



# 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 Wednesday of month  
Concord Citizens' Centre  
Graham Packett, 9743-3007

**Other Committees**  
As arranged  
*Watch the newsletter*

**Museum**  
Fred Stansfield, 9743-1866

**Archives/Local History**  
Kate Skillman, 9706-7479


**Heritage**  
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

**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



**YOU'RE**  
*Invited*

to our

## Twilight Christmas Barbecue

at

### Rhodes Rotary Park

on


### Wednesday, 8th December

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm approx.

**Cost: \$10.00 per head (children free)**

**BYO liquid refreshments**

For catering, please phone 9744-8528 by 1st December



visitors  
welcome



# The Rocks

## Old and Picturesque Area Gallows Hill and Barracks

The old "Rocks" area of Sydney is a page of the picturesque and adventurous past almost choked by modernity. It represented better than any other part of ancient Sydney the first hundred palpitating years of Australian history.

It was, before its reconstruction in the early 1900s, a place of narrow tortuous streets, with a curious network of lanes and alleyways; and no end of buildings that wore the marks of a bygone importance. One could easily imagine himself in an old world environment.

It teemed with historic associations and all lovers of this quaint bit of old Sydney, scene of the very beginnings of Australia, are sorry it now so largely wears a different face.

The southern abutment of the bridge rests on the crown of "The Rocks" area, and a great causeway in connection with the bridge has been constructed through to the city railway station, now in course of construction at Wynyard Square, which was once the Barracks Square, where the regiments of British soldiers stationed here for so many years were daily drilled.

Just about where Petty's Hotel now stands, the military sentries stood guard and milking cows wandered past to their grazing grounds on Flagstaff Hill. The barracks grounds extended from Petty's to George Street, fronted George Street (from near Margaret Street) to what today is called Barrack Street, and went from Barrack Street to Clarence Street.

The designation, "The Rocks", is a literal one. A comparatively high rocky ridge, much of it having been cut away, ran along the western side of Sydney Cove (now Circular Quay). It, therefore, was quite natural for the first people who gathered around the Tank Stream to refer casually to "The Rocks".

According to some authorities, it was about the corner of George Street North and Argyle Street (which leads up to the Argyle Cut) that the British flag was hoisted on Governor Phillip's first landing. A representative of "The Rocks" area in the State Parliament once endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to induce the authorities at the time of

the inauguration of the Commonwealth to arrange for the landing of the first Governor-General there.

Originally the point was known as Point Maskelyne, but this name gave way to Dawes Point in compliment to Lieutenant Dawes, an officer with a scientific bent who erected there an Observatory, out of which grew the present Observatory on Flagstaff Hill. The site of the Observatory was where the first fort in Australia was erected - Fort Phillip, as it was called - and that is how Fort Street got its name. For the purposes of defence in those days it had a good command of the harbour and of Sydney Cove, the present Circular Quay.

To "The Rocks" belongs the distinction, if it is one, of possessing the first gaol, and a remnant of it stood for many years at the top of Essex Street. "Gallows Hill" this place was called, and for many years the name had a grim significance. There in the olden days hangings were carried out in full view of the populace - ghastly spectacles which crowds went to see as a gruesome sort of entertainment.

The "Herald" of December 19, 1838, records the hanging of seven men on the one morning. The gaol remained there until 1841 when it was removed to Darlinghurst - and later to Long Bay. The last public execution took place on Gallows Hill in 1841, and the last public execution at Darlinghurst in September 1852.

The old Military Hospital became known as Fort Street Girls' High School and was used for many years for school purposes. Its old walls, if they could speak, could tell some queer stories. It was taken over for school purpose in 1849, its first teaching staff being drawn from what was known as the Irish National School service. Then it became the Fort Street "Model" School.

Next we find the old institution divided into two schools - the Fort Street Boys' High School and the Fort Street Girls' High School. Now, since 1915 the Fort Street Boys' High School has been transferred to Petersham - one easily can imagine the confusion that could arise in the minds of future generations over its name.

Fort Street Girls High School remained for many years. (*Ed note: It is now the headquarters for the National Trust.*)

A striking feature of the area is the Argyle Cut. "The Rocks" was, in the old days an aristocratic locality. Dalley was born in Princess Street, Sir George Dibbs and Sir Thomas Dibbs both scamped about there in their youth,

and so did Sir George Reid, whose father was the minister of the old Mariners' church. Dr. Mitchell, father of David Scott Mitchell, donor of the magnificent Mitchell Library, and Mr. Justice Dowling lived there. So did the Bartons, and Mr. Challis, who made the great bequests to the University. Charles Kemp (who was associated with John Fairfax in the purchase of the "Herald" at the beginning of the forties) had his home on "The Rocks".

Then, for various reasons "The Rocks" began to sink in the social scale, just as happened afterwards in the case of The Glebe, Newtown, Lavender Bay and other localities that once were more aristocratic than they are at present, and today a miscellaneous population resides in houses that once were social centres, but whose glory has completely faded. So the world, with its social ups and downs, goes round.

"The Rocks" area still, despite the wholesale demolitions and other vast alterations made in recent years, remains the most interesting bit of old Australia in our midst. Every inch of it is historic ground.

Though most of the fascinations for lovers of the old and picturesque are gone, there still are left odd bits here and there that make a visit even today well worth while.

*(This article appears in a special supplement of the Sydney Morning Herald on April 18, 1931.)*

## Walker Estates Committee

Our last meeting for 2004

will be held on

Wednesday, 1st December

at 7:30 p.m.

in the

Concord Senior Citizens'  
Centre.

Big things are being planned  
and these need to be ratified

All members are urged to  
come along,

**SUCCESS IS NOT A DESTINATION,  
IT IS A PROCESS, AND LUCK  
IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PREPARATION  
MEETS OPPORTUNITY**

# Concord Heritage Museum - a fun and educational place to visit

We are concerned at the lack of knowledge of our Museum. Have you visited it? Have you told your friends and neighbours about it? We need to let more people know about it and encourage them to visit. Come and take a walk through Grandma's Week with us.

In the "good old days" Grandma didn't have to go out to work, she could stay home all day and be a "lady of leisure" .

. . . provided she did her little bit of housework.

On **Monday**, she washed;  
On **Tuesday**, she ironed and mended;  
On **Wednesday**, she . . .

Well, to find out just what she did do to fill her week, take a stroll through

**Grandma's Week**

P.S. Just in case you think we're sexist, there'll be some of Grandpa's Week there too! Even some of the children's activities.

The museum is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays, 2 to 4 pm.

**ON MONDAYS** she did the washing, using the old copper, with water heated by wood fire. Rinsing meant filling and emptying tubs of water by hand. The mangle helped with wringing out the wet things. Dinner would be leftovers from the Sunday roast.

**ON TUESDAYS** she did the ironing - using irons heated on the fuel stove. It was also mending day - clothing was repaired, sox were darned, sheets were "side-to-middled" rather than replaced.

**ON WEDNESDAYS** she cleaned house. Rugs and carpets (squares) were taken outside, hung over the clothesline and beaten. Everything was thoroughly dusted and swept. Windows were cleaned and the brass and silver were polished.

**ON THURSDAYS** she did the shopping. Many perishables such as milk were delivered as the nearest thing to a refrigerator was the ice chest. The ice man delivered a large block of ice

every few days to keep it cold. With housekeeping budgets and the weekly shopping expeditions meant the rest of the shopping had to be carefully planned.

**ON FRIDAYS** she did the baking. Bread, cakes, biscuits, pies and such were made for the week ahead. All baked in the good old reliable fuel stove.

**ON SATURDAYS** - time to relax and visit or have visitors. This was the social day of the week. Important callers were received in the parlour (or drawing room), a room used only for special visitors. Everyday callers were entertained in the living room. Perhaps Grandma attended a dance or some social occasion.

**ON SUNDAYS** the family went to church and then, according to the era, either spent the day in prayer or in some solemn activities suitable for the sabbath day or, in later times, maybe a family outing.

## The Coolgardie Safe (also known as a Drip Safe)

This apparently came into being and received its name during the gold rush to Coolgardie, Western Australia when some method of keeping food cool was required as the people were a long way from refrigeration or ice.

Someone remembered that evaporation absorbs heat and that in Coolgardie's hot, dry climate water evaporates readily. So the Coolgardie Safe became commonplace.

No one knows who actually invented it. It may even have been around long before the goldrush, but it was standard domestic equipment on the W.A. goldfields.

The usual Coolgardie Safe was an open timber framework, with a hinged door and all covered in hessian. On top of this sat a tray several inches deep, full of water. Hessian strips, with one end in the water, were then hung down the sides and back of this safe.

Water percolated down them and kept the hessian cover damp. As the water evaporated it absorbed heat and thus kept everything inside the safe quite cool.

The safe worked best if it was in a

breeze, so it usually stood on the verandah, with its feet in tins of water to keep the ants away.

These were still in regular use in many parts of the country until as recently as the 1940s.

The Coolgardie safe was a fairly logical development of the canvas waterbag, which had been used in Australia for at least 40 years before they even heard of Coolgardie.

Outback explorer Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell is credited with inventing the waterbag. Observing that Aborigines carried their water in kangaroo skins, he realised that they had a far better method than the wooden kegs he was using.

He had some canvas bags made, and greased them with tallow to make them watertight. But the tallow tainted the water, so he tried plain canvas.

Once the canvas was wet enough it held water satisfactorily. There was a bonus, too, for water seeping through the canvas to the outside evaporated and cooled the contents.

Like the Coolgardie safe, the waterbag worked best if it was left in a breeze.

## The Famous Willow Pattern

The most famous ceramic pattern ever produced is the Willow Pattern — a "Chinese" scene including a pagoda, two birds, a fence, a boat, a three-arch bridge across which three Chinese figures are walking and, of course, the willow tree itself.

The Willow Pattern is actually a purely English design, developed around the 1780's by Thomas Turner, and has been produced by hundreds of different potteries over the years.

The story goes . . . "*Long ago, in ancient China, a corrupt nobleman had a beautiful daughter called Koong-see, who fell in love with his secretary Chang. Enraged, he banished Chang and imprisoned Koong-see behind a high garden wall. He planned to marry his daughter off to an old Duke, but Chang rescued her and took her away to his farm. Eventually the lovers were found and burned. But the gods took pity and turned them into a pair of swallows, so they could be together forever . . .*"

**MEMORIES:** The heart is like a treasure chest, that's filled with souvenirs. It's where we keep the memories we gather through the years.

## Concord Seniors Club

Glenda Rogers, their Vice President and Publicity Officer, has sent us a note to say that there is now a new executive and committee and they are keen to attract new (and lapsed) members to the club.

Membership is open to anyone 50 years and over. Many activities are being planned and they hope to once again become a vibrant part of the community.

Annual membership is \$4.00 and there are application forms in the foyer. There are also notices of available activities on their notice board.

**Their Annual Christmas Luncheon** is to be held on **Tuesday, 14th December** at 12 noon in the club auditorium and will be a Carvery with leg ham, roast turkey with all the trimmings, and tea and coffee. All other drinks are BYO. Door prizes and surprises.

RSVP with payment of \$10 per head by 1st December is essential to secure your place at the table. Any officer on duty will be happy to help with bookings or post to 9-11 Wellbank Street, Concord, 2137.

They hope to see some new faces at the table and assure us we will be most welcome.

## The age of Velvet, Fenders and Fire Irons

The drawing-room of a typical middle-class home at the start of the 20th century was a hotch-potch of Victorian bad taste. There were heavy curtains of velvet, serge or damask, trimmed with fringes or balls or tassels, and floral-papered walls crowded with reproductions of popular pictures such as Sir Edwin Landseer's "Stag at Bay".

The piece-de-resistance was the upright cottage piano, with its two curly brass candle holders, its pleated coloured silk above the keyboard, and its round, revolving stool.

The furnishing probably included a papier-mache or bamboo occasional table, with a fringed and patterned damask cloth; a set of misshapen and uncomfortable chairs; a horse-hair sofa with a heavily carved back; a five-tier corner whatnot displaying a jumble of family portraits in frames of painted fretwork or green or purple plush; Gloss china souvenirs of seaside resorts; a few shells, a pig-shaped silver pincushion; a plaster bust of Queen Victoria, ruby lustre vases, and a silver-mounted emu egg.

In front of the blackleaded fireplace was an ornate brass fender, and near it a coal scuttle of wood or black japanned metal, and a set of brass fire-irons - shovel, tongs, brush and poker. Poking the fire was a ritual and a pastime, usually reserved for the master.

## Invitations received:

**Concord Garden Club** will be holding their Christmas Party on Friday, 10th December at 2:00 p.m. at the Concord Community Centre, Gipps Street, Concord. Contact Marjorie Hogan on 9744-8302 for further details.

**Strathfield District Historical Society** will be holding their 2004 Christmas Dinner at the Strathfield South Bowling & Community Club, 40-44 Augusta Street, Strathfield on Wednesday, 1st December, commencing at 6:30 pm. Cost \$20 per head for dinner and desert. Dress informal. RSVP Friday, 26th November to Jan Jenkins, 9764-1174 or Cathy Jones, 9642-3145.



## Dates for your Diary . . .

- ☛ **Wed. 1st December - Walker Estates Committee - 7:30**
- ☛ **Wed. 8th December - Annual Christmas Barbecue (last for year)**

Next Executive Meeting will be in January 2005 and next General Meeting and Walker Estates Meeting will be in February.

## From the Secretary's Desk

**MUSEUM CLEANUP:** Our museum will be closed for the month of January to give us a chance to give the place a thorough cleaning and to sort through the final items in the store-room.

There will be a working bee on Saturday, 21st January from 10:00 am. If you can spare us some time we'd love to see you there.

Wear old clothes and if you have any rags for cleaning cloths that would be a help.

*SEE YOU THERE!!!*

We could also use some more help on the Museum roster - particularly on the Wednesday. If you can give us a couple of hours every month or so it would be appreciated.

**Yaralla Open Day:** We have applied to hold another function on **Sunday, 3rd April**. If you will be able to help on this day mark the date in your new diary now so you won't double book.

**Rivendell Open Day:** We are also considering holding the next one on **7th August**. More details later.

**Clean up Australia Day - Sunday, 6th March.** We have registered to take part in this with our aim to clean up Yaralla in preparation for your next open day. Keep the date in mind if you will be able to help. This is not restricted only to members - everyone welcome. The more helpers the better we can tidy up the grounds.

**Photocopying and Filing:** I still have plenty of this work piling up. If you can spare an hour or two now and then it would be greatly appreciated.

**Christmas Barbecue:** Don't forget to let me know, by 1st December, if you are coming so we can organise the food.