



# 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  
Phone: 8765-9155

### 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  
on 1st and 3rd  
Wednesdays & Saturdays

**No.109**

**April 2005**

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SERVANTS

In the early days of Australia convicts provided free labour, standards of living were generally poor and the small affluent society managed to live very well with a minimum of conveniences. Gradually the lower classes came to resent being servants.

There were two alternatives to the problem. One was to advertise overseas, mainly in Britain, for domestic servants; the other was to adopt the newfangled Victorian gadgets that were supposed to make housework easier.

The first of the new wonders to affect the household was gas, first introduced to Sydney in 1841 and praised in "The Australian" of 27th May, 1841: "The dim days of oil and tallow are gone by!" While only a few homes enjoyed the new delights of gas, people's imaginations were fired by the potential of the scientific future. However methods of producing gas were poor and many people preferred the kerosene and pressure petrol lamps that were introduced from the 1860s.

By the 1880s people were using the now more reliable gas for cooking and water heating. (They also had another brilliant new "appliance", the water closet, which had been invented in this modern form by Thomas Crapper of Liverpool, England.) The use of gas continued to expand, and gas room heaters became available, but the real break through came with the invention of the gas heater wash boiler - the copper that reigned supreme in millions of laundries until the 1950s.

Australia was a pioneer in the use of electricity. Lamps were operating in Sydney in 1882 and the electrical revolution erupted, although Sydney was not to see its own full power station until July 1904, around a quarter of a century behind New South Wales country towns such as Young and Tamworth, and Melbourne, where it was instituted in October 1880.

It was in Melbourne that the wonders of electricity were first applied in the home. George Anderson, an Adelaide alderman, described the miracles he saw on a visit to Melbourne - electric fans, electric frypans, ovens and electric stew pans:

"Ladies have an ornamental kettle and teapot stand in the drawing room now, and when afternoon tea is wanted, the ornamental wire attached to the kettle is inserted into a knob in the wall, and the kettle boils in a few minutes."

By 1900 electricity was being applied everywhere, electric heating was popular and there were even electric cigar and pipe lighters. However, these were only for the wealthy and brave.

In the period 1900 to 1939, when World War II stopped all development, almost all the appliances we now accept without question were introduced and heavily advertised. This advertising completely changed the concept of home living as it offered an alternative to drudgery and dirt.

Refrigeration was one of the major advances. In 1878 Mort & Co had unveiled their ice-making machine and in 1912 the electric refrigerator came to Australia and Emmco Pty.Ltd. began mass production in 1927.



## Bulletin Board

**11th May:** Come along and be surprised.

**8th June:** Jane Bennett, Painter of Architecture in Sydney

**13th July:** Graeme Payne - Lane Cove Historical Society - "Australian Commercial Plane Crashes"

**10th August:** Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers.

**14th September:** Andrew Monaghan, The Costume House, Gladesville - "Early Australian Fashions in Museum Collections"

**12th October:** Pam Liell, speaking on her recently released book, "Dressed in their Best: 100 Years of Family Photos"

**9th November:** John Walmeant - African Safari Photographs

The hand-operated washing machine had been introduced in the second half of the 1800s - and in fact in 1950 Breville were still advertising them for sale, mostly in country areas. The electric washing machine was first marketed in 1910, the vacuum cleaner in 1908 and the dishwasher in the 1920s.

By 1923 still only 34 per cent of homes were wired for electricity although it was available to half the homes of Australia.

Some electrical products achieved instant popularity. Of the homes with electricity around 75 per cent had electric irons, 20 per cent radiators and 7 per cent fans. Although toasters, kettles, sewing machines, stoves, clothes washers and dishwashers existed, less than 1 per cent of homes had them.

Even in the 1940s the average housewife still kept food in an ice chest, washed in a gas boiler and cooked on a gas stove, but more homes now had a vacuum cleaner, iron and electric radiator.

Middle-class homes were lucky to have a single power point, any power for appliances coming from a double adapter plugged into a light socket.

Then came the postwar revolution.

Email offered seventeen brands of refrigerators while Hallstrom offered a cheap-to-buy model. Refrigeration became an essential.

Hoover introduced their tiny but efficient agitator washer with hand wringer for £55, or about ten-weeks' salary for the average person.

Papers were full of advertising. The "get rich quick" retailer put teams of door to door salesman on the road determined to put at least three appliances into every home.

The world of electronics opened up a whole new era of wonderful electric gadgets and today the average home runs about twenty electric motors - providing muscle power that has almost completely replaced the servant.

#### **Some wise words on Action:**

*It is the greatest of mistakes to do nothing because you can do only a little. Do what you can.*  
(Sydney Smith)

## Women on the Move

In the 1800s women began to fight for freedom . . .

■ Though poor women worked long hours in factories or as servants in early Victorian times, middle-class girls were rarely allowed to take jobs except as governesses. Thanks to Florence Nightingale, nursing became a respectable profession, but at a time when women novelists like the Bronte sisters and



George Eliot were writing masterpieces, it was hard for women to become properly educated, let alone take up a profession.

■ The invention of the typewriter proved a turning point in the struggle to give "respectable" women the right to work. Originally invented in France in the 1850s as a machine to help the blind, by the 1870s "typewriters" were being used in business. The word "typist" was not yet in common use - operators of the machines were called "typewriters". Typewriters revolutionised women's opportunities, especially since they now had a foothold in the world of business which, until then, had been a male preserve! By 1901 there were 55,784 female clerks.



■ Even more sensational was the woman doctor! Miss Garrett, later Mrs. Garrett Anderson, was licensed at the Apothecaries' Hall in London in 1865 to



practise medicine. The London School of Medicine for Women was started in 1874, and two years later, after bitter battles in Parliament, women were officially allowed to qualify as doctors. Needless to say, they had to struggle for recognition, despite the success Florence Nightingale and her successors in establishing the modern profession of nursing. By 1901 there were 335 "lady doctors".

■ Some brave girls joined the Salvation Army, started by General Booth in 1865 and officially given its modern name in 1880. Now that the Salvation Army is universally respected, it is often forgotten that Booth, his noble wife, and their followers faced bitter hostility at first. Some publican and brewers hired hooligans to beat



up Salvationists and disrupt their services because they preached against drinking. Teenage servant girls became captains and lieutenants and worked in the worst slums in Britain - and went abroad, too, helping the poor and wretched overseas.

■ The right of women to a university education took many years to establish and even then it was a long time before some universities allowed them to be awarded degrees, however brilliant they were. Girton College for women at Cambridge dates from 1869. Somerville College and Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, from 1879, but Oxford did not admit women to full university status until 1920, Cambridge until 1947! London University granted women "graduettes" degrees from 1878, the Scottish universities and the University Wales from the early 1890s.



■ Though the bicycle was invented in the 1850s, it really came into its own in the 1880s, especially after the introduction of the pneumatic tyre in



1888 by Mr. Dunlop. Bicycles helped revive the fortunes of the roads, neglected because of the success of the railways, but the real revolution they brought about was in helping women and girls of all classes to get out and about and meet people. Motor cars, capable of 20 mph, were changing lives by 1901, but only the reasonably well-to-do could afford them.

*(Reprinted from an unknown publication on "Everyday Life in Britain. From earliest times to the present day . . . An illustrated social history of the people of Britain.")*

## Australia's Wartime History - on the web

One Hundred Years of Australians in wars and conflicts

[www.australiansatwar.gov.au](http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au)

Gallipoli and the Anzac Legend

[www.anzacsite.gov.au](http://www.anzacsite.gov.au)

Australian involvement in WW 2

[www.ww2australia.gov.au](http://www.ww2australia.gov.au)

World War 2 Nominal Roll

[www.ww2roll.gov.au](http://www.ww2roll.gov.au)

Some other useful websites:

[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

[www.peoplesvoice.gov.au](http://www.peoplesvoice.gov.au)



## My Life in Concord

I was born in 1927 at Sister Jurd's midwifery hospital "Gunyah", Majors Bay Road, Concord and have lived in Concord ever since.

My grandfather, Samuel Ashton, a bricklayer from England, constructed and operated the first NSW salt water concrete baths in 1886 at 16-18 Bennett Street, Mortlake; he and his wife Mary lived in a split-level home on the same site. The front steps and part of their home is still standing. When I was a child, my mother told me that males and females were segregated at Ashton's Baths and under no circumstances were they allowed to swim together.

Grandfather and Grandmother had two children born in England and seven in Concord, Australia. My mother Lena Smith (nee Ashton) was born in 1890 and lived in Concord all her life. At Mortlake School Centenary celebrations in 1987 she was presented with a book as the oldest ex-pupil. She died in 1993 aged 103.

My grandparents owned the waterfront land from 2 to 18 Bennett Street, and all of their children lived and reared families in the Mortlake area.

When Ashton's Baths were eventually closed to the public, only four relatives were allowed to swim there, and we had some great times. My father, Fred Smith, won many medals for swimming and taught me to swim. However, much to my chagrin, I never beat him in a race, even when he was 70 years old.

After my grandparents passed away, two of my uncles, Fred and Les Ashton, had a workshop adjacent to the baths and were engaged in repair work for the Australian Gas Light Company, which was the main source of employment in the Concord area.

I had many cousins who were about my age and we had a wonderful time together. We walked to Mortlake School, which didn't take long because we took shortcuts through so many empty blocks of land. There were no school buses then! In Primary School, a white line was painted down the middle of the playground because girls and boys were not allowed to play together, and there were no mixed classes. I was dux of the school in 1938.

I had a very happy childhood. We lived on the waterfront at 6 Bennett Street, Mortlake, looking across the Parramatta River to "Yaralla", where Dame Eadith Walker lived. My cous-

ins and I would row a boat to "Yaralla", where a large swing was adjacent to the waterfront, and would have a swing before rowing back. We were not supposed to be there, but kept watch in case someone caught us trespassing.

In my early childhood I remember almost everything we needed was delivered to our home free of charge. Our butcher used to deliver the meat with a horse and cart. The horse knew every stop.

We had no car, telephone, nor television, but we had an active physical life. We played hopscotch, skipped, walked and talked a lot. We caught tadpoles after rain in puddles near the waterfront, and almost all children had silkworms.

Every Saturday afternoon we walked to the movies at the Ritz Theatre in Majors Bay Road, Concord, where a man played the organ on stage before the movie started. I was given sixpence for my fare in and one penny to spend, which paid for an ice cream. I was fortunate because many children had no money to buy ice creams at interval, whereas my father was a foreman at Mortlake Gas Works, which was considered a good job. He did shift work and if I walked to the Gas Works' gate after he finished his day shift, he would give me a penny.

We attended St Mary's Concord North church; the minister's name was Mr. Lofts. After I was confirmed I taught the young children at Sunday school.

After Primary School I attended Fort Street Girls' High School on Bradfield Highway, very close to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which hadn't been built very long. I caught the tram from Tennyson Road, Mortlake to Burwood Station, then the train from Burwood to Wynyard, which was quite daunting for a 12 year old travelling on her own. I made some good friend at "Fort Street". There was a tennis court in the school grounds and, since we had a tennis court at home, I entered in most of the competitions, with mixed results.

During the Second World War years the school supplied us with khaki wool to knit socks for the soldiers. I became so proficient I used to knit them while at the movies.

During my teen years many more homes were built in Concord. We had picnics in the parks and attended dances, which were held monthly at St. Mary's church hall. It was there that I met my husband-to-be, Jim Alford. We led a fairly simple, but most enjoyable life.

I trained as a stenographer and worked in Sydney until Jim and I were married in 1948. I then applied and was accepted for a position with BALM Paints. We built a home in Dorking Road, Cabarita, where we still live.

I left BALM in 1955 to have a family. In those days, once you became pregnant you stopped working. We had three daughters, all of whom went to Mortlake Public School. When my youngest daughter stated school I went back to the workforce part-time with G.E. Crane & Sons, Concord. They moved their office to Sydney, so once more I applied locally and worked for Containers Ltd., Cabarita for five years, before retiring from the workforce.

I am active in the community, and am now an intrepid tutor at the Computer Pals for Seniors class in the Senior Citizens' Centre, Concord. I am involved also with Greenlees Park Women's Bowling Club. We are fortunate to reside in Canada Bay; we have Concord Hospital nearby, we have great amenities, magnificent parks and, of course, the Parramatta River, all of which are available to be enjoyed.

by Shirley Alford

(2nd prize in the Creative Story Writing competition for Seniors' Week 2004.)

## Tour Guides Wanted

If you are considering becoming a volunteer tour guide please note the upcoming Open Days at Rivendell and Yaralla. These will give you an opportunity to accompany one or more of our regular guides to give you an ideas of what is needed.

If you would like to give it a go please call the secretary who would gladly supply you with the guide books, which contain most of the information you will need.

To those who previously indicated they wanted to become guides - if you haven't conducted a tour yet, but feel you are now ready to do so, please let us know so we can add your names to our list of regulars.

**Week Day Visits:** If you can give us time on weekdays for group visits, either as guides or Devonshire tea helpers, please let us know so we can add you to this list.



# YOU'RE INVITED

**Murder Most Foul - tales from the courts, Police Gazette & other records . . .**

Sydney Records Centre - Wed. 15th June, 10:30-12:30 pm

Western Sydney Records Centre - Frid 24th June, 10:30 - 12:30 pm

FREE. Booking essential.

Enquiries and bookings:

Lindsay Allen, Senior Archivist, Access & Information (SRC),

phone 8247-8613,

email accinfo2@records.nsw.gov.au

**Parramatta and District Historical Society's 18th Annual James Jervis Memorial Lecture.**

The speaker will be Professor Ian Jack, President of the Royal Australian Historical Society and his subject will be "Parramatta and Narrambla: the Matter of Banjo Paterson's Birthplace.

Date: Saturday, 21st May at 2:00 pm

Venue: Centenary Uniting Church Hall, Cnr. Sorrell & Fennell Streets, Parramatta. The lecture is free and will be followed by afternoon tea.

Bookings essential for catering purposes - 9635-6924

## Membership

It's time again for renewal of membership. A form is enclosed in this newsletter - if there isn't one, then your membership has been paid in advance.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We have quite a few events coming up in the next few months and volunteers are needed. If you can help please phone the secretary as soon as possible so that we can plan.

**Wed. 25th May** - Group to Yaralla - 10:30 am - 1 guide, ? Devonshire Teas.

**Thurs. 23rd June** - Group to Yaralla -10:30 am - 1 guide, 3 Devonshire Teas

**Mon. 11th July** - Group to Museum, 10:00 am - 3 volunteers

**Wed. 20th July** - Group to Yaralla, 2:00 pm - 2 guides, no D.T.

**Wed. 20th July** - Group to Museum, 11:30 am - 2 volunteers

**Wed. 3rd August** - Group to Yaralla, 9:30 am - 1 or 2 guides, ? Devonshire Teas

**Sunday, 21st August** - our Open Day at Rivendell - all hands on deck

**Sunday, 18th September** - Friends of Rookwood have asked for assistance with their open day - can you give half a day?

**Wednesday, 12th October** - Group to Yaralla, 10:30 am - 2 or 3 guides needed, ? Devonshire Teas.

**Sunday, 23rd October** - our Open Day at Yaralla - all hands on deck

Please put these dates in your diary NOW and if you know you will be free and able to assist please call the secretary as soon as possible. These days take some organising and it's nice to know in advance what help will be available.

## From the Secretary's Desk

**Museum Roster:** We would still like to hear from any new volunteers - particularly for Wednesdays. It is only for two hours every couple of weeks and doesn't need any physical exertion - just sitting at the desk to take the money and answer any questions - or refer them back to the secretary.

It could be a good chance for you to catch up with some reading, knitting or letter writing in a quiet atmosphere.

A new roster is being prepared so we need to know as soon as possible.

**You can do it - ring now!**

**Photographs:** We still need some help to do a rough sort of our photographs so they can be identified and indexed for reference.

**Photocopying, Filing and Typing:** Can you spare an hour or two, here and there, to help with this. It's mounting up.

## Annual General Meeting - 10/8/05

This is the time to elect your officers and committee members for the ensuing year.

All positions will be declared vacant and will be up for nominations. Let's make it a proper election with lots of names being put forward.

There will be several vacancies and we urge you to consider putting your name forward for any of the positions. New blood is always welcome as you bring fresh thoughts and ideas.

If you feel you would like to be a part of the planning process please don't hesitate to put your own name forward - others may not know of your willingness to become part of the executive. If you're shy, just whisper in someone's ear and they will gladly nominate you.



## For Grandparents . . .

One of the joys of becoming a grandparent is that your grandchildren are going to grow up doing the same thing to their parents as their parents did to you while they were growing up.

To all our mothers and grandmothers . . .

Happy Mother's Day

For your Diary

Wed. 4th May - Walker Estates Meeting

Wed. 11th May - General Meeting

Wed. 25th May - Executive Meeting