They spent the morning looking at the nursery rhymes and also our other displays and had a fun morning.



A Parting Shot: Shelling of Australia by Japanese Submarines 1942.

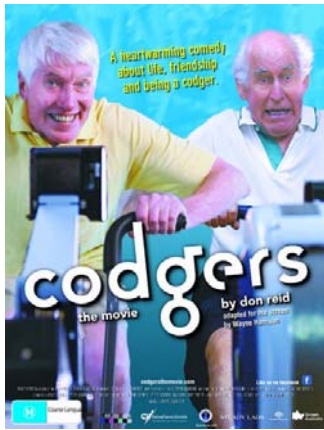
Do you remember Steven Carruthers, who spoke to our meeting early last year on the Japanese Submarine attacks on Sydney Harbour? He has co-written this new book.

It traces the story of the Japanese submarine shelling of Sydney and Newcastle - a story that until now has not been fully told. Although casualties and damage were slight, the bombardments fuelled the real fear of an impending Japanese invasion.

Why did the Japanese launch submarine operations in Australian waters when they had no intention of invading? What were the targets in Sydney and Newcastle? The authors answer these and other long-standing questions, dispelling many rumours and urban myths surrounding the attacks.

The RRP of this book is \$34.95 but Steven would be happy to drop the price to \$30 for members, with free delivery for a bulk order. If you would like to order a copy, please let the Secretary know.

More information can be found at www.casperpublications.com and the web site includes PayPal order form for single copy sales. It is also available in digital form (details on web site for \$16.99).



"Codgers" follows five everyday Aussie "codgers" who meet at the gym each week to exercise, chew the fat, sling off, sing and have a \$&+#@% good laugh.

Among the jokes and the secrets, the back strain and biceps, they learn that "difference" is more to do with your point of view and that no matter what, *"you wouldn't be dead for quids!"*

After several years as a sold-out, live theatre tour, this movie-length DVD is available for group screenings.

Cast includes Shane Porteous and Ron Haddrick.

**Booking Essential: 9744-8528 or
museum@canadabayheritage.asn.au**

City of Canada Bay Museum

Saturday, 6th April, 2013 - 1:30 for 2:00 pm sharp

(Please note that this is a movie-length presentation)

Movie will be followed by light refreshments

Admission FREE *(donations always welcome.)*

Women Who Know Their Place

Barbara Walters, of 20/20, did a story on gender roles in Kabul, Afghanistan, several years before the Afghan conflict.

She noted that women customarily walked five paces behind their husbands.

She recently returned to Kabul and observed that women still walk behind their husbands. Despite the overthrow of the oppressive Taliban regime, the women now seem happy to maintain the old custom.

Ms Walters approached one of the Afghani women and asked, 'Why do you now seem happy with an old custom that you once tried so desperately to change?'

The woman looked Ms Walters straight in the eyes, and without hesitation said, "Land mines."

The moral of the story is (no matter what language you speak or where you go) - **behind every man there's a smart woman**

A Puzzling Puzzle

A little silver-haired lady calls her neighbor and says, "Please come over here and help me. I have a killer jigsaw puzzle, and I can't figure out how to get started."

Her neighbor asks, "What is it supposed to be when it's finished?"

The little silver haired lady says, "According to the picture on the box, it's a rooster."

Her neighbor decides to go over and help with the puzzle.

She lets him in and shows him where she has the puzzle spread all over the table.

He studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, then turns to her and says,

"First of all, no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster."

Then he takes her hand and says, "Secondly, I want you to relax. Let's have a nice cup of tea, and then," he said with a deep sigh . . .



"Let's put all the Corn Flakes back in the box."

RAFFLE TICKETS: A reminder that all money, butts and any unsold tickets must be returned to us **immediately**. Please deliver to Museum (there is a letterbox at the front if we aren't open).

There are three wonderful prizes and all money raised helps us to plan for our next display.

FACES IN THE STREET: This is a project for History Week 2013 (March) and we need your help. Our last project with these stories was a great success and we received many favourable comments. Please consider submitting your own story and try to encourage others to tell their stories. They can be personal or family, or even about important people who have been connected with the area. The only restriction is it needs to be part of the history of Canada Bay - people, places, events. **We need stories in by 9th March.** Please publicise this as much as you can.

CONSTITUTION: Your Steering Committee has almost finished working on this and the final document will be presented to members at our April meeting for ratification. If you would like to have a copy in advance please let me know.

CODGERS: This movie will be our "Guest Speaker" for the month of April. There has been a lot of interest in it and bookings are already being received. As our meeting room can only hold about 50 people it is most important to let me know if you will be attending and how many. We may not be able to admit you if you don't book.

We also have advertising leaflets if you would like some to pass around to friends. Just give me a call.

SINCERE THANKS to Patricio Parague, who has completed the special storage section needed for our framed photographs and painting.

Thanks also to Patricio and Tim Caldwell who spent a morning at the museum recently sorting and stacking the photographs. Another much needed job almost finished.

WORKING BEE: We will be calling another working bee shortly to finish sorting and labelling the last of the boxes of museum objects hurriedly packed up ready for our move to Bent Street. We have applied for a large grant to allow us to obtain the services of Karen Coote to then help us carry out a Significance Assessment of our whole collection

WANTED!

Volunteers to help distribute our advertising leaflets around their home area.

Can you help? Take as few or as many as you wish. We'll deliver them to you if you wish.

Please phone 9744-8528 if you are able to assist.