

"Nurungi"

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

CONCORD HERITAGE MUSEUM

5 Wellbank Street

Open 2:00 - 4:00 pm on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays & Saturdays No.123

August 2006

The Domain and Royal Botanic Gardens

The Sydney Domain was set aside in 1788 by Governor Phillip as his private reserve. It covered the area east of the Tank Stream to the head of Woolloomooloo (Walla Mulla) Bay and contains the site of the first farm in Australia. The farm had been established for growing grain, but was soon moved to Parramatta, because of the poor sandy soil. The Farm Cove (Woccanmagully) area was then leased out for private farming for the next twenty years.

Governor Bligh attempted to reclaim the Domain c. 1808 and Governor Macquarie completed this task, extending the roads and gardens started by Bligh, and enclosing the Government Domain with stone walls and paling fences. The traditional foundation date of the Botanic Gardens is taken as the date of completion of Mrs Macquaries Road in 1816.

Our long history of collection and study of plants began with the appointment of the first Colonial Botanist, Charles Fraser, in 1817. The Botanic Gardens is thus the oldest scientific institution in Australia and, from the earliest days, has played a major role in the acclimatisation of plants from other regions.

Reminding us of the early days, Mrs Macquaries Point and Chair mark one of the sought-after photographic spots in Sydney with views across the Harbour to the Opera House and Harbour Bridge. The Governor's wife had the chair carved out of the rock so she could sit and observe the passing ships. Above the chair is an inscription recording the completion of Mrs Macquaries Road on 13 June 1816.

First Fleet Steps is the point where Queen Elizabeth II first set foot on Australian soil, and a commemorative wall plaque marks the event. The site is often used for large marquee functions with stunning views of the Opera House and Harbour Bridge.

Over the years the Gardens grew as the Domain was slowly whittled away, but remained an important buffer to the Gardens. The native vegetation was cleared and the gullies of Phillip Precinct filled. During the 1830s the expansive green space of the Domain was now opened to the public, who strolled and picnicked there. The Domain west of Mac-

quarie Street was then sold to pay for the construction of new Government House and Circular Quay.

In the 1850s the Domain was used for military, sporting, and ceremonial events, and was subsequently used for soap-box oratory and political meetings. From 1860 the Domain was opened up at night to pedestrians, allowing people to use this valuable recreational space on summer evenings. It became known as 'the Park where the Gates Never Close'. Carriage traffic however remained restricted after dusk for many years.

In 1862 Sydney's first zoo was opened within the Botanic Gardens and remained there until 1883, when most of it was transferred to Moore Park. During these years much of the remnant natural vegetation of the surrounding Domain was removed and planted as parkland. The Moreton Bay Figs, one of the major elements of this planting, continue to dominate the land-scape

In 1879 a substantial area of the Domain, south of the Government House stables (now the Conservatorium of Music), was taken for the building of the Garden Exhibition Palace. This building, 'an outstanding example of Victorian architectural exuberance, with towers and turrets deployed around a giant dome 100 feet in diameter surmounted by a lantern 200 feet above the ground', dominated Sydney's skyline and covered over two hectares.



Bulletin Board

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

Wed. 13th September - Gregory Blaxell - "The Life of Gregory Blaxland" and "Brush Farm"

Wed. 11th October - Barbara Hancock, "Concord Post Offices"

Wed. 8th November - Claude Bennie, "Arnotts History"

The Sydney International Exhibition held in the Palace drew world attention to civilisation's advances in Australia, achieved in less than a century of European settlement. It also put on show the abundant natural wealth of Australia and provided a focus for horticulture and landscape design

This Exhibition attracted over one million visitors. However, the building was destroyed by fire in 1882 and the land, now known as the Palace Garden, was added to the Botanic Gardens

The **Garden Palace** was a large purpose-built exhibition building constructed to house the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879.

Visually similar in many respects to the later Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne, the Sydney building consisted of three turreted wings meeting beneath a central dome. The building was sited at the southwestern end of the Royal Botanical Gardens and was of primarily timber construction - a fact that was to assure its complete destruction when engulfed by fire in September 1882.

The only extant remains of the Garden Palace are its carved sandstone gate-posts and wrought iron gates, located on the Macquarie Street entrance to the Royal Botanical Gardens. A fountain featuring a statue of Cupid marks the central point of the Palace's dome. The only artefact from the International Exhibition to survive the fire - a carved graphite statue of an elephant, from Ceylon - is on exhibit at the Powerhouse Museum.

The Garden Palace exhibition was so popular that the government bought many of the star exhibits and set up the Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum, the antecedent of the Powerhouse Museum. But in 1882, before it could open to the public, the Garden Palace mysteriously burnt down in a spectacular six hour fire. Fortunately some of the exhibits- and more importantly the momentum to build a museum- survived the Garden Palace fire.

Sincere Sympathy is
extended to
Glenn and Tina Casey
and their family
on the sad loss of his
mother.

The Powerhouse Museum and The Garden Palace

The Powerhouse Museum, along with the Sydney Observatory, make up what is known as the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. The Powerhouse Museum is the largest museum in Australia, and one of the most diverse in the world. Its exhibitions are noted for being educational as well as fun. Many of the exhibitions, especially those for children, are interactive and children learn as they participate in some way.

The building that houses this extraordinary museum was once the power source that fed the electric tram cars in Sydney. Constructed from 1899-1902 it was in use until 1961 when the trams stopped running. In 1979 the derelict building was sited as the new home for the museum and it opened as such in 1988.

Part of the old powerhouse can be observed as visitors tour the museum. The old boiler room and gargantuan smoke stacks are part of the museum as well as the Turbine and Engine Houses.

The history of the museum precedes its opening by one hundred years. Many of the collections were in the original museum that was to be housed in The Garden Palace. The Garden Palace had been built in 1879

for Australia's first international exhibition. The show was so popular that the government purchased many of the exhibits and set up a museum.

The Garden Palace was destroyed in a terrible six-hour fire before the museum could open. It was a miracle that a few of the exhibits were saved and a new museum planned. The Technological Museum, as it was called, moved into a new building in Ultimo just a block from where it stands today.

Exhibitions in the Powerhouse Museum change often as well as the museum supporting permanent collections. The Space exhibit, the Strasburg Clock, Success and Innovation, Brewing and Pubs, The Boulton and Watt Engine, Steam Revolution, Pills and Potions, Transport, and Musical Instruments are just some of the permanent collections available to the public.

Admission to the Powerhouse Museum is free the first Saturday of every month. There is a fee on other days, but children less than five and adults over sixty get in free any day also. The museum is open every day of the year, except for Christmas Day, from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m

You'RE Invited

Rookwood Necropolis - Sunday, 24th September - to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Central Railway Station.

To help celebrate, Steam Train 3112 will steam out of Central Railway at 10 am, past the Mortuary Station to Lidcombe, where vintage buses will provide transport into Rookwood Cemetery.

On arrival, tours will be conducted visiting important railway graves and the remains of the old railway line, as well as short heritage walks. Lunch is included . . . then join in the Mini Open Day.

Buses will leave Rookwood to transport you back to Lidcombe where you will rejoin the 3112 and be back at Central Station by 4 pm.

For fare details visit the website www.3801limited.com.au or phone 1300-653-801.

If you don't want to take part in the

above part of the celebration, then just come along to the . . .

Rookwood Cemetery Mini Open Day - 24th September, from 9 am to 3 pm. There will be lots of activities and various tours as well as white elephant stall, plant stall, sale of Heritage roses, souvenirs, Devonshire teas, BBQ lunch, etc.

Behind the Scenes tours at Rookwood Gardens Crematorium, Memorial Avenue, every hour from 9:30 am.

Enquires: Robyn on (02) 9499-2415. Entry to this part of the day is free. No booking required.

Have you ever wanted to be on television? On Sunday, 20th August, from 10 am to 11 am, Channel 9 is coming to Rookwood to do some filming regarding the Friends of Rookwood and what they do. They would love to have a 'crowd' involved for the cameras. If anyone is interested in attending for an hour and being part of the crowd for the filming it would be much appreciated.

It might be a good opportunity to make some media contacts for our work with Yaralla and Rivendell!!

Bill Barlow's Memories

(continuation of a letter written to Concord School on their 150th anniversary)

A two lane tram track ran outside the school and came from Burwood. It turned into Crane Street then up Majors Bay Road and finally to Cabarita and another branch line to Mortlake.

They were open-sided 'toast rack' trams where the conductor clung desperately to the sides, collecting fares in all weathers. I still remember a sign in the tram 'no spitting'. On the opposite side the paper boys would risk life and limb holding on as they sold their wares to the passengers. Indeed, one of the pupils, 'Bowie' Morgan, was killed when he was struck on the head by a tram from the opposite direction. He was also a member of our First Concord Scouts Troop.

Those not wishing to pay their fare would also 'scale' the tram holding onto the hand rails opposite the conductor. They were expert at jumping backwards from a moving tram if confronted

The dux of Concord School in 1942 was John Dart followed by Eric Ellis and, of the girls, it was Lilian Sims followed very closely by Jean White. They together, with Shirley Cox and Marie Artis, moved on to the Fort Street selective schools.

It may be interesting to note that there were very few obese children in those days. In fact, I can only remember one and he was taunted with, "fat, fat the water rat" or 'fatty boom sticks' by the other children.

I moved on to Croydon Park technical high school where I, only just, gained my Intermediate Certificate. I remember my mother being incensed when she was told by a vocational guidance officer that the only occupation I was suitable for was a tailor's assistant or a picture framer. When asked what I liked most about Concord Public School, I replied "the library" which was then located on the south side of the top floor.

I became a King's Scout, the youngest ever member of the Sydney Society of Model Engineers, started an apprenticeship at 15, captained the junior Western Suburbs ice hockey team at 17 and became a professional musician at 20, as well as an engineering draftsman at the Commonwealth Aircraft Engine factory, Lidcombe.

I married my childhood sweetheart, Jean White, who I met at Concord school, and on the 18th March, 2005, we celebrated our Golden Wedding (50 years) anniversary.

Have a good reunion for the 150th anniversary.

Bill Barlow.

Oxley Historical Museum, Wellington NSW.

Next time you drive through Wellington NSW, take time to stop at the Oxley Historical Museum in Percy Street. This historic former bank is a very elegant two-storey brick building erected in 1883 for the Bank of New South Wales.

The staff are welcoming, particularly if you tell them that you come from our society. Don't miss the photographic display of Wellington in flood, or the only bridge in town after a large truck demolished it and ended up in the river

Plenty of interesting exhibits to seethere is a 19th-century kitchen, bedroom and an Edwardian parlour. The kitchen contains a very unusual round storage unit, with arced bins that swing out to hold a multitude of kitchen supplies.

The museum is open from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm on weekdays and at other times by arrangement. Tel: (02) 6845 232

Wellington is the second-oldest town west of the Blue Mountains, and is located 369 km north-west of Sydney. It is a relatively large centre with a population of around 5700, a considerable proportion being Aboriginal.

It is a typical Australian country town, located in the Wellington Valley at the junction of the Macquarie and Bell Rivers near the foot of Mt Arthur.

Once thought to have been occupied by the Wiradjuri people, the first European visitor was John Oxley who headed north-east after being blocked by reeds in his exploration of the Lachlan River. He is believed to have climbed Mt Arthur and, from there, gazed down upon the Wellington Valley, which he named after the Duke of Wellington who, just two years before, had defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.

Descending the mountain, he recorded in his journal that he had 'scarcely rode a mile' along the banks of the Bell River before he came across a junction with the Macquarie River. He wrote of 'bright transparent water dashing over a gravelly bottom with a. brilliance equal to the most polished mirror' and was delighted by its contrast to the muddy, marshy waters of the Lachlan River.

In 1823, Oxley's glowing report on the area's agricultural potential inspired Governor Brisbane to send Lieutenant Percy Simpson to establish a camp with convicts and soldiers. Although wheat was successfully grown, the settlement was abandoned in 1831,

becoming a government stock station then, in 1832, the headquarters of an Aboriginal mission.

Lion of Wellington Inn. The most notable inn is just over the bridge at Montefiores in Gipps St. The Lion of Waterloo Hotel was licensed in 1842, making it the oldest licensed hotel still standing, west of the Blue Mountains.

The last 'official' duel fought on Australian soil was said to have been waged with pistols outside the Lion of Waterloo in 1854. Once a changing station for Cobb & Co coaches, today the inn has been restored and operates as a licensed tavern, art gallery and restaurant.

Lake Burrendong. The Burrendong State Recreation Area is adjacent to a huge artificial lake. This lake, in area three and a half times the size of Sydney Harbour, was built between 1946 and 1967 to irrigate farmland west of the town.

Wellington Caves and Phosphate Mine. The areas major tourist attraction is situated 8 km south of Wellington along the highway, and is well signposted.

The first European to see the caves was believed to be a member of Lieutenant Simpson's settlement in the late 1820's. Hamilton Hume provided a written account in 1828 when he noted: 'The inside of the cave is beautifully formed, some parts of it are supported by pillars 50 feet high and beautifully carved by nature.'

Two years later, a magistrate named George Rankin found fossil bones of both a diprotodon and a giant kangaroo in the caves. The diprotodon was herbivorous, with its teeth well adapted for grazing. It roamed this area during the Pleistocene period.

Rankin returned there with Sir Thomas Mitchell and collected a huge variety of bones from the caves. These remains became the subject of an address to the Geological Society of London in 1831. Since then, the cave has been a source of information about ancient geology and fauna. Phosphate mining commenced in 1913 and continued until 1971, destroying priceless relics, now fertiliser used by farmers.

In 1882, the caves became a reserve. By 1888 over 1500 people a year were visiting them. Today over 50 000 people visit the caves and abandoned mines annually.

Trish Skehan

Where the Blue Wattle Grows

Members are invited to attend the launch of Trish Skehan's latest book, titled *Where the Blue Wattle Grows*. Subtitled, *Spooky Stories from Yaralla*, it was written in collaboration with Jill Hodder. Author Di Morrissey wrote the stirring foreword.

Venue: Concord RSL, Nullawarra Avenue, Concord West

Date: Sunday, 27th August, 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

Ample parking - light refreshments.

RSVP by 23/8/06 to 0414-434-172 or email yaralla2137@yahoo.com.au

With 24 great new sketches by local award-winning artist, Terry Robinson, this book also contains Walker family photographs received from Norway relatives. These neverbefore-seen photographs and captions tell of family life at Yaralla in the late nineteenth century.

See Eadith and Annie as young children playing down by the river, Thomas relaxing in his garden, the children and Aunt Joanna resting happily under the towering trees.

One of those old Walker photographs inspired Trish to use her grand-daughters, Johanna and Natasha Davidson-Pollack, as models for the front cover. The girls are dressed in clothing similar to a picture of Eadith, aged 11, and Annie, aged 7.

At Yaralla recently the girls were photographed in costume with the mansion as a backdrop. The afternoon sun backlit the models with a spooky light. Look for mysterious eyes in the windows, reminiscent of Thomas Walker's all-seeing eye. The front cover photograph is untouched, apart from colour adjustments. The eyes are a trick of the light, reflecting off window blinds, but spooky looking, none-the-less. Natasha was posed differently, but a gust of wind lifted her hat, and she grabbed it, with a look of

For your Diary

Wed. 9th August - Annual General Meeting & Elections

Wed. 23rd August - Executive Committee Meeting

Wed. 13th September - General Meeting

Wed. 27th September - Walker Estates Committee Meeting

alarm on her face. It became the shot I was looking for.

Where the Blue Wattle Grows takes you on a guided ghostly tour as you meet the Walkers, friends and staff. It is also a tribute to our hardworking tour guides. The story is about Jill Hodder taking a group of students to Yaralla in 1997. Due to a fictional legend about Blue Wattle blooming on the estate that day, the children meet the spirits of those who have lived and died at Yaralla. The story weaves in and out of the decades since Thomas acquired the land. This inspired the unusual Australian title.

Several school classes have been involved in reading chapters and providing feedback on titles and type styles. Wellington school, which Johanna and Natasha now attend, have taken on selling the books as a fundraiser for their forthcoming Canberra trip. They will have the first cartons off the press. Wellington Times newspaper ran a feature article this week. Watch for others in The Weekly Times and Village Voice.

Would members who are willing to help at the book launch please contact Trish Skehan on 0414-434-172. Light refreshments will be served. Naomi Hart will again read her speech from 1997, when a large crowd gathered at Concord RSL to discuss the future of Yaralla land. Naomi, one of Jill's former students, has become a gifted debater, winning National medals.

Where the Blue Wattle Grows will be Profit of the Wattle Grows will be Profit of the Wattle Grows will be Profit of the Wattle Grows and specific grown will be declared vacant and nominations will be called for: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, "Nurungi" Editor, Public Relations Officer, Chairpersons of the Museum Committee, Archives/Local History Committee, Walker Estates Commiteee and Oral History Committee. There will also be vacancies for eight Executive positions with no specific duties.

If you feel you would like to become part of the Executive Committee, in any of the positions above, then please put your name forward. We especially urge our newer members to give some consideration to standing. New blood is always welcome.

Don't forget the launch of Trish's new book - Concord RSL, Nullawarra Avenue, Concord West - Sunday, 27th August, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

From the **Secretary's Desk**

Bill Barlow: Unfortunately, Bill is now confined to a hursing home but would love to see or hear from you. He is at St Ezekiel Moreno Nursing Home in Cheltenham Road, Croydon (near Burwood Girls High School). The telephone number is 9747-4847. If you call the home about 11 am then Bill will return your call.

Rivendell Open Day: Last Sunday was another great success - thanks to our wonderful volunteers who give up their time to help.- tour guides, room sitters, Devonshire tea helpers. You all have an important part to play, and you do it so well.

Thanks also to volunteers from the Friends of Rookwood who manned the barbecue for us - it proved very popular on the day.

We had nearly 350 people visit on the day, which resulted in a profit of over \$3,000 to help with our ongoing commitments.

Once again, a very sincere thank you to all who helped.

Speaking of Rookwood: If any of our members are free to give them a hand on their Mini Open Day on 24th September, please give Robyn a call on 9499-2415. They'd love to have your help.

Census Night - 8th August. Will you be in the Census Time Capsule? The information collected in the Census could be a valuable help to historians in the future. Will you tick the appropriate box?

Workers wanted: The timber shed at Yaralla which Vince Scerri and Michael Douglas recently repaired is now in need of sanding down and an application of oil to preserve the timber. Vince would like a couple of volunteers to help with this. Can you spare some time? If so, give him a call on 9736-1003

The Walkers of Yaralla: Due to regular requests for copies we have now reprinted the book. We did not include the colour supplement this time to help keep the cost down. The book will sell for \$22. If you know of anyone who wants a copy they can contact us.

Group Visit to Yaralla: The XY Ramblers will be visiting on Monday, 21st August at 10:30 am. We have a tour guide but would like some help with setting up tables and serving morning tea. Any volunteers?

Election of Officeres: If you want to stand for any position but can't be present at the meeting, please let me know.

Also, a reminder to current officer to have their reports ready.