



Nurungi

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

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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
August, October, January,
March, May and July
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre

Walker Estates Committee

4th Wednesday of
September, November,
February, April and June
at 7:30 pm in the
Concord Citizens' Centre
Derek Williams, 9746-9649

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Archives/Local History

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

COUNCIL SEEKS TO SAVE MANSION

(Article from Western Suburbs Courier, 1st November 1978)

Lansdowne House, believed to be the first "gentleman's residence" in the Western Suburbs, will be preserved for posterity as a building of historic significance to the National Heritage if Concord Council has its way.

At its meeting last week, Concord Council decided to nominate the property to the Heritage Council under the provisions of the Heritage Act for inclusion in its register as a property worthy of preservation. The decision follows its consideration of a report on investigations undertaken by Council's pollution vigilance-environmental officer. The officer told Council that the building called "Lansdowne House" located at 25 Burton Street, is a stately residence, formerly known as Ardnaree.

In 1834 the first land sales were held in Concord and the high value of some of the lots sold - £7.10.0. (\$15.00) an acre reflected the importance of the area's geographic location - half way between the expanding centres of Sydney and Parramatta. At this sale, the officer said, Emanuel Neich, an immigrant from Genoa, purchased a block of land on the northern side of Parramatta Road, opposite his hotel, the Bath Arms Inn.

Neich eventually built "Lansdowne House" and two double storeyed terraces called Melaleuca and Clewer. These are now numbers 31 and 33 Burton Street. (*Melaleuca was named after a port he visited while serving on the brig Dart in the 1820's*). The officer said it was not known exactly when these houses were built but Lansdowne House definitely predates 1855. He said that Lansdowne House was used by Miss S. E. Lester in 1855 as a school for young ladies.

By the 1870s, Miss Lester had moved into a large two storeyed house in Park Road called Kent House. Meanwhile, the Wesleyan Church had begun considering founding a ladies' college, encouraged by the success of their Newington College for boys and in 1885, bought Miss Lester's school for £6,000 and reopened it as the

Wesleyan Ladies College on January 27th, 1886.

This made Lansdowne House in fact the fore-runner of Methodist Ladies' College. First tenant of the premises was John Fairfax of the Sydney Morning Herald. The officer told Council that Lansdowne House in its original setting must have been a most impressive sight with the large gardens and driveway to Parramatta Road complementing the architecture of the house.

The style of the architecture is Georgian featuring high ceilings, narrow columns of wrought iron, executed by Bubb and Son, supporting a verandah extending on three sides. A prominent cedar railed stairway rises from halfway down the main hall to the upper storey. Most rooms feature cedar skirting and architraves but these have all been painted over in white.

The officer also reported that all but three of the magnificent fireplaces in the house have been "masked" by partitions. He said the three fire places are each different in their cedar panelling and iron hearths. The house, he said, is in an excellent state of preservation and most walls have the original plaster surfaces, while the stonework in the kitchen is untouched, as is the garage where the sandstock bricks are exposed.

An extension has been added on the ground floor as a living room for the boarders, but apart from this and the removal of



Bulletin Board

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

14th December: Christmas Picnic at Rhodes Rotary Park

the chimneys, very little change has occurred. The officer said it is the architecture and state of preservation that makes Lansdowne House prominent. No alterations have been made to the façade of the house and its interior is also well preserved.

The authenticity, he said, is uncommon and Lansdowne House is not a cosmetic façade of the original and so Concord has a representative of 1850's housing which requires no funding to either upgrade its condition or alterations to restore it to an original form.

The officer said the National Trust regards the wrought ironwork as an important feature of the house. The style was unique to Sydney. The overall effect is a well balanced appearance of light wrought iron columns and panels in floral patterns. Considering the fireplaces, it would be interesting to remove the partitions obscuring the majority of them to fully evaluate their beauty.

Another hidden asset is the cedar architraves and skirtings, as their aesthetic value is not being realised, painted over in white.

As a result of the report, the Council plans to nominate the property to the Heritage Council under the provisions of the Heritage Act for inclusion in its register as a property worthy of preservation.

(Ed. Why not take a stroll to Lansdowne House and read the plaque which was installed?)

Invitation

. . . to all members interested in the Walker Estates.

This committee meets on the 4th Wednesday every second month in the Senior Citizens' Centre, Wellbank Street, Concord at 7:30 pm.

The next meeting is Wednesday, 23rd November and you're invited.

Our Photograph Collection

This is in a state of chaos at the moment - but on Sunday, 13th November we will be holding a working bee at the Senior Citizens' Centre to try to sort these into some semblance of order and also to identify the many photos we have with no information on them.

Come along and give us a hand - and enjoy reminiscing on the old photographs.. Time is tentatively set at 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm.

Also, thanks to a grant from City of Canada Bay Council, we have purchased a multifunction unit (printer, scanner, copier) with which we can scan photographs, black & white and colour negatives and slides. This will enable us to scan our collection as well as making an appeal to others to allow us to copy their photographs. This is a very valuable addition to our equipment.

Extract from Sydney Morning Herald 26th December 1941

Evening Dress Rule A.B.C. to consider

"We are prepared to discuss with the people concerned any objections to our rule that evening dress must be worn by artists for night broadcasts", said the acting general manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Mr. Bearup, last night.

He was commenting on a complaint by the Actors' Equity that evening dress was unnecessary and that artists wearing dinner suits in the streets on their way to the studio had been handed white feathers.

Mr. Bearup said it was untrue that the A.B.C. has aped the B.B.C. (British Broadcasting Commission) in ordering that evening dress should be worn. The rule had been adopted in Australia before it was introduced in England. He did not know whether the B.B.C. had abolished the idea, as the Actors' Equity stated. Broadcasting facilities in Britain were now widely dispersed and a change probably had become necessary.

The secretary of the Musicians Union, Mr. F. Kitson, said that he also had made representations to the commission about the rule.

Old Newspapers

We still have several bundles of old newspapers that need to be gone through to look for articles relevant to Concord. (The article on the front page is one of our finds.)

These articles need to be cut out and photocopied before the papers become discoloured and too old and brittle to be handled.

They become a very important part of our archives - available for future reference as well as of general interest.

Can you spare some time to help with this?

Yaralla Open Day -

Sunday, 23rd October.

Due to illness and other things, some of our regular guides will not be available on this day.

If you have been learning, or are considering learning to be a guide, now would be the time to put thoughts into action.

Why not come along and join a tour or two with one of our regulars to get the feel. We have a book with all the information you will need, just contact the secretary to get one.

We need helpers for the Devonshire teas as well - many hands make light work.

If you are able to help, please phone the secretary today to put your name down.

We will also need some help on the Saturday before (22nd) to clean and dust and set some of the things out to save time on the Sunday.

Rhodes Shopping Centre

We again have the opportunity to set up a stall at Rhodes Shopping Centre on Saturday, 10th October (9 am to 5 pm).

This will be a good opportunity to advertise our open day at Yaralla.

If you can spare a couple of hours to help out on the day please phone the secretary.

Progressive Dinner

Saturday, 12th November

Cost: \$25.00

Meet at Trish Harrington's home, 22 Princess Avenue, Concord at 6:30 for nibbles and pre-dinner drinks. Then on to Errol and Margaret Grace's home for the main course. Finally to an as yet unknown destination for sweets and coffee.

A good fun and social evening. Come along and bring your friends.

Please liaise with Errol (9743-4301) if you are able to contribute to the meal.

Telephone Lois or Errol to book.

Mystery at the Palace Hotel, Mortlake

Is it the recent spate of television mysteries which has created renewed interest in the missing mystery Mortlake Boarder "Young – Leslie - De Garis"?

One person or three? Missing, suicide or alive and continuing a life of intrigue as an entrepreneur, confidence trickster?

Alive or dead this man's life created, for a brief period, intense interest for the local and interstate police, the hotel licensee Mr. Frank White and his son young Frank (who, with two mates, discovered some interesting but confusing evidence in the room vacated by Young - Leslie - De Garis).

Did this man create a bogus identity or identities to delude the police, ship's captain and taxi driver into believing he was: (a) an American journalist; (b) promoter of an export business featuring the young passionfruit industry; or (c) traveller? What did he say or do to arouse the curiosity of a fellow passenger on board the "Maheno" who, anonymously, contacted police and suggested all did not appear above board (forgive the pun, please)?

Were the three sets of keys – two labeled De Garis – left to mislead the investigators and why a plait of new hair? A false moustache, perhaps, although none was mentioned.

Did this intriguing character have a compulsion to constantly display different names to mystify and confuse. Was this one of a series of daring bluffs to create an air of derring-do?

Questions! Questions! Questions! And not a conceivable answer in sight. Nothing credible, nothing validated.

The Guardian Newspaper followed the aforementioned incidents with increasing interest as facts continued to pour in from a great number of people with whom "our man of mystery" had deliberately made contact.

To both police and reporters it was these continued cat and mouse actions which created and ensured continued interest in – and that's the big question – who?

Mr. Leslie – U.S. journalist – who arrived at the ungodly hour of 3:45 a.m. at the Palace Hotel, Mortlake, in



preparation to boarding the "Maheno" – bound for where? And three days before the ship was scheduled to sail?

C.J. De Garis – a former resident of Melbourne – who conveniently left written indications of a plan to drown himself. A certain way to attract po-

lice interest.

Conman Young, who used a simple taxi driver to take him to many places the driver declined to inform the police about.

A case of 'curiouser and curiouser', if one may quote from Alice in Wonderland.

Even the choice of a hotel, where there were no other boarders, which was designed for future re-location, became a mystery.

Conflicting evidence for licensee White when his only boarder – Leslie – had luggage labelled Young.

Frank White and his pals Willie and Hubert Solomon enjoyed their moments of notoriety as they discovered the evidence of the keys and plait. Accidentally found . . . or conveniently planted?

The incredible proposition attributed to De Garis whilst in Melbourne, calling for creditors to reclaim their money by becoming involved in a speculative land deal was one of the most incredible proposals ever offered in the world of finance.

There is (was) a man of many skills and talents misused in his own interest to confuse and mystify.

Young – Leslie – De Garis – Mystery Man of Mortlake – surely a case for Inspector Morse, Agatha Christie, Perry Mason . . . or even our readers.

From a paper supplied by Daphne Watts and obtained from the Archives in Canberra (circa 1925)

Assistant Secretary

Please! Please! Please!

Won't someone volunteer to help out. I'm finding it more and more difficult to get things done - particularly the things that have to be done to organise the Open Days - and I'd really appreciate some assistance.

It's most important that someone knows the things that have to be done in case of any emergency.

Executive Vacancy

We are still in need of an Archives Chairman. This is not hard work. At this stage it only involves sorting newspaper cuttings, publications, articles, etc. into proper order and cataloguing them for easy retrieval for people seeking information.

If you would like to give it a try, just put your hand up at the next meeting.

Publicity

With Trish Skehan's move away from the city she has asked if someone else could take on this job. It's not hard and mainly needed around the times of our open days.

We already have a list of people to contact - usually by email or posting events on various web sites - so it's just a matter of sitting down for an hour or so and getting the news out

Did You Know . . .

ROYAL FLUSH: Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history: Spades, King David; Clubs, Alexander the Great; Hearts, Charlemagne; Diamonds, Julius Caesar.

Camels of Australia

The friendly Ferals

Our own member, Bill Barlow, has just released his latest book - full of interesting facts about this fascinating animal.

In his introductions he says:

This is the story of a unique animal whose capabilities, under certain conditions, far exceeded the capacity of the traditional Australian 'beasts of burden', the horse, donkey, mule and bullock.

It is also about the Indian (Afghan) handlers who came with their animals from the 1860's and the European Australian and Aboriginal men and women who quickly learned their secrets and were soon in fierce competition with them supplying goods to the outback.

All human frailties were tested. Ignorance, intolerance, patience, hard work and determination.

The camel was once described as: 'A horse designed by a committee'. The designer was mother nature and evolution that produced one of the most fascinating animals on our planet.

If nothing else, it's worth getting the book just for its comprehensive list of Aussie slang.

We have a copy in our library that you can borrow, or you can purchase direct from Bill (9743-3662), our from the secretary.

Price: \$22.00

Bill's other book, "**Voyage of the City of Brisbane**" 1862, a chronology of an immigrant ship, is also available from Bill or us for \$15.00.

Family History

Another addition to our library is the comprehensive Walker/Jubb/Williamson History and Family Tree, compiled by Ron Williamson.

This is a very welcome addition to our archives and we thank Ron for the donation.

For your Diary

Wed. 12th Oct. - General Meeting
Wed. 26th Oct. - Executive Meeting
Wed. 9th Nov. - General Meeting
Wed. 23rd Nov. - Walker Estates
Wed. 14th Dec. - Christmas BBQ

Sydney Cove

Construction of Circular Quay

FLOWERS AND FOREST GLADES

Sydney Cove, which is now called Circular Quay, was the spot from which white Australia's history commenced. There the first settlement was established, and from it the progress of the continent radiated.

When Phillip and the First Fleet arrived the little bay had been untouched by man, apart from the aborigines who lived thereabouts on account of the supply of fresh water and fish.

The bush grew down to the water's edge. A beautiful little stream flowed into it in the western corner. The hills and valleys would be ablaze with flowers when Phillip landed there, having been nobody to pick them.

Silence reigned. On the banks of the little stream grew heavy timber. Among the trees the Argonauts saw wild celery, spinach and parsley. The stream rose in a swamp about a mile away in the centre of what is now Hyde Park, meandering under the heavy overhanging trees, over rocks and pearly white sand beds. It met the tide between Hunter and Bridge Streets.

Major Ross spoke of the cabbage trees and oaks that were cut for the huts.

From our knowledge of the "natural" parts of Sydney Harbour and Broken Bay there is no doubt it was a beautiful spot.

Man is a destructor as well as a constructor. It was not long before the crystal clear stream became murky and unclean. Shipping moored out in the bay, and later the vessels moored to piles driven in the shallow water.

More than half a century elapsed, however, before anything was constructed that could be termed a quay.

While the vessels in port were either transports or store ships, communication with the shore had to be restricted. Commissioner Bigge, writing in 1822, said: "All are anchored, sometimes crowded, at Sydney Cove. It would not be attended with any real inconvenience if they were made to anchor in front of Dawes Battery, where they would be between the guns of that work and those of the new fort at Bennelong Point. Government and other boats frequently hover around the convict ships."

The first structures were jetties, and it was not until the early 1840s that any serious effort was begun to improve the Quay and to provide wharfage accommodation. There was low land at the head of the bay, which was reclaimed.

The bay became known as Semi-Circular Quay. Even as late as 1855 references are to be found in the "Herald" to Semi-Circular Quay.

From the Secretary's Desk

Constitution and Rules of our Society:

We are about to review these to bring them up to date. If you would like to help contact the secretary for a copy of the present rules. You can go through these at your leisure and we will then have a meeting - some time next year - to put it all together to present to a meeting.

Change of starting times for meetings:

For the sake of consistency, all future meetings will now start at 7:30 p.m. (General, Executive and Walker)

A note for Yaralla tour guides: To all tour guides and intending tour guides - we have made some minor corrections to our Tour Guide Books. Some of our guides have already received these. If you haven't, please contact the secretary to get yours. There is also a second book with details of plantings, etc. If you haven't got this make sure you get one before our open day.

Reminders:

Rhodes Shopping Centre Stall - Saturday, 10th October - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Can you spare an hour or two to help?

Sorting and Identifying Photographs - Sunday, 13th November - 12 noon to 4:00 p.m. A fun afternoon of reminiscing as well as putting our collection into order so special ones can be located quickly when needed.

Meeting Attendance

There has been some concern of late that attendance at our regular meetings is falling off - and we don't know why.

Trish Skehan always has interesting guest speakers who talk on diverse subjects. We are renowned for our suppers and it's a good chance to chat to other members and get to know one another better.

In an endeavour to see what we can do to improve matters a form is enclosed with this issue. We would like you to take a few minutes and give us your opinions and suggestions for the future.

We also need to attract more younger members to take up the reins as we older ones slow down.

Please spare a few moments to fill in the form - if you have complaints let us know - if you have suggestions let us know - and get it back to us before the next Executive meeting on 26th October. We need your input to help us grow and prosper.