



"Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@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

Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

Archives/Local History

(Vacant)

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

It's All in The Mind

Our guest speaker for March, Mr Roger Johnson is a retired Police Forensics officer. Working on such cases as the Anita Cobby murder and the infamous Mr Bubbles child assaults, Roger gathered forensic evidence to present before the courts.

Roger began his career over 30 years ago, assisting with early Police Identikit photos. On one occasion, frustrated by an eye-witness who was too nervous to make an identification, he escorted her to see a noted hypnotist in Bondi. After calming the troubled lady, and placing her into a relaxed trance, she was able to clearly describe the offender, and selected appropriate eyes, nose and mouth features. Roger was amazed to see how accurately that description matched the alleged perpetrator. He set out to discover just how remarkable the human mind is.

After training and working for years in using hypnosis to assist victims in recalling minute details of the crimes, often months or years after they occurred, Roger became President of the Hypnotherapists' Association.

Mr Johnson explained the three types of hypnosis; stage work, clinical and forensics and their applications in everyday life. Hypnosis, he explains, is a definite craft that can be learned. There is no magic or mumbo-jumbo. It all depends on accessing the sub-conscious mind of the subject. With interesting data of experiments, such as placing a cold coin on the palm of a subject, telling them that it is white hot, then having the subject hastily toss the coin away and produce a blister underneath that site, Roger holds his audience spellbound.

He sometimes works with primary school children, or adolescents who have to perform some task. With trust, relaxation and by accessing the parallel awareness in the trance state, Roger had succeeded in producing remarkable results with clients.

With graphic tapes of details recalled by victims, while under the hypnotic state, Roger shows how to obtain information without asking leading questions, forbidden by law. To learn more about this intriguing subject, and to hear Roger's talk, don't miss our March 8th meeting.

Trish Skehan.

Let's Save Graythwaite

The Friends of Graythwaite have appealed to us for assistance to save this valuable piece of history. They write . . .

"We have a once only opportunity to secure a major new park for the North Sydney Central Business District.

The park is the Graythwaite Estate, just a five-minute walk from Greenwood Plaza.

Graythwaite is a magnificent sandstone Victorian mansion set in almost three hectares (six acres) of landscaped grounds. It has sweeping views across the harbour all the way south to Royal National Park and west to the Blue Mountains.

When you wander across the extensive lawns, sit under a century old fig or walk its forested pathways, it is hard to believe a busy commercial district is just a stone's throw away. As a park, Graythwaite would be the perfect place for lunch or a little time out.

The property was entrusted to the State Government in 1915 in the immediate aftermath of the terrible news of Gallipoli. The gift was for use as a convalescent home for the wounded ANZACS.

It is currently being used as a nursing home, but NSW Health wants to sell the site for development.

North Sydney Council has made an offer to the State Government to buy Graythwaite. The Council will open the grounds as parkland for the CBD and will ensure full restoration of the heritage mansion.

Sydney City has Hyde Park, the Domain and the Botanic Gardens.

North Sydney CBD was developed without parklands. This is our last chance to secure a large and gracious park so close to the CBD".

Can you write a personal letter to the Premier to state your support for Graythwaite as a park, or you can go to their web site - <http://graythwaite.org.au> - where you can email the Premier or get a copy of a suggested letter . . . or contact Lois for a copy.

(PO Box R224 Royal Exchange, NSW, 1225)



Bulletin Board

6th March - Roger Johnson, Retired
Police Forensic Officer

12th April - to be advised

Elgin Marbles – The Curse of Minerva (cont)

Lord Elgin left England in the summer of 1799 with his young bride and a personal secretary named William Hamilton. In Naples, they engaged the services of a Neapolitan painter, Giovanni Lusieri. Lord and Lady Elgin continued on to Constantinople, while Harrison stayed to assemble a team of workers for the mammoth task ahead. Arriving in Athens, Harrison and Lusieri found the Acropolis a squalid mess. They described a depressing sight of structures cannibalised from the ruins, or whitewashed from the remains.

In case you missed the last meeting here is the rest of this interesting story.

1800. They had a detailed brief to 'carefully and minutely measure every ancient monument' and to make plaster casts of the more interesting. Nothing at all was said about removing any sculptures or other works of antiquity. The team spent the next year trying to sketch and copy the statues, but met with great opposition from the ruling Disdar, as the local governor was known. With a mixture of outrage and bewilderment, he expressed affront that Christian men desired to obtain such pagan images. When asked about obviously missing statues, the Turkish owner 'pointed with a sardonic smile to the lime in the wall which had been made from sculptures that previously stood there. It became clear that the ruin of the noblest works of art was progressing with giant steps.' This was the recorded opinion of Adolf Michaelis, a German archaeologist who did not favour Lord Elgin.

The governor had forbidden the workers to erect scaffolding to reach higher sculptures as this would enable the infidels to peer down into the courtyards of good Moslems. The men could only tackle lesser works at ground level.

In early 1801, they received a visit from the Chaplin to the British Embassy at Constantinople. Rev Dr Philip Hunt was a scholarly cleric, who shared the prevailing British Passion for antiquities. Dr Hunt wanted the real thing, not just copies. And he thought big, on a grand scale.

Hunt proposed to remove the whole Palace of Mycenae to Britain, but was defeated by the sheer size of the project. He turned then to the Erechtheum, which would fit nicely into a British man-o-war.

Dr Hunt realised that the problem was the local governor, and decided to go over his head. He wrote to Lord

Elgin, urging him to use his position at court to obtain a firman/decreed that would free the agents in Athens from local restrictions. Hunt's letter arrived at the ideal moment. Lord Nelson had just fought and won the Battle of the Nile, where British influence was rising in Eastern Mediterranean. Lord Elgin was showered with honours, and the granting of such a permit was seen as a minor matter.

The only surviving copy is an Italian translation of the original document, which stated that they could remove some 'figures or inscriptions' that would not interfere with the works or walls of the citadel. The Italian term was 'qualche' which could be translated as some or any. The workers chose to interpret it as any works. Over the next year 300 men worked to strip the citadel of all the main statues and friezes over the Parthenon façade.

Lord Elgin, busy with his ambassadorial duties, briefly visited the site once in 1802. When made aware of the situation, he was anxious to get the marbles away before 'the tide turned in favour of the French'. By 1803, hundreds of pieces of marble statues and columns from the Parthenon and the Erechtheum were stashed in 200 chests, awaiting shipment to Scotland for inclusion in Broomhall, far from the original intention. Lord Elgin, as a high-ranking diplomat, received permission to ship his treasures by HM warships. Transportation would cost him nothing, but he had already paid £28,000 for workmen's wages and crates.

With the bounty safely stowed on board, he unwisely headed overland to England. Passing through Rome, Lord Elgin contacted Canova, the most famous sculptor of that time, asking him to help appraise and restore the marbles. Canova refused, stating that '*it would be sacrilege for me, or any man, to touch them with a chisel*'. Proceeding through France, war broke out again and Lord Elgin was captured. He endured four years in a prison, and obtained a release in 1806. By this time, Lady Elgin had absconded with another man, and Lord Elgin's diplomatic career and finances were in ruin.

Meanwhile, in 1805, a year before Lord Elgin's release, war broke out between England and Turkey. The French re-established their dominance in Athens. Smarting over the affair of the Rosetta stone, they demanded return of the marbles, trying to seize eighty chests from some of the ships. British supremacy at sea prevailed and most of the chests finally reached England. One of the ships

carrying 12 chests sunk near the Isle of Cerigo. Lord Elgin received a salvage bill of £5,000. He lost his seat in the House of Lords, and his marbles, his most precious antiquities, were now the subject of bitter controversy.

Richard Payne Knight, a young and famous archaeologist, became his vicious antagonist. Knight was described by Francis Taylor as a 'complex and difficult man, jealous, with an infallibility coupled with a sense of persecution and a madness for his own subject, the very essence of the archaeological character and temper'. Knight, a leading member of the Dilettante society, had never met Lord Elgin, but heaped scorn on him. Knight attacked him on his return home, and could not bear to think of his Society's own Roman antiquity collection being overshadowed by the Greek treasures of a 'Scottish laird'. He even declared that the marbles were overrated, and described them as 'Roman of the time of Hadrian.'

It was 1812 before all the marbles were assembled and displayed in England. Lord Elgin, having given up any hope of moving them to Broomhall, paid over seven thousand pounds for the building of a suitable gallery on the corner of Park Lane and Piccadilly. Meanwhile, Prince Ludwig of Bavaria travelled to Britain to view and offered to buy them. French authorities demanded their return, claiming that Lord Elgin had only been released from prison on his promise to give them back.

Lord Elgin proposed to sell them to the British government in an attempt to cover his heavy financial losses on the venture. Despite the jibes of Payne Knight, public opinion turned in favour of His Lordship. Many prominent artists viewed the wondrous works of art, and enthused over them. Canova came to London and on seeing the marbles declared, 'Oh that I had but to begin again, to unlearn all that I had learned. I now at last see what ought to form the real school of sculpture. I am persuaded that all artists and amateurs must gratefully acknowledge their high obligation to Your Lordship for having brought these memorable and stupendous sculptures into our neighbourhood'. High praise indeed!

British painter Benjamin Haydon was so stunned by the collection, he rushed to find his friend Henry Fuseli, and insisted on going immediately to view the sculptures. Fuseli declared, 'De Greeks were godes!' and Haydon wrote to Lord Elgin saying, 'You have immortalised yourself, my lord, by bringing them here.'

Despite this enthusiastic reaction

from the public and private sectors alike, Lord Elgin was in dire straits. Many felt that he had gone too far 'in the rape of one of the most beautiful buildings in the world – even one so heavily damaged as the Parthenon.' This prompted many travellers to visit the original site. When they saw the devastated remains, the ugly gaps and gaping wounds of the building, one British man lamented, 'It is painful to reflect that these trophies of human genius, which have resisted the silent decay of time during a period of more than twenty-two centuries, which had escaped the destructive fury of the iconoclasts, the considerable rapacity of the Venetians and the barbarous violence of the Mohammedans, should at last have been doomed to experience this devastating outrage which will never cease to be deplored.'

Byron, the famous poet, carved in the rock of the Acropolis the damning phrase. 'What the Goths spared, the Scots destroyed.' He wrote a scathing poem titled 'The Curse of Minerva', and spoke of Elgin as being 'Cold as the crags upon his native coast, his mind as barren and his heart as hard.'

Lord Elgin had had enough. His life was in tatters, his marriage over. The marbles which should have earned him fame were being used to condemn him as a philistine. He was in desperate need of money and offered the marbles for sale for the sum of £74,250 - the amount it had cost him over the years, plus a sum for his loss of income while in prison in France.

The Government referred the matter to a committee, who voted to offer him £35,000. They reasoned that he had used his position as a public figure to obtain the marbles, and to transport them on British warships. Parliament debated the issues involved, including the terrible state of the Parthenon, and the fact that these rare antiquities had been rescued from certain destruction. After sitting for eight days the committee recommended the standing purchase price. 'Take it or leave it,' they said. Despite the fact that he had spent over twice that sum, Lord Elgin finally agreed to the deal. Ironically, the marbles that had ruined him would carry his name for posterity.

In 1832, the Greeks shook off Turkish rule and, as their first national act, began restoring the Acropolis. What had been a praiseworthy intent, in connection with an unregarded building, became an unforgivable act of vandalism when the building became the symbol of that nation's fight for freedom. Small wonder that the

searchlight of public opinion should continue to be trained on this cause celebre.

Having stood in the basement and galleries of the British Museum, having photographed the Parthenon frieze in the closed gallery, and having toured many of the sites where these great works of art once stood, I feel that the originals, or at least a copy of each, should be returned to the main sites. To assist in restoring these great works would help to foster better relations between many nations and to restore the flagging tourist industry.

To see the four huge statues, one with the missing head of Ramases at Abu-Simbal, to see that gigantic head sitting on the floor of a gallery in the British Museum, is a strange and humbling experience. To see the Tomb of Eretrea stripped bare of the great columns and plinths that lined the archway, and to see the originals stuck in a corner of a British gallery is indeed a great shame.

There is much debate about leaving these sites in their original condition, but the original conditions were as perfect displays, not as tattered or broken columns and empty, bland structures, devoid of colour and character.

See the original statue of Winged Victory in the following slide. Contrast this with the magnificent reproduction that follows. Which would you rather view, about to swoop down upon you from a forty foot high column. Watch the following reproductions, and decide what would entice you to visit the countries of Greece, Egypt and Rome. Dull, empty landscapes, or vibrant settings with restored marble statues and real columns.

One tour guide in Greece confided to me that many of the sites were indeed stripped bare by scavengers, who used the marble and granite for newer buildings. The governments knew that travellers would be bored by such empty scenes. They obtained many newer columns and plinths and constructed parts of them in such sites as the Temple of Diana. Look closely at the colours and variety of marble and you will clearly see that the original base is not the same as the standing columns. How could pristine white marble altars with high bass relief figures survive in the midst of crumbling and greyed walls and buildings, such as at Pompeii? Observe the dull walls of the Pyramids, then marvel at the restored tomb of the Overseer in the Valley of the Kings. Which would you rather see, which excites your imagination?

Patricia Skehan.

Australia Day & Isaac Nichols

Following our article in last month's Nurungi, Barbara Hancock, one of our members who has carried out research on Nichols through his position as the first postmaster of the colony, advises that it is extremely unlikely that the dinner would have been held at Yaralla as this was basically a farm and orchard.

She also supplies the following information.

Isaac Nichols' House in George Street

By 1803 Isaac Nichols had leased an area near the Hospital Wharf in Sydney. This was later named King's Wharf, then Queen's Wharf, and was situated on the western side of Sydney Cove.

In October 1804 Sydney suffered from severe storms and "a large stone building, erected by Mr. I. Nichols near the Hospital Wharf, was blown down during one of the tempestuous nights". Nichols then set about repairing the damage, erecting a large warehouse on substantial stone walls at the water-line, followed by a large house fronting George Street. For several years this was the largest building on the western side of the cove, until the Commissariat Store was erected nearby. Nichols conducted the Post Office from the house until his death in 1819. The house was later known as the Australia Hotel and was demolished in the 1890s to make way for road access to the wharf. It was located in the centre of what is now First Fleet Park.

In November 1808 Nichols' lease of the George Street property was converted into a grant, "given in consequence of having erected an excellent dwelling house, extensive stores and other substantial building as a very heavy expense". The annual quit rent was £9.0.0.

Governor Macquarie attended the Bachelors Ball held there in 1811 and conferred the "appellation of the Sydney Hotel" on the premises, which continued to be used for Race-day Balls and other gala events.

Although the location was not stated, it is probable that the Anniversary Day celebrations of 1817 were held by Isaac Nichols in his George Street house, which could obviously accommodate a dinner party of 40 people with ease.

(Ed. Thank you Barbara. Contributions are always welcome.)

YOU'RE INVITED

Concord Garden Club presents their Autumn Flower, Vegetable and Floral Art Show on Saturday, 1st April, 10:30 am to 4:00 pm at the Concord Community Centre, Gipps Street, East Concord.

If you are interested in entering their competitions then contact Marjorie Hogan on 9744-8302

City of Canada Bay Council: Pamela Hubert, the Council's Heritage Advisor, will give a talk, exploring the evidence of industrial heritage in Canada Bay. The talk will take place on Wednesday, 12th April in the Bay Room at Five Dock Library, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Refreshments will be served.

A photographic display "From Steel to Suburbia - our changing industrial landscape: will be on show in the Bay Room at the Library.

Yaralla Open Day Sunday, 9th April, 2006

Please put the date
in your diary now.

This year's event will take on a different format. We will be conducting group tours through the house but the ground tours will be self guided. We are also carrying out extensive advertising and hope that there will be quite a large crowd.

We will need people to volunteer to man the various sites of interest around the grounds to talk to people and extra help for the Devonshire teas.

Also, some of our regular guides will not be available for various reasons so we urgently need additional helpers.

Please won't you volunteer some time for the day!!

For your Diary

Wed. 8th Mar - General Meeting
Wed. 22nd Mar - Executive Meeting
Wed. 12th April - General Meeting
Wed. 26 April - Walker Estates
Wed. 10th May - General Meeting

St Patrick's Day

The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385. His given name was Maewyn, and he almost didn't get the job of Bishop of Ireland because he lacked the required scholarship.

Far from being a saint, until he was 16, he considered himself a pagan. At that age, he was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders who raided his village. During his captivity he became closer to God.

He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in the monastery under St. Germain, Bishop of Auxerre for a period of twelve years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert the pagans to Christianity.

His wishes were to return to Ireland to convert the native pagans to Christianity. But his superiors instead appointed St. Palladius. But two years later, Palladius transferred to Scotland. Patrick, having adopted that Christian name earlier, was then appointed as second Bishop to Ireland.

Patrick was quite successful at winning converts. And this fact upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times, but escaped each time. He travelled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid him in his conversion of the Irish country to Christianity.

His mission in Ireland lasted for thirty years. After that time, Patrick retired to County Down. He died on March 17 in AD 461. That day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since.

Much Irish folklore surrounds St. Patrick's Day. Not much of it is actually substantiated.

Some of this lore includes the belief that Patrick raised people from the dead. He also is said to have given a sermon from a hilltop that drove all the snakes from Ireland. Of course, no snakes were ever native to Ireland, and some people think this is a metaphor for the conversion of the pagans. Though originally a Catholic holy day, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into more of a secular holiday.

One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. An Irish tale stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.



From the Secretary's Desk

Our Photographic Collection: Now that we have identified many of our collection they need to be scanned into the computer. This is not a hard job and requires no computer skills. It's just a matter of pushing a button when the computer tells you to. Can you spare some time to help with this important work?

Museum Roster: We are about to prepare the new roster. If you would like to volunteer to assist with this let us know. The museum is only open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays and Wednesdays each month from 2:00 to 4:00 pm so you would only be on the roster every couple of months.

Urgent Appeal: We desperately need more volunteers for the **Wednesdays**. Please give Lois or Lorraine Holmes a call. Phone numbers on front page.

Yaralla: If you've been past, or into Yaralla recently you will notice some much needed tidying up. The area around Hyacinth, the gatehouse at The Drive, is now looking much cleaner and more visible to the street. For this work we can thank the Jones Boys - Bob and Peter. Thank you for a job well done. If you'd like to help them Bob's number is on the front page.

March Guest Speaker: Perhaps you've been watching the spate of shows on TV about Forensic Investigators. Well, now's your opportunity to come along and listen to the real thing.

Many interesting tales to tell of how evidence is uncovered in real life.

It's next Wednesday - short notice, I know - but mark it down and **make sure you come to our meeting**.

Graythwaite - does this have a familiar ring to it? Please give them support in their endeavour.

Group Visits to Yaralla:

Wednesday, 15/3/06 - 10:30 am
- Drummoyne Community Centre. Assistance needed for Devonshire teas.

Monday, 20/3/06 - 10:00 am
- McMasters Beach Garden Club. Two guides and assistance with Devonshire teas set up and serve needed.

Can you help with any of these tours. Please contact secretary.