



# "Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

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[www.concordheritage.asn.au](http://www.concordheritage.asn.au)

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## MEETINGS

### General Meetings

2nd Wednesday of month  
at 7:30 pm in the  
Concord Citizens' Centre  
(except July)

### Executive Meetings

4th Wednesday of month  
at 7:45 pm in the  
Concord Citizens' Centre

### Committee Meetings

As arranged  
Contact Chairpersons  
for details

### Museum

Fred Stansfield, 9743-1866

### Walker Estates

First Thursday each month  
(please contact to confirm)  
Strathfield North Public School  
Correy's Avenue, North Strathfield  
Errol Grace, 9743-4301

### Heritage

Bill Barlow, 9743-3662

### Oral History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

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**CONCORD  
HERITAGE MUSEUM**  
5 Wellbank Street

Open 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
Wednesday & Saturday

## Rookwood Tour - Sunday, 27th October

Some members have told us the original starting time was too early for them so we have now arranged to leave the Museum at 10:30 a.m.

Robyn Hawes, who sparked our interest with her talk to us in July, will meet us and conduct us around this historic site – showing us the restoration work that has been undertaken, the history and architecture of the area and regaling us with tales of the residents.

The half-day tour will cost \$22.00 per person or the full-day tour will cost \$30.00 (both include the bus cost).

We will be able to travel through the area by bus but there will be some walking to specific places during the day.

We will need to bring our own picnic lunch but will have access to chairs and tables for the break. You may need to bring some liquid refreshments during the day.

*Have you booked yet! If not, please phone Lois immediately.*

We need to know soon if we have enough to fill the bus (maximum 48 people), otherwise we will have to look to alternative means of transport.

Members' relatives, friends and neighbours are all welcome - so spread the news.

This should be a wonderful day out and the gardens should be magnificent as they are holding their Spring Garden Fair the week before.

## Death is the Martyr of Beauty

### An exploration of Rookwood Necropolis - by Dawn

As the train nears Lidcombe Station, my attention is drawn to the tall crumbling statues out the sinister side of the carriage. It is a village, a hamlet on the outskirts of the vast necropolis that looms out of view. I approach the towering gates, pausing only to read the words "ROOKWOOD NECROPOLIS" as I slip into a new, but long-standing city.

This place, I notice, has its own public transport system. A bus stop assures me of this, but a timetable could not be found: the dead have all the time in the world. It is difficult to imagine the enormity of this place until you start walking.

My first stop is to be the old Catholic section, and I venture off the road, onto grass, and head towards a cluster of headstones. These are very old and worn, a hundred years of rain etched into the surface.

Moving on I find row upon row of stones and statues, some marble, some granite, but each telling a story of lost loves, happy friendships, catastrophe and disease. I read each epitaph with mixed feelings, fascination and pain.

I'm back on the road again, "Necropolis

Drive" it is called. There are many different sections at Rookwood, so I simply let my camera lead me where it will. There is so much to see, in five visits I've never managed to reach the opposite end to the entrance, it just seems to go on and on.

I come across what looks like little rows of streets. Either side of a single-lane road are large gleaming vaults, in black and grey marble. They remind me of an ageing opera singer with her expensive clothing, where the gaudy, at times, kitsch, gold decorations and embellishings are her



### Bulletin Board

**Wednesday, 9th October - Colin Platt**  
from the **Western Suburbs**  
**Lapidary Club.**

**Sunday, 27th October - Visit to**  
**Rookwood Cemetery**

**Wednesday, 13th November - some-**  
one from a **Calligraphy Associa-**  
**tion** to speak on "**Illuminated**  
**Addresses**"

**Wednesday, 11th December -**  
**Annual Christmas Party at**  
**Rhodes Park.**

costume jewellery.

Some of these vaults have windows and doors, one has something akin to a tiny parlour inside, with antique chairs and plush, red velvet cushions, a mahogany table and countless glitzy photo frames and candelabras. Obviously it's for the comfort of the mourners left behind by the black, horse-drawn, driverless carriage. But this luxury also serves to ease the very notion of permanent death. In these pristine vaults it can be believed that the dead are merely sleeping, gone are the usual associations of dirt and decay, which drive home death's penalty. I notice that the window panes are clean and the furniture is free of dust, indicating that someone comes and cleans these shrines to human nature. Those entombed probably did their own housework when alive, in death they hire a cleaner.

I leave the gleaming marble behind me as the landscape changes yet again. These stones are old and eroded. Shrubs and tallgrasses camouflage some of the stones. Prickly branches tear at my skirts as I push through, trying to find stories and witticisms carved into the stone.

I have been walking for some time, and delight in finding a drinking fountain. As I drink, I notice the water tastes clean and delicious, and ponder upon how many cracks must be in the pipes underfoot, and how much nutrient rich earth has seasoned it...

I think I am lost, for I can't see the road, and the headstones furnish the 360 degree view apparently without end. This necropolis really is like a city: it has its rich and poor suburbs, its churches, its nurseries, rest homes, dignitaries and unknown persons, it has its own ecosystem, and is ecumenical in style. I can't work out which direction the exit lies in or which way I was headed. I press on hoping to find somewhere nice to eat my picnic lunch.

I come across more elaborate vaults, these ones are stone and the doors are cemented closed or rusted shut. One of these vaults is shaped like a miniature church, I can't believe the extravagance of it. The masonry is beautiful and inspired. The knee-high wrought iron fence creaks as I open its little gate. I feel like Alice in Wonderland after eating the "grow bigger" side of the mushroom.

The air is delicately scented by the rose garden in its courtyard. I continue wandering and get a fright as a rabbit jumps out from a caved-in tomb and scurries across my path. I find a pleasant shaded spot with a view and

settle down to eat. It seems sacrilegious, to take plastic wrapped junk food to such a peaceful and timeless place as this, so I settled for only fresh traditional foods.

A cabal of ravens swoop down and perch on stones, planning an ambush to rob me of my hunk of bread and slab of cheese. Cautiously, I place it in front of me to wet my throat with red wine, wishing I was Argus so I could watch every single villain and avert their victory. I lean back against a Celtic cross and light a cigarette, and contemplate morbidity. This Necropolis is actually very much alive, rabbits, birds, butterflies, and a variety of flora.

Continuing my chaotic meandering, I get thirsty again so I start looking for the greenest, lushest plants in hope of finding a tap, when suddenly I see it. It seems such a travesty, but it's true. There *is* always Coca Cola. My pace quickens as I fumble for change to use in the machine. I press the Coke button and to my surprise the can is icy cold. It's next to some kind of storage building that has tools and equipment laying around it.

Refreshed, I begin to climb a small hill, at the top is a war memorial centre. Hundreds of little white crosses placed meticulously in neat rows. At the summit sits a large pillared structure with a body length stone slab in the centre. Above this in the roof is a stained glass pentagram, "curiouser and curiouser". I felt like Alice again.

Further on I find a large domed structure that turns out to be a vault, it is the most extravagant one I have seen. It has two huge, heavy doors, and exquisite masonry and gargoyles.

The sun is beginning to set, so I must find the way out quickly, as the gates close at dusk. There was once a train station at Rookwood called Mortuary Station, but it was moved to a museum in Canberra, which I think is a terrible shame. Historical buildings and monuments look best *in situ*.

But now the only way out is the gate and I'm hoping I'm heading in the right direction. Finally I reach the gate, a little worn out and emotional about some of the sad stories the epitaphs told, but looking forward very much to getting home and developing the photographs.

*If you want to see the wonderful photographs referred to in this article, visit [www.goth.org.au/5/Rookwood.html](http://www.goth.org.au/5/Rookwood.html)*

*If this hasn't whetted your appetite, I don't know what will. Come and see these sights for yourself on 27th October.*

## Yaralla Open Day

Thanks to 2BL and Simon Marney this was a success beyond all expectation. Simon took Hazel King (the daughter of the head gardener at Yaralla, and who was born on the estate) on a walk around Yaralla and then broadcast this interview on radio.

This resulted in approximately 400 telephone calls from people all around New South Wales ringing to book a tour. The response was so great that we already have over 100 people on our waiting list eagerly waiting for the next open day.

Many other radio stations and personalities supported this day and we thank them all.

Instead of our usual 300 or so visitors booked in for the tours, we had over 600 and several hundred more visiting the grounds only.

Not only was the day a social success – everyone had many nice things to say and pledged their support in preserving the estate – but it was also a financial success with gross takings of over \$13,000 for the day.

We're off to a great start with our ambitious plan for the restoration of the historic squash courts.

*P.S. There will be a copy of Hazel's tape at our next meeting for you to hear.*

## Tour Guides

With this number of visitors we were pushed to our limits with all the additional tours and Devonshire teas served. In fact, without the help of several volunteers from **The Friends of Rookwood** we would not have been able to handle the crowd and we express our sincere thanks to them.

However, we can't always depend on this outside help and we desperately need our own members to serve as guides and help with devonshire teas.

It is not difficult and requires little training and just some knowledge of the information contained in our tour guide books. Why not give it a go - sign up now to get in before our next open day, tentatively set for 30th March, 2003.

### Quote for the Month:

*"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."*

## Special Thanks

to some special members who helped prepare for our Open Day . . . .

- \* to Michael Douglas for refurbishing and painting tables and chairs;
- \* to Terry Robinson for preparing our display boards;
- \* to Fred and Frank Stansfield for carpentry work in our storage area, and for all the little odd jobs;
- \* to Michael and Beryl Douglas, Jann Ogden, Lorraine Holmes and Les (non-member), for photocopying and binding our Tour Guide Books and copying other stationery (this was a major effort involving days, not just hours, of work);
- \* to all those who came along in the final days leading up to the Big One to help clean and prepare the flats and the display area. (So many that for fear of missing out on a name I have not listed them, but they know who they are and how grateful we are.)

And, on the big day itself, thank you to all the tour guides (garden and mansion), tour bookings, devonshire teas (the hardest workers of all), souvenir sellers and display minders, gatekeepers, sign putter-uppers, and cleaners.

To those whose names I have omitted, please forgive me. It was such a hive of activity in the lead up and on the day that I could well have missed you if I named individuals, but you were all important and we, and I, thank you all sincerely.

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## Local Authors Honoured

Five local writers received literary awards at the Citizenship Ceremony held on 17th September, 2002 at the Concord Council Chambers. The Mayor interviewed each author and gave them the opportunity to talk briefly of their research and work.

Our own Patricia Skehan spoke about her book, "The Walkers of Yaralla", now in its second edition. Newer residents were fascinated to learn that this significant and unique Edwardian estate is right here in our own backyard.

Noel Crusz presented his book, "The Cocos Islands Mutiny", foreword being written by James A Michener. Noel received a grant from the Australian Literature Board to publish this story through Fremantle Press.

## Noel Crusz

Noel Crusz, now a retired journalist, will be our guest speaker for February 2003.

He trained in Broadcasting at the BBC London, then worked for Pinewood Studios and The London Sunday Times. He gained a B.A. at London University. He also has a Diploma in Education from Armidale and Fordham University (USA).

Moving to America in the fifties, Noel filmed features and documentaries, winning awards worldwide. He will recall The Glorious Forties and Fifties and his work during that era in Hollywood.

Surprisingly, Crusz first vocation was as a priest, reading news on Vatican Radio. He is distinguished as the only reporter to interview Sophia Loren inside the Villa Ponti. Noel and his wife Tirzah also visit schools, giving demonstrations of Puppetry.

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## Horbury Hunt, Architect

For those who enjoyed Dr. Peter Reynolds talk at our September meeting, there is an exhibition of Horbury Hunt's work at the Museum of Sydney until the end of November.

If you would like to make a group visit, and perhaps enjoy a light lunch with Peter, please contact Trish Skehan for details.

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## On This Day – 9th October

1803 - Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins arrives at Port Phillip and founds a settlement on the site of present-day Sorrento.

1829 - Emancipists become eligible for jury service. Such juries consist of 12 men.

1889 - Report on the State of Defence of the Australian Colonies. This report suggests that the continent should federate for defence reasons.

1873 - The fifty-dollar note entered circulation.

1980 - The standard gauge railway from Tarcoola in South Australia to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory was opened.

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## Concord Fair - 13/10

We will be having a table on this day. If you can spare an hour or two to help man this, please contact Trish Skehan. on 0414-434-172

## WHY AUSTRALIA, WHY THEN?

In order to understand the reasons for the colonisation of Australia it is important to understand both the social, economic and political pressures that the British Government was facing at the time.

In the 1700s the population of England was approximately 9 million people and at least one million of these were living in abject poverty. Many people were out of work and some of those that did work, did not work regularly enough or were paid badly.

Mary Holmes (aged 14) describes her work in a coal mine:

*"I have been 8 years working in the pits. I have always hurried (dragged a cart of coal) with a belt around my waist and the chain through my legs. Sometimes I get cold and it being so wet, the wet covers my ankles. They thrash me sometimes in the pit. I have a shilling for hurrying two dozen."*

The Industrial and Agrarian Revolution was sweeping the land and in its wake huge changes in both the country and the city were forcing people into unemployment and starvation loomed. Small farmers were losing these lands and many labourers found that modern machinery was taking their jobs.

City life too was altering. New factories sprung up and industries grew. With the changes, country people began to filter into the cities looking for work. All this led to dirtier, smoggy and overcrowded cities. Prior to the Industrial Revolution each man had his place in a community. In the new factory dominated towns these men and women were simply 'factory hands' or 'miners'. There was no security from day to day; they could be laid off at the will of their employer. The old community base was weakened or, in some cases, completely destroyed.



So each day people were confronted with the harsh reality of living. Some turned to crime as they had nothing to lose, and they felt that they'd chance

getting caught because, in the 1700s, there was no established police force, just old soldiers and men patrolling the streets trying to catch criminals.

A young pickpocket describes his life:

*"I have been in prison 13 times in all. Every time I came out harder than I went in. I saw Manning and his wife hung. I did 4 shillings and six pence at the hanging, two handkerchiefs and a purse with 2 shillings in it. I've lived a great deal in lodging houses and knows the ways of them. They are very bad places for a boy to be."*

The government's reaction to this increase in crime was to introduce heavier penalties. In the 1700s people could be hung for picking pockets, stealing horses, cattle and sheep and for certain shoplifting offences. In fact, there were over 160 crimes for which people could be given the death sentence.

But rather than seen as the deterrent that the government had wished for, hanging became a popular entertainment. Grandstands, food and drink stalls and buskers too helped make a hanging a family entertainment.



Transportation as a form of punishment had its roots with a bill passed in 1597.

*"An acte of punyshment of rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars shall be banished out of this realm and*

*shall be conveyed to such parts beyond the seas as shall be assigned by the Privy Council."*

From the 1600s convicts were transported across the Atlantic to work in the plantations of the New Land. After 1717 transportation was stepped up to deal with more petty crimes and continued until 1775 when the Americans rebelled and the beginnings of the American Revolution halted the influx of convict labour into America. America told Britain that it no longer needed or wanted convict labour to pollute its shores. America instead turned to black slavery from Africa. All this spelled the end of Britain's transportation to the Americas.

Britain felt the affects of the forced end of transportation almost immediately. Her gaols began to overflow. The British Government did not want to enlarge the gaols, instead they believed that America would eventually change her mind. But the American Government steadfastly refused to receive any more convicts.

Hulks along the Thames were soon set up as temporary prisons, but they were not, and never were intended as a permanent solution and soon, with the spread of disease and the cost of security to stop the threat of rioting increasing amongst the hulks, the British Government was forced to make a decision. Transportation must recommence and Australia (mapped in 1770 by Captain James Cook and proclaimed a British possession) was seen as the ideal answer for a number of reasons.

If Britain colonised Australia that would stop the French from doing so and gaining a port in the growing trade areas of the east. There had also been reports of good supplies of flax and timber in nearby Norfolk Island, essential for any seafaring nation.

## From the Secretary's Desk

### VACUUM CLEANER WANTED

Does anyone have a vacuum cleaner they no longer use (in good working order) they would like to donate to our society. This will be helpful when cleaning the flats at Yaralla ready for our open days.

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### HANDYMAN WANTED

There is still some work to be done in setting up our storage area at Yaralla. We need some shelves in a cupboard – any volunteer(s) for the job?

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### BUS DRIVER WANTED

Do any of our members hold a licence (LR or higher) which would enable them to drive an 18-seater bus for society outings? We'd like to hear from you.

## Transportation

**The following is the list of crimes that was punishable by transportation**

- \* All theft above the value of one shilling.
- \* Thefts under the value one shilling.
- \* Receiving stolen goods, jewels and plate.
- \* Stealing lead, iron or copper.
- \* Stealing ore from black lead mines.
- \* Stealing from furnished lodgings.
- \* Setting fire to underwood.
- \* Stealing letters.
- \* Assault with intent to rob.
- \* Stealing fish from a pond or river.
- \* Stealing roots, trees or plants.
- \* Bigamy.
- \* Assaulting, cutting or burning clothes.
- \* Counterfeiting the copper coin.
- \* Clandestine marriage.
- \* Stealing a shroud from a grave.
- \* Watermen carrying too many passengers on the Thames, if any drowned.
- \* Incorrigible rogues who broke out of prison and persons reprieved from capital punishment.
- \* Embeuling naval stores.

Source: [www.convictcreations.com/history/caesare.htm](http://www.convictcreations.com/history/caesare.htm)

## Dates for your Diary . . .

- ☛ *Wednesday, 9th October - Colin Platt from the Western Suburbs Lapidary Club*
- ☛ *Wednesday, 23rd October - Executive Meeting*
- ☛ *Sunday, 27th October - Tour of Rookwood Cemetery*
- ☛ *Thursday, 7th November - Walker Estates Committee (venue to be advised)*
- ☛ *Wednesday, 13th November - "Illuminated Addresses"*
- ☛ *Wednesday, 27th November - Executive Meeting*
- ☛ *Wednesday, 11th December - Our annual Christmas Barbecue at Rhodes Park from 5:30 p.m. Booking essential for catering. Cost \$10 per head, all food supplied. BYO liquid refreshments. Visitors welcome.*