



# "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  
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

## Metropolitan Fire Brigade

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), the precursor to the NSW Fire Brigade, was established on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1884.

MFB headquarters began operating from the old Insurance Brigade Headquarters in Bathurst Street but with demand for a new central fire station the government purchased a site on the western side of Castlereagh Street and in 1888 the new station was completed.

From dusk to dawn junior fire fighters spent three hours on a twenty metre high tower (called the pigeon box) undertaking fire spotting duty.

A watchroom was located on the northern side of the ground floor and telephone exchange board, fire alarms and electrical apparatus were operated from there. The electrical contact in the room, when pulled, rang the bells throughout the entire building, turned up the gas lamps in the engine bay, released the stable doors (which immediately flew open by means of springs) and released a weight situated in the single men's quarters on the first floor which opened two flaps to enable fire-fighters to slide down a pole.

The original switchboard has been restored and is on display in a replica of the watchroom at the Museum of Fire, Penrith.

**Some extracts from a talk given by Station Officer S. Heart from Fire Brigade Headquarters, to the Concord Historical Society in September 1971.**

The first fire in Sydney, of historic interest, caused the destruction of the first church in the colony. This building, of wattle and daub, was built in 1793 and completely destroyed by fire on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1798. The site is now marked by a monument in Richard Johnson Place, near the intersection of Hunter, Castlereagh & Bligh Streets. It would appear to be the first case of arson in the colony as a £100 reward was posted by Governor Phillip for information as to who started it.

In 1837 Assurance Companies began to organise their own fire brigades. They were formed principally to minimise their losses and protect their insured buildings. Each Company fixed a distinctive "firemark" (plaques of light metal or lead, many quite colourful) to insured buildings to help firemen

to easily confirm if the premises were insured and by which company.

The Companies employed small boys as runners to notify their brigades of any fires. Upon arrival at the fire the men would inspect the building for the "firemark" to see if the premises were insured by them. If not, then they would take no action but probably wouldn't leave the scene in case the fire spread to adjoining buildings which might be insured by them.

In 1854 Andrew Tarning inaugurated the first Volunteer Fire Brigade in Sydney and also assisted in the formation of others.

In the days of the Volunteer Fire Brigades, payment was made to the brigade which discharged the first stream of water on the fire. This manner of monetary reward was responsible for intense rivalry and on occasions the extraordinary situation of firemen belonging to one brigade cutting the hose of another and indulging in other malpractices to prevent, or at least delay the members getting the first water on the fire and thus qualifying for payment.

The largest, most spectacular and destructive fire in the history of Sydney occurred in the premises of Gibbs, Shallard and Company, Hosking Place. Large warehouse in Castlereagh, Moore (now Martin Place) and Pitt Streets were involved. Firemen were hampered by narrow lanes and insufficient water supply. Falling walls fractured water mains beneath the footpath, causing considerable loss of water.

**To learn more, come along to our June meeting.**



### Bulletin Board

**Wed. 14th June** - Stephen Woods from the NSW Fire Brigades

**Wed. 12th July** - Mayor Angelo Tsirekas speaking on his experiences walking the Kokoda Track

**Wed. 9th August** - Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers and Committee

## The Introduction of Brass Helmets in Australia – the Concord Connection

When the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was formed in Sydney in 1884 the London Fire Brigade uniform, including the brass helmet, was adopted.

Originally the helmets were imported from England but following the outbreak of the Second World War and the formation of a new Fire Brigade system in the UK, brass helmets became unavailable.

In 1940 the New South Wales Fire Brigades sought expressions of interest from local Sydney firms to produce Brass Helmets. Eventually the Rhodes firm of Ryder & Bell was contracted to produce them. No assistance was received from the UK manufacturers and Mr. Ryder, starting from scratch, produced new moulds and tools.

Production commenced in 1947 for NSWFB. Ryder & Bell went on to produce other uniform and rank insignia for the fire brigades.

From May 1964 the brass helmets in NSW were replaced by an American design made from polycarbonate. In some other states they continued in limited use up to the late 1970's.

*(We are proud to have one of these brass helmets on display at our museum.)*

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## Sydney Ferries

Passengers on the Sydney ferry-boats often commented on the euphorious names that distinguished the fleet.

According to ancient mariners, we owe these Aboriginal names to a Scotsman who was chairman at the first christening. The vessel was to have been *Willoughby* after the suburb. The chairman, in his rich Scottish brogue, whispered *Wullaby* to the lady who had the honour of bestowing this name, and she christened it *Wallaby*.

When the next boat was built, being bigger than the *Wallaby* and of the same genus, it was called *Kangaroo*.

Thus originated the custom of giving aboriginal names, each beginning with the letter K, as Kookaburra, Kameruka, Kiandra, Kareela, Koompartoo, Karama, Kai Kai, Kummulla, Karingai, Kalang, Kara Kara, Killara, Karablia, Kurraba, Kirribilli, and a dozen others.

## Mortlake Volunteer Fire Brigade (1901 – 1929)

In October 1901 a Volunteer Fire Brigade of 12 volunteer firemen was established by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Board. A manual engine with 12 feet of suction hose and 600 feet of delivery hose was allotted to it.

During the same year the Board of the day purchased a site in Burwood Road, Mortlake for the sum of £160 for the purpose of building a Fire Station there. In 1903 the Board of the day erected a wood and iron Fire Station on that site, at the cost of £300, and a horse was allocated to the brigade to draw the manual fire engine.

According to Fire Brigade Headquarters there is no official record from what point the Brigade operate between October 1901 and the erection of the Fire Station in 1903, or whether the engine was drawn by manual effort or by a borrowed horse.

None of the earlier residents can recall whether the manual fire engine was ever used for the purpose of extinguishing a fire or by which method it was drawn to the site of operation.

By further research and enquiries among the earlier residents, it is believed that the manual fire engine was housed at the old Pig & Whistle building at the top of Hilly Street, near a laneway. Fire drill was frequently carried out at this site and all trial runs started from there, the engine being manually drawn to an impromptu destination named by the Captain. Then away they would go to extinguish the imaginary fire and return to the Pig & Whistle.

Charlie Sanders, the founder of Sanders Boatshed, was the first Captain and he was relieved by a Mr. Solman, a constructional engineer, who was Captain when the Brigade moved into the completed Fire Station in 1903.

An interesting feature regarding the horse mentioned earlier is that he was a tall grey, about 17 hands, named Sloper. So that, with the animal included and an established Fire Station, fire drill and putting Sloper through his routine was quite a regular thing, old Sloper responding quickly. Immediately the bell rang Sloper would take up his position quite smartly between the engine shafts and the semi-auto-

matic harnessing would be operated, having him in readiness for the practice – travelling north down to the river, turning left and back via Hilly Street to the Station. This seemed to have suited Sloper's sense of responsibility to such a degree that, on the occasion of a genuine alarm, it was almost beyond human effort to convince Sloper that he had to travel south. From then on it was decided to vary the direction of all future trial runs.

The name "Sloper" was derived from a comic paper character of a London publication; a goodie, tall character in striped trousers, checked coat and straw boater, who captured the interest of young and old of that period.

In 1905 two horses had been allocated to the Brigade and in 1912 a permanent Officer, a Mr. Jamieson, was attached to the Fire Station. A red brick cottage was built on the adjoining allotment by the Board as a residence for Mr. Jamieson's use. The Brigade and all the equipment then came under the control of the Board of Fire Commissioners of NSW by virtue of the Fire Brigade Act 1909. In 1918 the Brigade was motorised, having at this stage acquired a motor hose carriage. That is to say, a vehicle with a pump.

In 1925 a Garford Motor Engine, complete with pump, was allocated to the Station where it remained until 1928.

It is interesting to note that, although the Fire Station was originally located at Mortlake, it was always known as Concord Fire Brigade, a position which still exists today, although the Brigade is stationed in North Strathfield.

The Mortlake property was purchased by St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, the fire Station becoming a classroom (since demolished) and the Station Officer's residence becoming the Presbytery, which still remains.

In 1888 Tennyson Road was part of Burwood Road, Mortlake, which then extended from Georges River Road through Burwood, down Crane Street, along Majors Bay Road, Brewer Street, Frederick Street, Gale Street and down to the Parramatta River. In 1904 Tennyson Road was recorded and in 1905 Gale Street was named.

*(prepared by Ernie Younger in the 1970s and published in the Concord Historical Society newsletter.)*

## Positions Vacant

We still need more guides for Rivendell and Yaralla. Why not come along to our Rivendell Open Day on 30th July and join one of the tour group to learn about this work. It's not hard and can be very rewarding. Your Society needs you - won't you help?

# YOU'RE INVITED

## Discovering Iron Lace in Newtown (Walk) - Sunday, 2nd July, 2006.

The decorative ironwork on the terrace houses of Newtown is an exceptional part of the inner city's Victorian heritage. The variety of design surviving on the verandah railings throughout much of Newtown makes a walk through this area of modest housing an aesthetic experience.

Time: 10 am to noon. Cost: RAHS Members \$11, non-members \$16.

Meeting place: St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Church Street, Newtown.

The walk will go as far south as Wells Street and return to St Stephen's. There is street parking in the vicinity of Church Street and free Council parking off Lennox Street nearby.

Bookings essential - 9247-8001 or history@rahs.org.au.

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## The Museum of Fire, Penrith

The museum is situated at No.1 Museum Drive, Penrith (on the corner of Castlereagh Road) and has one of the world's largest and most unique collections of fire fighting equipment and memorabilia from NSW, other states and countries around the world.

Vehicles include hand drawn, horse drawn and motorised vehicles dated from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1980's.

There are fire fighting tunics, dress uniforms, helmets, badges, buttons, etc. from all over the world as well as communication systems, fire fighting tools and protective equipment.

The museum is open 7 days per week, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed Good Friday and the last two weeks of December). Group bookings are welcome and there is something for ALL the family.

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## Some thoughts on Dreams

There is consolation in the fact that even though our dreams don't always come true - neither do our nightmares.

Some men see things as they are and say "why". I dream things that never were and say "why not"  
(Robert Kennedy)

## Our Museum - a Call to Action

For too long our Museum has been the "poor relation" in our Society, but we are now hoping to re-activate the Museum Sub-Committee and work towards improving and promoting this wonderful asset.

With the help of Karen Harris, Cultural Development Officer at City of Canada Bay Council, we have applied for a Community Heritage Grant.

If this is successful the money received will go towards preparing a Significance Assessment of the artefacts housed at the museum and provide training for our members to carry out the assessments, preservation and management of the collection.

This is something that is long overdue.

In anticipation of receiving this grant - but even if we are unsuccessful - what we need now is a group of volunteers who would be willing to learn the basics to undertake this work.

Our Museum should become a focus point for people to learn more of our area's heritage and history, particularly for the school children studying local history.

While we are waiting to hear about the grant and in preparation there are several things we can do.

\* Margaret Roberts, the Council's Local Studies Librarian, has invited our members to visit the Five Dock Library to inspect their collection. It contains books, reports and environmental studies, maps and plans, local newspapers and newspaper clippings, photographs and family history resources. We need to know what they have and how it complements our own collections.

\* There are "Quickstart" Courses run by the Mitchell Library. These are free and introduce participants to popular areas of research using the Mitchell Library's card and computer catalogues. You learn the practical aspects of finding and accessing pictures, manuscripts and maps in the Library.

\* There are courses, "Researching on the Internet", which could be helpful to those not too familiar with computer research. This is a step-by-step introduction which covers the basics of the internet, using a browser, and tips to help you find the information you need. It is suitable for beginners and senior citizens.

We have many valuable and historic items at the museum which need to be identified, researched and catalogued. This work can be carried out in your own time, spending as much time or a little as you can spare.

You can work as an individual or we can work in groups.

This is too much work for just one person - we need as many volunteers as we can enthuse. The more helpers we have the less work there will be for individuals and the more we can achieve to make our Museum a place of learning as well as an interesting place to visit.

Perhaps we have, amongst our members, someone with the experience to lead us in these endeavours. We need to hear from you.

If you are willing to put your name forward, please contact Lois on 9744-8528 as soon as possible so that we can start to work towards our goals.

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## R.A.H.S. Special Workshop

The Royal Australian Historical Society is holding a **Photographic Collection Management Workshop** on Saturday, 24th June. - 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

This is for Societies who have had collections of photographs donated and don't know where to begin. (*This certainly applies to us.*)

Participants will gain some new skills by helping process and catalogue photographic material in the RAHS collections. This workshop, conducted by Kylie Rees, will enable us to begin the process of correctly storing, identifying and cataloguing our own collections. She will demonstrate the correct handling procedures and archival supplies will be given. All participants at this workshop will be helping the RAHS in their efforts to catch up with the backlog of photographic material. This will, in turn, train us to manage our own collection. We will also receive a sample bag of archival goodies to take home with us.

Cost is \$25 or \$50 for 3 members. Lunch can be purchased for \$5.50 per person. Venue: History House Auditorium.

*This is something we have to do for our own collection and it is too much for just one person so won't you come along to learn.*

We need to book so please contact Lois as soon as possible.



## Time Capsule at Breakfast Point

As part of Australia's Bicentennial activities AGL and Concord Council buried a Time Capsule on the tip of Breakfast Point and our two local MPs planted trees.

With all the building activities taking place there, we are concerned that this capsule has not been removed..

If any of our members visit Breakfast Point or walk the foreshore track would you please check to see if there is any visible sign of this. We have contacted Canada Bay Council but they don't appear to have any information.

The capsule was intended to be opened in the year 2088 and contains: a set of stamps, the new 1988 Bicentennial Coin Collection, Photographs from Photo Competition, Photographs and Biography of Bicentennial Committee, Photographs and Biography of Council and Staff, Details of F4 and Ring Road 33, Bicentennial Council Minutes, Video of Concord, Microfiche of films and general records, History of the AGL Mortlake works, Photographs (past and present) of Mortlake, Programme of Dedication Ceremony.

Your help in locating this would be greatly appreciated.

Also, are there any other known time capsules buried in Concord, by whom and in what location.



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## The Sydney Morning Herald

... achieved 175 years of publication on April 18, 2006.

- \* The first edition of the Herald was launched on Monday, April 18, 1831 – it was 4 pages long. The second edition was only 2 pages.
- \* A subscription delivered to a Sydney address cost 5 shillings a quarter.
- \* The front page primarily consisted of classified ads and listed those “Prisoners of the Crown” who had obtained “tickets of leave” and where they were now living.
- \* The main article in the paper was a manifesto from the Editor, starting with a quote from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*: “Sworn to no master; of no Sect am I”.
- \* Three quarters of a page was devoted to shipping news from departures and arrivals to exporting and importing information.
- \* The last section of the paper was titled “Fashionable & Important Information” with a brief article on the arrival of a very “respectable London designer – Lewis Cohen” and stated “(he) hopes, by exerting himself to please those who may honour him with their commands, not to be found unworthy of patronage.”
- \* A personal notice on the back page states: “One Pound Reward – Lost in Parramatta”. Mr. John Dargin declares that he has lost the deeds to his farm located on the “First Branch of the Hawkesbury” and that One Pound reward will be given to the person who returns the deeds.

### For your Diary

Wed. 14th June - General Meeting  
Wed. 28th June - Walker Estates  
Sun. 30th July - Rivendell Open Day  
Wed. 12th July - General Meeting  
Wed. 26th July - Executive Meeting  
Wed. 9th August - Annual General Meeting & Elections

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## Reviving a Lost Art

*Stand erect, place right foot on the ground, push foot down as in operating a throttle and shift weight to right foot. Place left foot forward to repeat operations as previously carried out with right foot. Alternate at a speed of 60 movements per minute and, when proficiency has been attained, increase speed to 80 per minute. This is known as “walking”, a form of transportation used before the development of the automobile and said to be healthful. With the rise in the price of petrol, it is likely to be revived.*

## From the Secretary's Desk

**Open Day at Rivendell - Sunday, 30th July.** We need to know if you are available to help on this day. Please contact me as soon as possible.

**Missing sticky tape dispensers.** Do you have any of these from your time helping to go through the old newspapers? If so could you please let me know.

**Newspaper Cuttings:** By the way, we still have a small number of papers that need to be gone through. Can you help us finish up this job?

**Arnott's Cottages.** Some time back Council purchased three of these timber cottages prior to development of the site. One is located at Walker Reserve and one at the tennis courts in Wellbank Street. Does anyone know where the third one is?

**Reminder:** Have you paid your membership fees yet? They are due by the end of this month.

**Air Conditioners at the Museum.** Thanks to Council, who kindly donated two air conditioners from the old Council Chambers, we will now be a little warmer - or cooler - on museum duty

**Attendance at meetings.** Would members please sign the Visitors' book at the entrance as this is our only record of attendance. Last meeting, according to the book we only had 11 people attending - but I'm sure there were a lot more.

**Photographic Collection Management workshop by R.A.H.S:** Did you read the article? Can you join me to learn?

**Museum in Action:** Did you read the article? Can you become part of the team?

**Annual General Meeting:** To officers and chairmen, it's time to start preparing your report for this meeting. We will also need a copy to the Editor for publication to our members.

**Election of Officers:** At our August meeting ALL positions will be declared vacant. Are you willing to put your name forward to become part of our Executive? Now is the time to start thinking.

**Articles or Items for Nurungi:** Have you come across something interesting that you think might interest our readers? Why not send it in. If we need to get permission to reprint we will also need to know its source.