



Nurungi

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

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MEETINGS

General Meetings

2nd Wednesday of month
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre
9 Wellbank Street, Concord

Executive Meetings

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

Walker Estates Committee

1st Thursday each month
(please contact to confirm)
Concord Bowling Club
Clermont Ave, North Strathfield
Graham Packett, 9743-3007

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Fred Stansfield, 9743-1866

Archives/Local History

Kate Skillman, 9706-7479

Heritage

Bill Barlow, 9743-3662

Oral/Family History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

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**CONCORD
HERITAGE MUSEUM**

5 Wellbank Street

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

No. 100

July 2004

Liberty Plains – 1793

In accordance with Imperial instructions Governor Phillip, shortly after landing at Sydney Cove, proceeded to give effect to that part of his commission of April 2, 1787 which had reference to the "*Cultivation of land . . . for procuring supplies of grain and ground provisions*" for the maintenance of his people, but "*finding few amongst the convicts who were inclined to be industrious*" he wrote in his letter of July 9, 1788 to Under-Secretary Nepean as follows:

If fifty farmers were sent out with their families they would do more in one year in rendering this colony independent of the mother country, as to provisions, than a thousand convicts.

In subsequent communications Phillip repeatedly referred to the necessity for the introduction of free practical farmers in the interests of settlement. Owing, however, to the difficulty experienced in inducing farmers to undertake the long and hazardous journey to the antipodes, and the subsequent uncertain life in a convict settlement, the Home Authorities were unable, during Phillip's stay in the colony, to provide the much desired assistance.

The first free settlers sent out by the Home Government, in response to the solicitations of Phillip, arrived at Sydney on January 15, 1793 aboard the Bellona and, as stated by Lieutenant Governor Grose in his despatch dated February 16 of the same year, "*were placed in situations of their own choosing*". A descriptive list of these settlers was enclosed in the Secretary of State's despatch of July 15, 1792, in which communication he also expressed his sorrow in stating that "*these settlers are as yet all who have offered themselves*".

Those who came were:

- Thomas Rose, aged 40, farmer from Blandford with his wife Jane and their children - Thomas, Mary, Joshua and Richard;
- Elizabeth Fish, aged 18, related to the Rose family.
- Edward Powell, aged 30, farmer and fisherman from Lancaster;
- Thomas Webb (and his wife), gardener;
- Joseph Webb, aged 18, nephew of T. Webb;
- Frederick Meredith, baker; and
- Walter Brodie, blacksmith.

Of the six male adults listed, four had already been to Port Jackson as ordinary seamen - Meredith, Brodie and Thomas Webb in HMS Sirius, and Powell in the Lady Juliana transport.

Brodie, being unable or unwilling to join the five others on Liberty Plains, was granted land fronting the Parramatta Road, opposite Ashfield Park, but apparently unable to support himself owing chiefly to inebriety, he was ultimately returned to Britain and his land grant cancelled.

The conditions under which the first free settlers had engaged to settle were (according to official statements): *to have their passage provided by the Government, and on landing to receive an assortment of tools and implements from the public stores; to be supplied with two years' provisions and one year's clothing; the land to be granted free of expense, and the services of convicts to be assigned them.*

The areas allowed them were as follows: to Powell (No.15) and Thomas Webb (No.14), both of whom were married (the former, upon arrival, having wedded Elizabeth Fish) eighty acres each; to Meredith (No.13) and Joseph Webb (No.12) sixty acres each; and to Rose and his family 120 acres were granted, on the bank of the rivulet – Powell's Creek.

With regard to the itinerant movements of these settlers in quest of land suitable for farming purposes, nothing appears to have been recorded, but upon glancing at Grimes' map of the allotments we observe that the rectangular piece of ground chosen would indicate that only four of the settlers had at first decided to adjoin each other, viz. Powell, Meredith and the two Webbs.



Bulletin Board

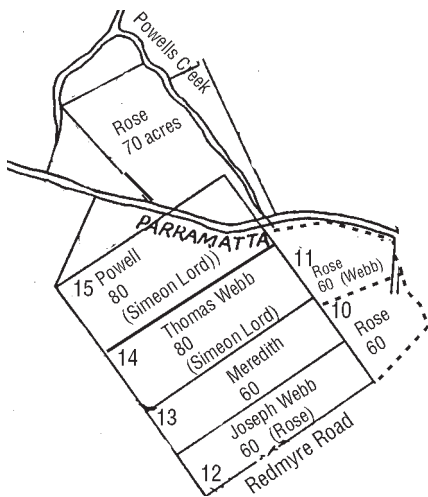
14th July - Marion Smith, National Council of Women

11th August - Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers

Upon Rose joining his fellow immigrants later on it is assumed that he had exchanged land with Joseph Webb – the latter receiving sixty acres on the Parramatta Road (No.11) in lieu of Portion No.12. This latter portion was increased subsequently in the interest of Rose by an addition on the south, along the southern boundary of which Redmyre Road, Strathfield, was ultimately formed.

Mention may also be made of the irregular method of adjusting the survey of allotments to the streamlet (Powell's Creek) passing through the settlement but the survey of land grants in those days was frequently made by the settlers themselves, hence the adoption, where possible, of rectangular forms of measurement, the computations of which being within the knowledge of farmers generally.

It may likewise be stated that the survey of Portions 10 and 11 (if effected, which is doubtful) would be postponed pending the adjustment and consolidation by Rose of his allotments (10 and 12), hence the provisional and somewhat irregular forms of these portions (10 and 11) as charted on Grimes' map of the region, and on sketch herewith.



The selection of Homebush-Strathfield ground for agricultural purposes by these free settlers was immediately followed by a progression settlement of the surrounding country, Lieutenant-Governor Grose having considered it necessary to establish such an occupancy midway between Sydney and Parramatta for the convenience and safety of the travelling public.

Much of the ground immediately to the north (Concord) and northwest (the Abattoirs and its environs) was unconditionally allotted to non-commissioned officers and privates of

the New South Wales Corps and Marines, many of whom, however, disposed of their 25-acre lots (bonus land grants) as soon as granted.

With the assistance of convict labour the settlers, for a time, made good progress in clearing and cultivating their ground, but later on (1797) the poverty of the district became so pronounced that the Governor found it necessary to appoint a committee of inquiry and accordingly the Rev. S. Marsden and Surgeon Arndell were instructed to inspect and report, extracts of which report are as follows:

The farmers in Concord and Liberty Plains are very poor and greatly involved in debt, and are now living upon credit. Most of them have no seed wheat, and have every appearance of approaching ruin . . . under their present circumstances they will not be able long to hold their lands.

It is also stated that:

The first free settlers were considered as men of general good character; the cause of their ruin and misfortunes may be easily traced (in their own representation) to the enormous sums which are exhibited against them at the different Courts of Civil Judicature.

To the rapidly diminishing productive capacity of the soil under constant cropping, without the aid of manures, may be attributed, in part at least, to the unfortunate state of affairs mentioned above. Owing, therefore, to the necessary frequency in the opening of fresh ground, it was soon considered advisable in the interest of the community to increase the holdings of bona fide settlers, in harmony with which project an additional grant of seventy acres adjoining Portion 15 was allowed to Rose and his sons in 1798, and Meredith secured an allotment of sixty acres at the northern extremity of Concord (Rhodes), fronting the Parramatta River and Homebush Bay.

Both of these settlers, however, while retaining an interest in their land grants, had found employment elsewhere. (Powell is shown as holding an

other area of 60 acres between the original grants and Meredith's grant at Rhodes.)

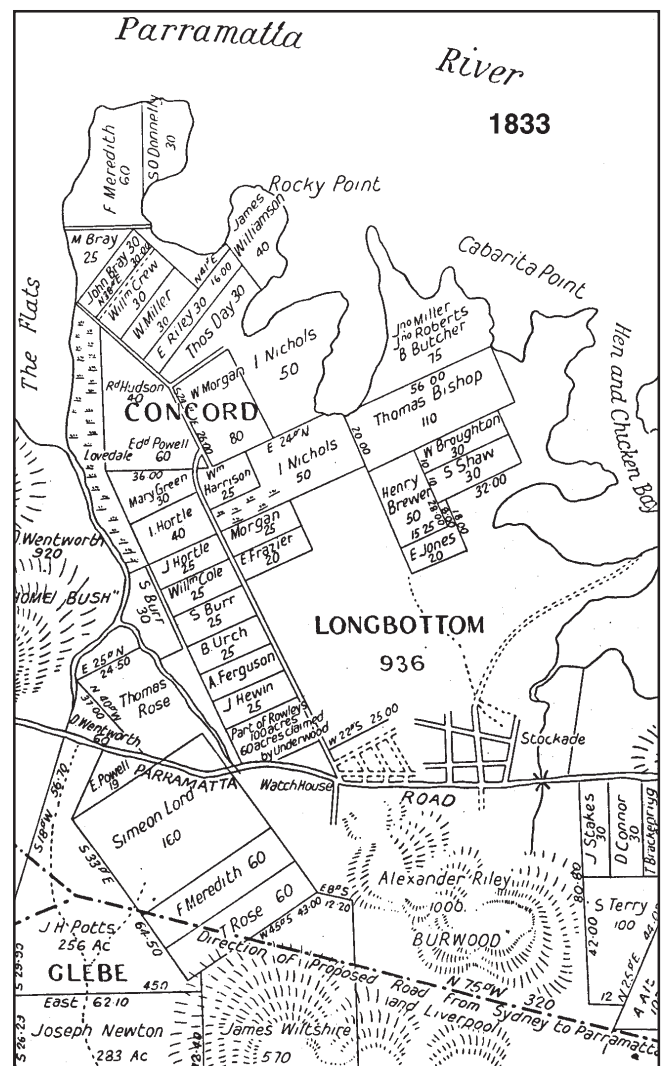
With regard to the colonial careers of our first free settlers, little would seem to have been recorded.

Powell, despairing of success at Liberty Plains, entered the public service as Constable at the Hawkesbury River, and Mrs. Thomas Webb, whose husband had died in 1795, evidently equally unfortunate, abandoned her right to her late husband's land which, in conjunction with Powell's grant, ultimately became the property of Simeon Lord, the then well-known Sydney merchant, whose name appears on the official maps as grantee of combined areas of 160 acres.

Meanwhile Captain Thomas Rowley, having been granted an area of 250 acres in 1799 adjoining the first free settlers on the east, increased his Liberty Plains landed property in 1803 by adding thereto the grant of Joseph Webb and the eastern end of Rose's 120 acres

(to be continued)

(Reprinted, with permission, from the Strathfield District Historical Society newsletter of March 2001.



Sydney eccentric Quong Tart honoured 100 years after his death!

Quong Tart (1850–1903) was an eccentric, a tea merchant, a sporting all-rounder and a trendy restaurateur. He was also nineteenth century Sydney's most celebrated Chinese migrant who spoke with a Scottish accent and used to sing Scottish ditties in a kilt! He died tragically on 26 July 1903.

The State Library started a year of celebrations for the centenary of his controversial death with a special night of Scottish ballads, lively verse, entertaining stories and tea drinking on Thursday 24 July.

The Library also launched a unique display of rare Quong Tart family photographs and some fascinating letters, including a letter of introduction from Sir Henry Parkes, in its Heritage Collection exhibition.

Quong Tart, the Man

In 1859 Mei Quong Tart, a nine year old Chinese boy, set out from his home in South China with his uncle to seek his fortune on the Braidwood gold fields of Australia. He was just one of many millions of Chinese to leave China in the 1800s, despite the fact that until 1893 it was illegal to do so without special permission from the Emperor.

By the age of 21 he was already a rich man. He was one of the successful ones - many others were treated little better than slaves in the lands in which they settled.

In 1881 Quong Tart purchased his first teahouse in the Sydney Arcade, and was regularly seen handing out samples of his blends. He went on to establish a network of tea rooms in the Sydney Arcade, the Royal Arcade and King Street.

The King Street establishment, which he opened in 1889, consisted of tea and grill rooms which occupied the ground floor, while on the first floor there was a reading room. It soon became one of Sydney's favourite



meeting places.

With the construction of the Queen Victoria Market completed in 1898, Quong Tart saw the opportunity to expand his tea room business. He leased a series of rooms on the ground and first floors for his new enterprise. In a letter to the Mayor, 23 November 1898, Quong Tart was negotiating the lease of an additional room for a cloak and smoke room.

Quong Tart's Elite Hall in the Queen Victoria Market was formally opened by the Mayor of Sydney, Matthew Harris, in 1898. The tea rooms were on the ground floor near the centre of the markets fronting George Street. A plush-carpeted staircase led to the function hall on the first floor. The Elite Hall had capacity for nearly 500 people and included a stage with an elaborately carved proscenium. At the other end was the Elite Dining Saloon, described as having 'elegant appointments'.

He married an English schoolteacher and had their six children baptised in different denominations to avoid charges of prejudice.

Quong Tart was a leading nineteenth century Sydney merchant and importer from China and was popular in both Sydney's Chinese and western communities despite the racism of the day.

He had close ties with the City Council and hosted various official dinners in the Elite Tea Rooms. He sat on the famous Royal Commission into Gambling in 1892, which was chaired by the Mayor and met at the Sydney Town Hall. He was also a community leader, well connected with the local political and social elites. The Chinese Emperor made him a Mandarin of the fifth degree in 1887, in acknowledgment of his services to the Overseas Chinese community and to European-Chinese relations in Australia. Despite the virulent anti-Chinese agitation in Australia at the time, Quong Tart was 'as well known as the Governor himself' and 'quite as popular among all classes' in NSW (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 October 1897).

He was an active philanthropist, and often provided dinners, gifts and entertainment at his own expense for recipients ranging from the Benevolent Society home at Liverpool, to the newsboys of Ashfield, Summer Hill, Croydon and Burwood. An invitation from 1900 invites guests 'to meet Miss Gould and her Staff [members of the Army Medical Nursing Reserve] prior to their departure for the seat of war' in South Africa, with the Mayor presiding. When he was bru-

tally bashed and robbed at his office in the QVB in August 1902, the crime shocked Sydney. He never fully recovered from his injuries and died at his home in Ashfield in July 1903. A western man was charged, but rumours linked the attack to factions in the Chinese

Find Out more

Margaret Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart or, How a Foreigner Succeeded in A British Community*, Ben Franklin Printing, Sydney, 1911. This book was written by Quong Tart's wife a few years after his death in 1903. As part of the 2003 celebrations of Quong Tart the State Library of New South Wales is publishing a facsimile edition, available through the Library Book Shop. Check it out on www.sl.nsw.gov.au.

Robert Travers, *Australian Mandarin: the life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1981.

Chris Pratten, *Ashfield at Federation*, Ashfield & District Historical Society, 2001. Quong Tart lived in Ashfield for many years and this book contains a study of him.

Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese*, State Library of NSW Press, Sydney, 1997. This gives the context for Quong Tart's Sydney.

*As you grow old, with passing years;
In spells of laughter, and of tears;
One of the kind dictates of fate,
No living soul can confiscate . . .*
FOND MEMORIES

Annual General Meeting & Election of Executive Committee - 11th August.

A reminder to those concerned that all reports should be in hand prior to this date.

Also, if you are again standing for office, please let the secretary know as soon as possible.

For any member who would like to consider becoming part of the Executive, please speak to the secretary.

This can be very interesting and rewarding, giving you a better insight into the workings of our society and we would appreciate the fresh thoughts and ideas that you could bring to us to improve the workings of our society.

Don't be shy! Put your hand up!

Information wanted

We have had a request for information on the Mortlake-Putney Punt and Ryde Bridge by a firm undertaking a heritage study of the forty-three bridges and ferries in NSW for the Roads and Traffic Authority. The aim of the project is to provide the RTA with information which will assist in the management of the bridges into the future, and to enable the RTA to take into account any historical significance or importance to the community that these might have.

They are looking for information of the opening up of early roads. Bridges were often constructed in response to a petition from the community or local landholders who were anxious to gain access to their properties and markets or to schools. They would be appreciative of any information or stories about the reason for the bridge or ferry's construction and siting. Bridges can also provide shelter in times of hardship or for travellers, or a place for fun for children swimming or fishing. Information or stories about activities, people and events associated with these items would also be helpful.

If you have anything you could offer - reminiscences, photographs, articles, etc. please send them to us for our records and to send on. Time is limited so we'd like to hear from you very soon.

In case you were wondering!

■ Although it took less than a decade of space travel for man to get to the moon, 19th and 20th century engineers needed 22 years to design the zipper.

■ The word "toast", meaning a proposal of health, originated in Rome, where an actual bit of spiced, burned bread was dropped into wine to improve the drink's flavour, absorb its sediment, and thus make it more healthful.

■ During World War II bakers in the United States were ordered to stop selling sliced bread for the duration of the war. Only whole loaves were made available to the public. It was never explained how this action helped the war effort.

■ The Mona Lisa has no eyebrows. It was the fashion in Renaissance Florence to shave them off.

■ Frank Baum named "Oz" after a file cabinet in his office. One cabinet was labelled "A to N" and the second was labelled "O to Z".

Yaralla Tours

We have the following bookings and need your help. Please give us a call.

Tuesday, 17th August - The Wanderers Club - 10:15 am - 1 guide, plus Devonshire Teas

Wednesday, 22nd September - St Mark's Church, Ermington - 10:00 am - 1 guide plus Devonshire Teas

Sunday, 17th October - Australian Garden History Society - 9:30 - this is a large group so we'll need about 8 grounds guides - plus Devonshire Teas

Sunday, 7th November - our own Open Day at Yaralla - all hands on deck!

... and we've already got a booking for next year.

If you can help with any of these, please contact the Secretary as soon as possible.

Special Poem for Senior Citizens!!

*A row of bottles on my shelf
Cause me to analyse myself.
One yellow pill I have to pop
Goes to my heart so it won't stop.
A little white one that I take
Goes to my hands so they won't shake.
The blue ones that I use a lot
Tell me I'm happy when I'm not.
The purple pill goes to my brain
And tells me that I have no pain.
The capsules tell me not to wheeze
or cough or choke or even sneeze.
The red ones, smallest of them all,
Go to my blood so I won't fall.
The orange ones, very big and bright,
Prevent my leg cramps in the night.
Such an array of brilliant pills,
Helping to cure all kinds of ills.
But what I'd really like to know . . .
Is what tells each one where to go!
(Author unknown)*

Dates for your Diary . . .

- ☛ **Wed. 14th July - General Meeting = Marion Smith, National Council of Women**
- ☛ **Wed. 28th July - Executive Meeting**
- ☛ **Thurs. 5th August - Walker Estates Committee Meeting**
- ☛ **Wed. 11th August - Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers**
- ☛ **Wed. 25th August - Executive Meeting (new committee members please note date - details on front page)**

From the Secretary's Desk

Liberty Grove: Liberty Grove is one of Sydney's newer residential suburbs on the peninsula. Located to the east of Homebush Bay, it adjoins Bicentennial Park, which has been developed as a significant wetland area. Free settlers began farming in the area in 1793 and knew it as "Liberty Plains", a name which has been adapted for the modern residential development.

Hall Telephone: There is now a public telephone in the Senior Citizens Centre - if you need to be contacted or to contact us during meetings the number is 8765-9155.

Yaralla/Rivendell Tours: Have you completed and returned the specific questionnaires regarding these functions? We're anxious to hear from you.

Nurungi: Have you come across any interesting article, web sites, or just something you have written. We are always looking for articles, how about some help!



The Strathfield District Historical Society invites our members to attend the C S Malcolm Memorial Lecture at the Strathfield Library Community Meeting Room, Cnr. Rochester and Abbotsford Roads, Homebush on Saturday, 4th September, 2004.

A light lunch will be served at 1:00 pm, followed by the commencement of the lecture at 2:00 pm. The meeting will conclude at 3:30 p.m.

Lecturer: Nick Vine Hall, Historian, Genealogist and author of *Tracing Your Family History in Australia*.

RSVP 27/8/2004 to PO Box 117 Strathfield or phone 9642-3145 or 9764-1174.