



"Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

EDITOR

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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)
Concord Bowling Club
Clermont Ave, 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

You're Invited . . .

. . . to join us for a **Working Bee** at the Museum during January.

To give us time to get all the necessary work done we have set the dates for

**Saturday 11th,
Wednesday 15th
Saturday 18th**



Work still start at **10:00 am** until late afternoon. If you can come along on any of these days would you please telephone Lois so we can plan the jobs for each day.

The main work to be carried out is to clean out the store room, see what needs to be kept and what can be disposed of and re-pack and label boxes so items can be easily located. This will involve lifting so some strong arms and backs will be useful.



We will also need to mop the floors and clean and dust the displays and cases. Depending on what we find in storage we will probably rearrange some of the cases as well.

Why Australia?

by *Liz Palmer*

A look at why Australia was chosen for a convict settlement.

On the 4th of July 1776, America gained its independence from Great Britain. This was not only of major significance to America, but completely changed the history of Australia.

The most significant effect, as far as Australia is concerned, was that America was no longer prepared to accept England's convicts. Transportation had been a good way to treat convicts in the past. Not only did it solve the problem of where to keep them, but it removed them from England.

When America stopped accepting convicts, the prisons quickly filled. The large number of convictable offences, and the high poverty rates, meant that many people were convicted of crimes during this time. England did not have the space to keep them all.

A temporary measure was to put the convicts into hulks, but even these soon filled up. Somewhere else had to be found as a suitable place for transportation.

Another result of the War of Independence was that England had to find somewhere to send those Americans who remained loyal through the war. James

Matra, who was midshipman on the Endeavour when Cook discovered the east coast of Australia, suggested that Botany Bay would be a good place for the loyalists. As transporting the convicts was a higher priority for the English government, he later amended his proposal to include convicts.

Australia's isolation made it a perfect place for a convict settlement. It was difficult to escape from and, indeed, difficult for convicts to return to England even after their sentence was completed. But there were other reasons why Australia was thought a good place to build a settlement.

Due to France's involvement in the War of Independence, England had to consider its defence strategies. If England were at war with France, it would be useful to have a naval base in the area of Australia. Also, the flax and pines grown at Norfolk Island were thought to be appropriate for the making of sails and ship masts, which



Bulletin Board

January - NO MEETING

February 12 - Noel Crusz, "Hollywood in the 50's" (see write up in October *Nurungi*)

March 12 - Amy Wilcher, Parapsychologist, "Ghosts of Yaralla and other Paranormal Phenomena"

would be useful in a war.

So England decided to send its convicts to Australia, based on accounts given by Banks and Matra, who saw the land 17 years previously. Those aboard the Endeavour presumed that they were viewing Australia during its dry season, when, in fact, it was the wet season. The flax and pines that would have built sails and ship masts turned out mostly unsuitable for that purpose.

If England had known all this, there is no doubt they would have chosen somewhere else for their convicts and the history of Australia would have been completely different.

SOURCE: www.australianhistoryonline.com/article1006.html. Reprinted with permission of the author, Liz Palmer.

Progressive Dinner

Saturday, 22nd February, 2003

Book this date into your diary now!!

It will commence at 6:30 pm at the home of Errol and Margaret Grace, 27 Boronia Street, Concord West for pre-dinner drinks and nibbles; then on to Trish Harrington's at 22 Princess Avenue, Concord for the main meal.

It will conclude with dessert at the home of Lorna and Allan Wright, 2 Myall Street, Concord West.

Cost: \$30.00 per head.

If you can help with catering, please telephone Trish on 9764-3296 or Errol on 9743-4301.

If you will be joining us please telephone the secretary as soon as possible for catering arrangements.

Vale Vicki Ferguson

On 8th December 2002, a memorial service held at History House, celebrated the life of Viscountess Joy de Capele d'Hancs, better known to many of our society members as Vicki, partner of Graham Ferguson.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Vicki died on 17th November 2002, after a long illness. She had a great zest for life. Joining many committees, she organised dances balls and dinners to raise funds for various charities. The Haywire Committee for the NSW Institute of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind; the Family Welfare Bureau Younger Set and The Gold Diggers Committee for the William Morris Hughes Memorial Cottages Appeal were some causes she supported.

In Sydney in 1959, Joy Hann married Viscount Gerard de Capele d'Hancs, a member of the Toulouse nobility established before the Crusades. They lived in Algiers during the war. After the breakdown of the marriage, Vicki shared a flat at Double Bay with Lydia Lamas, wife of the film star Fernando Lamas. Soon she met young Graham.

Legend has it that Joy, wearing a tiara at a Duntroon ball, so closely resembled a young Queen Victoria, that she was given the nickname *Vicki*.

She lived travelling, visiting Europe and Britain, but her special love was Paris, where she was often mistaken for screen actress, Jeanne Moreau. Her friends gave her a return trip to France for her 50th Birthday.

For thirty years, Vicki has shared her life with her soul mate Graham. He fondly remembers her as 'stylish, funny, loyal, warm, loving and giving, a person of integrity and true grit. They don't come much better than that.'

Clean up Australia Day

Sunday, 2nd March, 2003

"Australia's Own Medication"

We have decided to hold our "clean up" effort at Yaralla on this day. It will be a good opportunity to make the area more presentable for our open day on 30th.

If you will be able to take part, please telephone the secretary.

Details of times, etc., later.

Walker Estates Committee Meeting

Thursday, 6th February at 8:00 pm at Concord Bowling Club

This meeting is open to **all** members who are interested in the preservation of the Walker Estates, particularly Yaralla.

There are many interesting things in the pipeline so come along and give us the benefit of your input.

Please **note the date** on your calendar **now** so that the secretary doesn't have to remind you.

The preservation of this unique estate is a very important part of our activities and the more people meeting together to discuss ways and means of making sure nothing happens to it, the more we will be able to achieve.

Our big task over the coming months (years?) is to raise enough money to restore the squash court, the first built in Australia, so we need all the help we can get and all the ideas for raising the money.

Come along and help us!!!

Centennial commemorative medal, 1788 – 1888

British settlement on the East coast of Australia began on 26 January 1788.

Medals were made to commemorate the first centenary of this event.

This example, in gold, was presented to Sir Henry Brougham Loch, Governor of Victoria, in 1888.

The medals were struck by the Sydney firm WJ Amor in gold, silver and bronze and were awarded to 'prominent citizens and Shire Councils'

http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/coins/1788/gold_medal.html



Obverse – The front of the medal depicts Britannia in a form easily recognised in 1888, as it is exactly as found on the everyday bronze coins of that era. However the words ONE PENNY on the coin is replaced with AUSTRALIA. Below the main design is a crown with the letters G R at its sides for Georgius Rex [King George III — the King in 1788] and the date January 26 1788.



Reverse – The back of the medal shows the New South Wales Arms within a wreath of Australian native plants. At the top is a crown above the conjoined letters VR, an abbreviation of Victoria Regina [Latin for Queen Victoria]. Below is the centenary date 1888 around which is the Latin legend ORTA REGENS QUAM PURA NITES [Recently risen how brightly you shine].

Were There 19th Century Working Class Communities?

The following is portion of a paper I submitted as part of my Masters Degree several years ago. In the hope that the contents will be of interest, I have submitted same! In addressing this question, I examined Mortlake in the Local Government Area of Concord from approximately 1883 to 1900. My sources included historical and government material which let me to explore the development of this geographical region into a thriving township populated by a distinct working class community. This particular working class community emerged as a result of the impact of the Australian Gas Light Company which provided the major employment for that period. I will discuss how a fragmented village became a major industrial centre by the turn of the century with the associated infrastructure necessary to service the community. Lola Sharp

Mortlake, situated on the foreshores of the Parramatta River, has endured cyclical changes in its history, emerging from a fragmented township in the closing decades of the last century to a distinct population growth area, experiencing prosperity and depression several times over throughout its growth, due to the nature of its industrial links. Today, Mortlake is enjoying gentrification, revelling in a real estate boom because society values "water views" as the epitome of housing considerations and as such, is outside the price range of our late 20th Century working class aspirations. However, my brief is to argue that the original geographical area of Mortlake developed into a typical late 19th Century working class community; that it's **geographical location** was integral in **attracting capital to create employment**, thereby accumulating population requiring the infrastructure necessary for community habitation.

Within this historical time frame, there is an employment "boom and bust", the impact of which affects the young community. Use of Australia Post Archives provided me with an opportunity to observe local history "from the ground" regarding prevailing social conditions, attitudes and personalities. Examination of Sands Sydney and Suburban Directory 1880-1896 allowed me to make my own assessment of the population in Mortlake at that point of time. I concluded that the establishment of the Australian Gas Light Company was pivotal to the formation of an industrial working class community with a commonality of interest, specifically employment. This led to the infrastructure required to support and service Mortlake community in the physical sense.

Geography as location

The Municipality of Concord was initially proclaimed on 11th August, 1883, an area of 9 square kilometres, supporting a population of over 500 residents, with its northern boundary being the Parramatta River while the southern boundary reached a 'line along the centre of [Parramatta] road' to about the north boundary of the Municipality of Burwood. Tucked in the northern boundary was the beginnings of Mortlake, first known as Breakfast Point in 1799, then variously as Batchelors or Green Point.

Supposedly "Mortlake" as a place name had its origins in English geography, named by settlers to remind them of moorings along the Thames River. Thus the village of Mortlake already had obvious transport advantages, firstly being serviced by the Parramatta River Steamship company from the 1860's and from 1874, horse drawn buses that crossed the Parramatta Road at an area which was the coach halfway point between Sydney and Parramatta and connected with Burwood Railway station.

Capital as Employment creating identity

It was this very accessibility by land and water which in 1883 induced the Australian Gas Light Company (AGL) to purchase 42 acres of land for new works on the southern side of the Parramatta River. Development quickly extended to 80 acres then 120. This was a departure from previous company policy of building small works (such as those at Balmain and Five Dock) close to the area to be supplied. Mortlake was to be **the** showplace, with room for expansion and buildings of expansive scale, "churchlike in appearance, temples to industry". The Retort House, more than two storeys high, 270 feet long and 70 wide, was flanked by two grand edifices providing covered storage for 8,000 tons of coal, delivered by part steam, part sail from Newcastle. Railway tracks carried by a viaduct from the jetty at Breakfast Point bore locomotives which delivered the coal to huge bins to supply constant fuel for the charging of the retort. The accompanying holders, over thirty metres high, also on a scale never seen before, radically changed the appearance of the Municipality of Concord. By the time the building of the new works began, its benefits were enjoyed by people of moderate means as well as by the wealthy, with gas sent from Mortlake being made available to the working class by use of the penny in the slot meter.

Identity creating Community of consciousness

From the very beginning, Mortlake's workmen formed a close community, working together to improve their lots and supporting each other in difficulty.

The works were being built while the 8 hour day was coming into general acceptance in Sydney, thus forcing the AGL to bow to the inevitability of change. Where once stokers, engine drivers and boilermakers worked twelve hour shifts day or night, they ultimately gained the eight hour day, unlike the Blacksmiths who had won it in 1883. The 1890's marked the beginning of open conflict between capital and labour. The Stokers Union (comprising Stokers, Yardmen, Engine Drivers and Boilermakers) successfully negotiated concessions such as wage rises, payment of time and a quarter for Sundays and public holidays. The retorts at the AGL were a continuous operation but despite the initial harsh conditions at Mortlake, men wanted to work there because the continuity of operation offered greater job security than other industries of the day and because the Company provided some compensation to families as a result of death or injury.

The building boom of the 1880's necessitated building a second retort house at Mortlake but by its completion in 1893, Sydney was in the grip of a severe depression affecting most of Australia. The resultant unemployment of the level experienced between 1891 and 1895 was unprecedented. By 1890 due to the extreme preceding growth of Mortlake, AGL staved off the mainlaying of the Company coming to a halt for quite some time especially since the Balmain and Five Dock works were closed. Apparently, AGL was never in danger of collapse but its public and private consumers suffered financial distress and reduced their use of gas. Economy measures instituted by AGL included the reduction in workingmen's wages of 1d. in the shilling from November 1893. Despite the Gas Stokers Protective Association meeting with the Directors, a report from that meeting shows the "men accepted their position in the structure of society. Whilst the second retort house stood idle till the end of the decade, wages of those "lucky enough to keep working" were reduced, but Mortlakers, unlike their Victorian counterparts, did not resort to striking. Skilled workers were always more fortunate than unskilled who, in bad times were laid off, the usual fate of such men.

Physical community and required infrastructure

With the advent of the AGL, Mortlake was quickly transformed from a quiet rural district, with an influx of people soon requiring the associated infrastructure of transport, schools, shops and churches. An advertisement for the sale of land on 13th September 1884 displays a map of Mortlake - "Parramatta River . . . near the Gas Works, ten pound deposit". In 1888 the "Echo" reported that already a very large number of men were employed at these works, and a small township had sprung up in the vicinity. Records of 1896 indicate Mortlake gasworks employed an assistant engineer and three clerks, sixty-three lamplighters, and 212 stokers, mechanics and yardmen, a total of 279 men. Local foundries also expanded to make castings which were then completed by AGL workmen. The subsequent growth of the population led to greater sense of community identification. The "Echo" report of 1890 refers to the township that had grown up around the gasworks, mentioning amongst other evidences of "progress and civilization" Mr. Sturt's hotel, the Concord Working Men's Club, churches, working men's cottages and noting that the village of Mortlake was the largest in the municipality. Karskens describes Mortlake as a thriving compact population centre in contrast to the intermittent and dispersed development of most of the municipality; that the Pier and Mortlake Estates had been subdivided and well established by 1890. She describes the street planning of most of Mortlake area as "reiterating a pattern of the rest of the municipal-

ity, that is a patchwork of rectilinear grids within the lines of earlier roads". However, she notes the exception in the early subdivision of Mortlake Estate and Mortlake Village where Northcote, Edwin and Bertram Streets . . . intersect Hill Street and Tennyson Road at odd angles . . . resulting in narrow allotment. Karsken considers this to be modelled on the subdivision pattern of inner city suburbs, somewhat incongruous in the rural, isolated landscape of this area. I would argue that it is this very incongruity that remains a tangible evidence today of the emergence of Mortlake as a typical 19th Century working class community.

(to be continued)

References:

- F Bolt *Municipality of Concord 1884-1901*
R. Broomham *Mortlake 1886-1986*
K. Buckley & T Wheelwright *No Paradise for Workers*
R. Cashman "A Suburb" in *Local History Co-ordination Project Locating Australia's Past: A practical guide to writing local history in New South Wales*
C. Coupe *Concord A Centenary History*
R. Gollan *Radical and Working Class Politics*
G. Healy *The Book of Sydney Suburbs*
G. Karskens *Concord Heritage Study*
M. Kelly *Sydney: City of Suburbs*
J. McCalman "Class and Respectability in a Working Class Suburb" .. quoted in McCarthy "Defining the Field" in *History and Communities* ..
A. O'Brien "Untangling the Web: Interpreting Written Evidence" in *Local History Co-ordination Project Locating Australia's Past: A practical guide to writing local history in New South Wales*
G. Shaw *Concord Jubilee 1882-1933*

Dates for your Diary . . .

- ☛ *January - there will be no general meeting in January*
- ☛ *11, 15, 18th January - Working Bees at Museum*
- ☛ *Wed. 22nd January - Executive Meeting - 7:45 pm, Senior Citizens Centre*
- ☛ *Thurs. 6th February - Walker Estates Committee - 8:00 pm, Concord Bowling Club*
- ☛ *Wed. 12th February - General Meeting - Noel Crusz, "Hollywood in the 50's"*
- ☛ *Sat., 22nd February - Progressive Dinner (see item elsewhere)*
- ☛ *Wed. 26th February - Executive Meeting - 7:45 pm*
- ☛ *Sunday, 2nd March - Clean up Australia Day (Yaralla)*
- ☛ *Thurs. 7th March - Walker Estates Committee - 8:00 pm*
- ☛ *Wed. 12th March - Amy Wilcher, Parapsychologist, "Ghosts of Yaralla and other paranormal phenomena"*
- ☛ *Wed. 26th March - Executive Meeting - 7:45 pm*

From the Secretary's Desk

CAR BOOT SALE

Thanks to those who helped with this function - on the day and supplying items for sale - it added \$257.50 to our bank account.

It is hoped to hold another one later in the year so start checking to see if you have anything you can offer to us for sale.

CHRISTMAS BARBECUE

Thirty-six members and friends gathered at Rhodes Rotary Park to enjoy a pleasant evening of fellowship and fine food. A fitting way to end our year. If you didn't make it, note the date in your diary for 2003 - the 2nd Wednesday in December. See you there!

GROUP TOURS OF YARALLA

As well as our regular Open Days we are now seeking volunteers who can spare some time on weekdays (or odd weekends) for grounds tours and serving Devonshire teas.

These group tours will only consist of approximately 10 to 50 people and will only cover a short period of time.

If you would be able to help, contact the secretary to put your name on the list.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

We are still in need of help with photocopying old newspapers - filing correspondence and newspaper clippings, etc., etc.

Just give the secretary a call when you have a free couple of hours.

HAVE YOU CALLED LOIS ON 9744-8528 ABOUT . . .

- ☛ .. Working Bees at Museum - 11th, 15th & 18th January
- ☛ .. Progressive Dinner - 22nd February
- ☛ .. Clean Up Australia (Yaralla) - 2nd March
- ☛ .. Yaralla Open Day help - 30th March
- ☛ .. Yaralla Group Tours Roster list - for weekdays
- ☛ .. Helping with newspaper cuttings
- ☛ .. Helping with filing, etc.