



# “Nurungi”

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: [chs@concordheritage.asn.au](mailto:chs@concordheritage.asn.au)

[www.concordheritage.asn.au](http://www.concordheritage.asn.au)

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EDITOR  
**LOIS MICHEL**  
9744-8528

PRESIDENT  
**JANN OGDEN**  
9809-5772

PUBLIC RELATIONS  
**TRISH SKEHAN**  
4369-4172

SECRETARY/TREASURER  
**LOIS MICHEL**  
3 Flavelle Street  
(P.O. Box 152)  
Concord 2137  
Phone: 9744-8528  
Fax: 9744-7591

#### 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

## The Kokoda Experience

On Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2005 Mayor Angelo Tsirekas, then Council's general manager Michael McMahon and seven others set off on a once in a lifetime journey. Little did they know that this nine-day trek that they were about to undertake in the depths of Papua New Guinea would be an emotionally challenging and completely life-changing experience.

**Angelo will be our guest speaker on 12th July so make a note to come along and share this experience with him.**

## The Kokoda Track

One of the bloodiest campaigns of World War II, which has forever sealed the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea, began 64 years ago

It was on July 21, 1942, that Japanese troops landed on the northern coast of then New Guinea and unexpectedly began to march over the Owen Stanley Ranges with the intent of capturing Port Moresby.

Had they succeeded, the mainland of Australia would have come under dire threat.

July 23 – Remembrance Day – marks the 64th anniversary of the first engagement between the opposing troops on July 23, 1942, and from that engagement, as the Australian force was progressively outnumbered, began the long fighting withdrawal over the Owen Stanley Ranges.

Kokoda was arguably Australia's most significant campaign of the Second World War.

More Australians died in the seven months of fighting in Papua, and the Japanese came closer to Australia, than in any other campaign.

Many of those young Australians, whose average age was between 18 and 19, now lie buried at the Bomana War Cemetery outside Port Moresby.

The famous photograph of 'fuzzy wuzzy angel' Raphael Oimbari leading a blindfolded wounded Australian epitomizes the close relationship between Australians and Papua New Guineans which has come about because of the battle of Kokoda.

A small force of Australians known as "Maroubra Force" arrived at Buna on July 21st, 1942, as the first Japanese force of 1500 men landed at Gona, eight miles to the west.

What followed will forever go down as one of the most heroic defensive actions in the annals of military history.

Two main battles were fought during that period (Isurava August 26 to 29 and Brigade 'Butchers' Hill from September 6 to 8).

In the main, the desperately tired but determined force kept themselves between the Japanese Major General Horri's South Sea Force and Port Moresby – defending, retreating and then counter-attacking in a masterly display of strategic defence.

Conditions were almost indescribable.

It rained for most of the time, the weary men endured some of the most difficult terrain of the world and they were racked by malaria and dysentery.

But they kept on fighting, making the enemy pay dearly for every yard of ground.

They bought time for those being prepared to come up from Port Moresby to relieve them.

The Australians, however, had a surprise in store for the enemy.

This was in the form of 25-pounder guns brought from Moresby to the road head at Owers' Corner and then laboriously dragged into position at Imita Ridge, opening up on the enemy's barricades and it was now the turn of the Japanese to suffer



**Bulletin Board**

**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

what the Australians had suffered in the preceding two months.

Australian shelling smashed Japanese defences and aggressive patrols inflicted severe losses.

On the morning of September 28th the Australians were closing in and it became evident then the Japanese were withdrawing.

The chase, with the Australians the pursuers, was now on.

Kokoda was entered on November 2 and this was the beginning of the end of Japanese hopes in Papua.

The campaign now entered a phase known as "The Battle of the Beaches".

The Japanese were bottled up in the area from which they had commenced their drive on Port Moresby some months previously - Buna, Gona, Sanananda.

This final campaign commenced on November 19, 1942, and ended on January 22, 1943, when all organised resistance by the Japanese in Papua ended.

## The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels

To read between the lines of 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', the celebrated poem by Australian digger Bert Beros, will drive you to tears. The poem, which whilst sentimental, touches a chord that has endured to this day in the hearts of both Australians and Papua New Guineans.

It tells of the prayers of worried Australian mothers, whose young sons are fighting the Japanese on the rugged Kokoda Trail, and how their prayers are answered in the form of 'fuzzy wuzzy angels'.

### Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels

*Many a mother in Australia when the busy day is done  
Sends a prayer to the Almighty for the keeping of her son  
Asking that an angel guide him and bring him safely back  
Now we see those prayers are answered on the Owen Stanley Track.*

*For they haven't any halos only holes slashed in their ears  
And their faces worked by tattoos with scratch pins in their hair  
Bringing back the badly wounded just as steady as a horse  
Using leaves to keep the rain off and as gentle as a nurse*

*Slow and careful in the bad places on the awful mountain track  
The look upon their faces would make you think Christ was black  
Not a move to hurt the wounded as they treat him like a saint  
It's a picture worth recording that an artist's yet to paint*

*Many a lad will see his mother and husbands see their wives  
Just because the fuzzy wuzzy carried them to save their lives  
From mortar bombs and machine gun fire or chance surprise attacks  
To the safety and the care of doctors at the bottom of the track*

*May the mothers of Australia when they offer up a prayer  
Mention those impromptu angels with their fuzzy wuzzy hair.*

Bert Beros

## The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway

A Memorial Walkway has been constructed at Rhodes Park, Concord to commemorate all veterans who served in World War II.

The Memorial Walkway has been named the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway in recognition of the young Australians who served on the Track; those young men who fought, died and suffered to keep Australia safe from invasion.

The fighting on The Kokoda Track was one of the vital elements which saved Australia from invasion in World War II. During the four months of fighting in the Owen Stanley Ranges the Australian infantry lost 607 killed and 1015 wounded.

The efforts of the native Papuans - the legendary "fuzzy wuzzy angels" are also acknowledged. Cold, hungry and often over burdened, they carried forward the supplies and facilitated the evacuation of the casualties with devotion and humanity.

It is hoped that those who tread the path of this Memorial Walkway gain a greater appreciation of the important events that took place in Papua in 1942.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway covers more than 800 metres from Rhodes Station to Concord Hospital in

Sydney's inner-west, and runs along the mangrove-studded shores of Brays Bay on the Parramatta River.

At the centrepiece are magnificent granite walls bearing photographic images of the campaign; there are 22 stations or plaques along the walkway, each describing a significant place or engagement; the walkway has been planted with lush tropical vegetation simulating the conditions of The Kokoda Track.

### Benefits of becoming a Friend of Kokoda

Opportunity to attend all official services and events at the Memorial Walkway

You will receive newsletters and other updates about the Memorial Walkway

Limited edition Kokoda Track Memorial merchandising for members only

Your opportunity to walk the original Kokoda Track with other members through special priced package tours to New Guinea

Satisfaction that your membership donation contributes towards the maintenance and development of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway

Members only lapel pins depicting Gold, Silver and Bronze memberships

### Initial Membership Contributions

- \* Bronze Membership ..... \$20
  - \* Silver Membership ..... \$50
  - \* Gold Membership ..... \$100
- Thereafter, membership will be \$10

### Contact Friends of Kokoda

PO Box 127, Concord 2137

### The Isurava Memorial

The Isurava Memorial overlooks the Kokoda Valley at the site where the Australian forces dug in to face the Japanese invasion. It stands a short distance from the spot where Private Bruce Kingsbury of the 2/14th Battalion won his posthumous Victoria Cross, the first to be awarded in Papua New Guinea.

The memorial features a central stone of polished South Australian granite, raised on a plinth composed in bronze, Portland cement and granite.

Surrounding the plinth are four sentinel stones, each weighing more than 3.5 tonnes, engraved with the words courage, endurance, sacrifice and mateship, representing the resolute commitment of the Australians who stood firm in the face of the enemy.

The Isurava Memorial was unveiled on Wednesday 14 August 2002, the 60th Anniversary of this epic battle.

<http://www.kokodawalkway.com.au/index.html>

## Yaralla Progress

At 10am on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, a meeting was held at Yaralla Estate by Angela D'Amore, State Member for Drummoyne, where she announced the formation of the "Friends of Yaralla" committee.

Attending the ceremony were representatives from the Concord Heritage Society, the Walker Estates committee, the National Trust, Canada Bay Council, Sydney South West Area Health Service and teacher and students from the History Department at Concord High School.

Ms D'Amore stated it was envisaged the new committee "Friends of Yaralla" might consist of members from the local council, Concord Heritage Society, National Trust, Sydney South West Area Health Service, Robert Jones, and other interested parties, including herself.

The committee would look at addressing issues such as increasing promotion of Yaralla as an important heritage site, seek funding sources such as grants to restore and maintain the estate, and increase political support and public awareness of Yaralla to help protect the site.

This new collaboration could also work to help address the current skills shortages in the heritage restoration trades that work on heritage sites, by giving TAFE students the opportunity of specialist training, through assisting with repair and restoration work on the estate.

The group then participated in a tour of the estate and viewed some of the restoration projects that Concord Heritage Society has undertaken in recent years.

Ms D'Amore made recognition of all the volunteers who have so generously given their time over the years to Yaralla, creating the environment which is now being recognised.

She also noted that Robert Jones has applied, on behalf of the Concord Heritage Society, to the Environmental Trust for a Grant to the value of \$20,000. It is hoped that the application will be successful, as this will allow the Society to pursue yet another conservation project at Yaralla.

This new committee will endeavour to establish fresh support for Yaralla, while working toward the long term goal of a secure future for Yaralla, which the Concord Heritage Society has been trying to achieve for many years.

It is wonderful to receive this support from our State member, and we are all very excited for the future of Yaralla Estate, and the possibilities which it now holds.

Derek Williams  
Chairman, Walker Estates Committee

## Concord Memories

My family were comfortable, living in Kempsey on the North Coast, until the Great Depression of the 30's when my father was declared bankrupt. We then moved to Parramatta, Bowral, Kiama and finally Concord in 1942, where I enrolled in Concord Public School at the age of 12.

My first impressions were that the footpaths were made of concrete and not bitumen as they were in country towns. Every town had a 'gas works', the by-product of which was tar. Concrete was not available or too expensive.

The second impression was the sound of pigeons. Sixty years ago, there were winged predators, eagles, etc. which kept the feral bird population down. In those days, many of the boys came to school barefoot and 'stubbed toes' were the norm; a bleeding big toe that had knocked into something. Girls always wore shoes, even in the country.

There were three boys and one girl in our family and I was the eldest. Our parents had made us small cardboard boxes about 6 inches square into which were placed the two halves of a tennis ball and a piece of rubber. If we were caught in an air raid, we were to lie down in a street gutter, place the rubber in our mouths, bite on it, and hold the two halves of the tennis balls over our ears to prevent concussion damage. There were air raid shelters dug out from the ground, on the south side of the main school building at Concord, but after the first heavy rain they filled with water and were useless.

What is now Queen Elizabeth Park was surrounded by barbed wire and was the barracks for hundreds of young Australian army trainees. Diagonally across from the school, on the south side of Burwood Road, were a group of shops. The one on the corner was a favourite and was run by a Mrs. Christie. She also sold 'Old Chums' cigarettes which came in packets of 1, 2 and 3. It is hard to believe that one 'fag' was in its own packet!

Along from this store, was a produce merchant who sold chook feed, seeds and garden implements. He also had an 'ice works' out the back where one could buy a block of ice for the 'ice

chest' if the regular 'ice man' failed to arrive, or he forgot to place a wet bag over the delivery and it had prematurely melted. Not that there were no electric refrigerators in those days, we had one in Kempsey in the early 30's but no-one could afford them any more. This shop also sold frozen grapes, a great favourite in summer.

There were many street vendors, hawkers, in those days with their horesedrawn carts. With the cry of 'clothes props' one sold washing line props; three metre long tree branches with a fork at the top where housewives would lift their washing into the wind. "Rags, bags, bones and bottles" was the call of another. Maybe the precursor of re-cycling?

What we would term unhygienic in these days were the ice cream and bread carters, although the manure left by their horses was very quickly shovelled into a bucket to be used on the back yard vegetable garden, and nearly every home had one.

We visited friends from Kempsey, who were also down on their luck, and they lived in a 'tent city' at Carlton, which is now the site of the St. George Leagues club. It was strange to see furniture which was previously in a well-kept home, sitting on linoleum which was placed on top of grass. There were even streets with names!

There were very few Chinese restaurants in those days. They were concentrated near Dixon Street, Sydney. My father, Harold Barlow, was a connoisseur. There was no such thing as a 'take-a-way' in those days but if you needed to take food away, you would have to supply your own 'billy can' or saucepan.

(to be continued)

*The above is part of a letter written by Bill (Milton Edward) Barlow to Mr. Alan Duncan, Headmaster of Concord Public School, Burwood Road, Concord, on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2005.*

*The letter was written to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school.*

*It is printed with permission.*

**Wise Words:** *Volunteers don't receive money for their work; not because they're worthless but because they're priceless.*

## 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?

## Our hope for the future

We have just received this wonderful letter from 6-year old Matthew who shares our love of Yaralla.

Unfortunately, the hospital won't allow children to do clean-up work on the estate because of insurance problems.

However, we sincerely appreciate his interest and hope he will continue to walk around the estate and enjoy.

Perhaps, he can keep an eye on things for us and let us know of any damage or work that needs to be done so we grownups can take care of it. And when he gets a little older he can join us to carry on our work.

These children are our hope for the future because we will need him and others like him to take on the work that we do now when we get too old.

Thank you Matthew.

## Yaralla help in fixing

Hello my name is Matthew Stevens. I am 6 years old and I am in Year 1 at St Marys. I live at 20 Addison Ave, Concord, with my Mum and Dad, younger brother Patrick and baby sister Lucy.

I enjoy my walks seeing buildings, gardens, rivers, the Four Winds Fountain and exploring the grounds of Yaralla. Today on my walk I discovered the sunken garden. It is dirty and I was wondering if I could help you fix it up.

## Thank you



This is the pond.

from Matthew  
28-5-06

## 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. It's only 4 weeks away and we need to have your names in now.

**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?

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

**Attendance at meetings.** Please don't forget to sign the attendance book - it's not just for visitors.

**Photographic Collection Management workshop by R.A.H.S:** Thanks to the 5 members who turned up for this. Armed with all our knowledge we're ready to tackle our photographic collection.

**Museum in Action:** We need to reform the Museum Committee now that things are starting to happen. If you'd like to become part of this group please contact Lorraine Holmes, the Museum Committee Chairman, on 9743-2682

**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.

## For your Diary

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

## RAHS State History Conference - 14-15th October, 2006 - at Hornsby Roads, Rates and Records: Governing the Neighbourhood

Conference papers include: Discovering Local Council Rate Books \ Maps as a window on local history \ The role of a local Historical Society in preserving a Shire's heritage \ State Records and Local Government Records \ The characters of Local Government \ 150 years of responsible government in NSW \ Using the NSW Statistical Registers for local research \ Company archives and local government \ Property valuations and the VG Department records \ Researching the NSW Land Tax Records \ Women in local and state government.

This should be of help to us when we start work on our Museum. Why not mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend.