



"Nurungi" Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

EDITOR
LOIS MICHEL
9744-8528

PRESIDENT
ALAN WRIGHT
9743-4869

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
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Lorraine Holmes, 8743-2682

Archives/Local History

Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

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.132

May 2007

Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services

Commonly known as Sydney Wildlife, the organization was formed by a large group of experienced wildlife carers in May 1997 to meet the specific needs of urban wildlife in the Sydney Metropolitan area. As the name suggests, it only operates in the Sydney metropolitan area, which extends from the Hawkesbury River in the north, to Picton in the south, and from the foothills of the Blue Mountains to the ocean.

The organisation is licensed by the NPWS to rescue, foster and rehabilitate native animals. It is a non-profit, voluntary organisation with two basic aims:

- ★ to provide for the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned native animals in the Sydney metropolitan area;
- ★ to educate the community at all levels about our native wildlife, its habitat and how we can live with and enjoy our urban wildlife.

Sydney is fast losing its native wildlife due to cats, cars and urban development. If you find any wildlife in trouble in the Sydney area please call 9413 4300. Volunteers staff the office, which is open from 9am until 5pm, 7 days a week. Volunteers also attend the phone after hours for emergency calls.

Members share a common goal of caring for wildlife. Each member must complete a two day basic training course prior to joining.. Further training is available for those wishing to care for other species.



Members must be over 18 years of age and are required to be available for animal rescues when possible and to care for wildlife in their own homes. They are expected to meet the costs of travel and animal food/equipment and to commit to a minimum of 4 hours per annum working in our rescue office at Lane Cove National Park.

Wildlife rescue is not for everyone. While it can be extremely rewarding, it can also

be time consuming and sometimes distressing. Rescuers need to have access to a car for rescues. They need to be able to handle animals and to accept that, in many cases, the animals they encounter may die or have to be euthanased.



What you should do if you find sick, injured or orphaned native fauna

- ★ Bird: place in box (with lid and airholes) and keep in a warm, dark undisturbed place
- ★ Mammal: Use towel to handle, then same as above
- ★ Baby mammal: Wrap in something woollen or cotton, then same as above
- ★ Lizard: Place box over, and weigh down with something heavy
- ★ Snake: Do not touch - stay away!!! Keep children and pets away!!!
- ★ Do not try to feed any of the above
- ★ Call Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services for assistance - 9413 4300

Donations to Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services may be sent to : PO Box 78, Lindfield, 2070

(Ed: Come along to our meeting on 9th May to hear our member, Lorraine Holmes, talk about the work of this wonderful organisation. She's sure to have a few surprises for you too.)



Bulletin Board

May, Wed. 9 - Lorraine Holmes to talk on Sydney Wildlife and her involvement in that organisation.

June, Wed. 13: to be advised

July, Wed. 11 - Judith Hughes, "The Guilds of old London"

Aug, Wed. 8 - Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers and Committee

Strange Happenings, Coincidences or . . .

Trish Skehan's journey towards the writing of her books on Yaralla took many strange twists and turns. Here are just some of them.

After I made the commitment to write a small pamphlet about the history of Yaralla in 1998 I visited Eadith Walker's grave. There I prayed that, if it were the right thing to do, doors would be opened to me. Within 12 hours I had the first rare document in my hands.

The old minister had retired and a new young Reverend now ran Holy Trinity at Concord West, where Dame Eadith worshipped on Sundays. The Illuminated Address for the opening of the parsonage in 1919 was found in an old cupboard under the window. The cupboard had been concealed by a blue wall hanging, featuring only one eye (a Masonic symbol). (*A Walker coat-of-arms displays the all-seeing eye.*)

In the Stables . . .

One day we were cleaning out the stables area when an old lady approached me. She remembered staying there many years ago, while her husband was receiving treatment in the hospital. She looked around, a puzzled expression on her face, and asked me where the lavender plants were.

"There's no lavender planting around here. It used to be down towards the river in the Lavender Walk, a path leading from the squash court to the power house", I replied.

"That's over the other side of the mansion", she said. "How could I smell that lavender from here?"

Puzzled, I asked her what she was talking about.

"Early one morning, while staying in the flat above the archway, I awoke to hear a loud banging noise at my door. Thinking it was one of the staff come to tell me news about my husband, I got up and hurried to the door. Someone was shaking and rattling the door-knob. As soon as I spoke, saying that I was coming, the noise stopped. I hurried down the stairs but no one was in sight. There was a strong smell of lavender in the air, but I couldn't see any plants around. I hurried over to the main building, but the staff said that no one had been sent to get me and that my husband was fine."

"When you smell the lavender, that's Dame Eadith around", I said, rather tongue in cheek. The story appeared in the local paper a few weeks later, it pictured the stables area but called it her mansion.

The War Years . . .

During the war years of 1939-1945 Yaralla was used as a hospital. Nurses remember the windows being blacked out and wooden strips being nailed across the bottom of doorways so light would not escape from the rooms.

They had to move around the grounds at night with shielded lanterns that only cast light at their feet. They hated going near the old laundry building that was used as a morgue. There was said to be such a cold feeling there, and one nurse swore that she saw the face of Thomas Walker in the upper window.

After that she said that she would throw soiled sheets into the river rather than take them into the laundry at night. The nurses remembered strange noises and creaking, but, given the fact that Yaralla was built between 1867 and 1870, it would not be unusual.

One paranormal group took measurements at Yaralla in 2003, but refused to release their findings, stating that the report must remain confidential!

Another lady told me about seeing an old lady sitting down on a sandstone seat in the sunken garden. She looked down to watch her footing as she went down the steps, but when she looked up again, there was no one around. She believed that she had seen Eadith sitting in her garden, which workmen had made for her.

Mollie Irish

Mollie Irish lived on Yaralla many years ago. Her father was head gardener. He pricked his finger on a rose and died of septicaemia when he was 44 years old. Mollie and her mother had to leave the estate as their cottage was needed for the new head gardener.

During my research I discovered her whereabouts in a nursing home. One of the estate staff had kept in touch with her family. Mollie had dementia and had not spoken for years. They assured me that it would be a waste of time to go and see her. However, they gave permission for me to visit on the following week.

I sat down beside her and told her who I was and that I had come to talk about Eadith Walker and Yaralla. She slowly turned her head and looked at me. "How is she?" asked a small, squeaky voice. Her hand came up in front of her chest, as though she was clutch-

ing a tray.

"Every day after school I take up her tray of afternoon tea. I can still hear her lilting voice saying *Irish, Irish. Hurry up girl, come along now. Where's my cup of tea?*"

The nursing staff gathered around and encouraged me to keep talking. "What else do you remember, Mollie?" I asked.

"She had a pet cockroach, you know. I had to put some crumbs on the tray for it. Eadith kept it in her top drawer" she said, a smile on her face. I wondered if this was the dementia talking or a real memory. By this time the matron had arrived.

"Papa died you know", she said, turning to me and I nodded. "He pricked his finger on the rose and got very sick. Then he died. Mama and I had to leave the estate. We were very sad." "How is Dame Eadith?" she continued.

I couldn't tell this poor soul that Eadith had been dead for over sixty years. I lied to her, saying that Eadith was fine and the biscuits and sweets I brought were sent by her.

She smiled at me, murmuring "Thank you". Then her head sank down onto her chest again. I was amazed and turned to the matron. "I thought she had not spoken for years!"

"She hasn't", responded matron. The hairs rose on the back of my neck.

The matron said that she'd heard about some such cases, how certain words could trigger old memories, but she hadn't seen it happen till that day. She explained that the mind was like an onion. In some circumstances, with the right trigger, layers could be peeled away, releasing earlier memories.

The voice that spoke to me that day was weak, but sounded like that of a young school girl.

Deaths and Murder at Yaralla.

Mr. Charlesworth was estate manager in the 1930s. His daughter remembered one particular incident very vividly.

She sat in the back seat of her family's sedan while they drove from Yaralla for a holiday to Cronulla. Mother and father were discussing a murder, so my ears pricked up.

"Dame Eadith only got him off the charge because of who she is", said my mother.

"Nonsense", said my father, just as an official announcement came over the radio.

"The King has abdicated to marry Mrs. Wallis Simpson" stated the announcer. Mother and father were so busy discussing the announcement that they ignored my question about which murder, "Teddy will have to put on his thinking cap now!" stated father, and that was the end of the discussion. I never did find out whose murder, or whom Dame Eadith got off the charge.

A worker was killed when helping to cut down the 'lightning tree'. He was on the ground, where tightly stretched

supporting lines were pegged into the ground. One stake suddenly came loose, striking him in the back of his head. He died instantly.

The 'Parramatta River Murders' was another subject that came up. In 1872 a body was found floating in the Parramatta River off Yaralla. Bound and tied up with wire and weighted down with blocks, it still rose to the surface. It was identified as a Mr. William Percy Walker, newly arrived from England. George Robert Nichols, together with Alfred Lister, was hanged for the murder on June 18, 1872 in Darlinghurst Gaol. Nichols family had owned the estate before the Walkers.

Famous author, Di Morrissey, author of "The Last Rose of Summer" stated in a TV interview that "The ghosts in the gardens of Yaralla came to me" and she wove her story around them. The book is a fictional account of Yaralla. She called the mansion "Zanana", the Indian name for 'sanctuary'. She called the family the MacIntyres (the name of Thomas' early butler). Eadith's character was a male who married and had a child, who then lost the estate. Di has some brilliant twists in the story. If you can borrow a copy from your local library you will recognise the settings.

Trish Skehan

The War Years (1939-45) and their affect on Concord

War was not unknown to many of the residents of Concord who had purchased land as a result of soldier-settlement schemes after World War I.

During the period immediately preceding the outbreak of WWII Concord saw large recruiting meetings, parades and rallies, all designed to encourage the younger citizens of the municipality to join up. Several committees, branches and organisations were formed to contribute to the war effort. Several of Concord's industries and factories were commissioned to provide goods for the war effort. Even the scout hall of the 1st Concord Group was called into service as a military signalling depot between April 1942 and August 1943. Mortlake Point became a boat-building centre and a defence repair establishment was set up on the banks of Brays Bay.

A hospital for servicewomen – the 3rd Australian Women's Hospital – was established in the Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital in March 1943 under Matron Gwendolyn N Pegg. The hospital, which cared for up to fifty patients remained operative until 1946.

The Red Cross had strong links with the 3rd Australian Women's Hospital. The organisation's major contribution was the establishment of "The Hut" in the grounds of the hospital as a craft centre for servicewomen. Although in short supply, materials were provided by the Red Cross, which also supplied staff to teach and encourage patients in need of therapy. Bed patients were able to use hand looms to make scarves, table mats and towels from cotton or wool. Others were taught a variety of skills and crafts: knitting, glove-making, feltwork, leatherwork and a number of sewing skills. (Note:

Several examples of these works are on display in our museum.) The supervisor of the centre, Winifred Hurt, received the British Empire Medal in 1974 in recognition of her services to the Red Cross.

The outstanding long-term effect of World War II on Concord was the building of the 113th Australian General Hospital – later known as the 'Concord Repat' and now Concord Hospital. It was built on part of the old Yaralla estate in 1941. Given the enthusiasm of both Thomas and Eadith Walker for hospital benefaction, the construction of this hospital was a fitting climax to their long involvement – spanning almost a century – with the municipality.

The suggestion for the site came from the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital which, in 1938, had been vested with the management of the Dame Eadith Walker Hospital. The directors of the hospital suggested to military authorities that the sixteen hectare block between the Dame Eadith Walker Hospital and the Thomas Walker Hospital would be a suitable site for

the construction of a base hospital to serve the Second Military District. It was centrally situated and easily accessible by public transport.

The block was known locally as "The Folly". It had been granted to James Williamson in May 1798 as part of the grant he named Rocky Point. It later passed to a Mr. Levy who built a house on the land. Rumour has it that, as there was no fresh water in the district, he mixed his mortar with salt water. When the house was almost built, the mortar, which would not dry, fell out and the building collapsed. According to tradition, Levy tried once again to build his home but made the same mistake and suffered the same consequence.

The Australian government purchased the land of The Folly from the New South Wales Government and in November 1940 Lieutenant Colonel W. Wood was appointed as Commander of the as yet unfinished hospital. In January 1941 twenty-five members of the army's medical unit were transferred to Concord to arrange quarters and staff training. At



this time about 1500 workmen were employed on the building, mainly in the construction of temporary quarters and wards. Within a month another 500 men were working on the site, building the main multistorey wing and two sisters' homes. Meanwhile the thirty-two original wards were fitted out with all the facilities of a complete hospital, including X-ray and operating equipment.

In April 1941 the new hospital was put to the test when a large convoy of sick and injured American and Filipino troops were admitted. The number of American troops admitted was to increase following the establishment of United States headquarters in Sydney and the American use of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital facilities. With 2000 beds, the military hospital at Concord was one of the largest in the southern hemisphere.

The people of Concord energetically supported the military hospital. Local clubs and associations raised money to maintain several wards and generously contributed time and skills to bring extra comfort to the patients. The Red Cross played a significant part in this community involvement and its members voluntarily aided hospital staff and provided comforts, amenities and entertainment for the hospital's inmates. A bowling green and cafeteria provided by the Red Cross was opened at the hospital in March 1945.

After the end of WWII the hospital was taken over from the military authori-

(Note: Was this photographs of the opening of the hospital, or the Royal Visit? Anyone know?)



ties by the Repatriation Commission of the federal government.

The multistorey main building of the hospital is notable for its architectural merit. When it was completed in 1942, its architects, Stephenson and Turner, were awarded the Sulman Memorial Prize for Architecture.

This was a strange coincidence and one which created an interesting link between two very different periods of Concord's history. Sir John Sulman, who financed and initiated the award, was the husband of Anne Masefield, the childhood companion of Eadith Walker. The two girls had, many years earlier, been taken on Sunday walks over the area by Thomas Walker, who could never have envisaged, but who would no doubt have approved the use to which his land would later be put.

The Concord Repatriation General Hospital is also listed in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Register of Twentieth Century Buildings of Significance, published in December 1978.

(Reprinted from "Concord, a Centenary History")

From the Secretary's Desk

Yaralla Open Day: Many thanks to all those who helped on the 29th. It was an outstanding success. With over 400 people booked in it ran extremely smoothly with no problems at all.

Publicity: We must offer our sincere thanks to the Inner Western Weekly for their wonderful article the week before our day - this brought in about 70-80 additional visitors and resulted in the day being fully booked out. We actually had to turn away several hopefuls, but we've added their names to our waiting list for the next one. There's another article in this weeks Inner Western Weekly as a follow up, with photographs from our day - make sure to see it.

Rivendell Open Day: Calling all guides and Devonshire tea helpers - I know you've hardly had time to catch your breath but this Open Day is fast approaching. **Sunday, 8th July is the date** so please mark your diaries now. If you are again able to help please let me know as soon as possible. To our potential Yaralla guides, if you think you'd like to help with this function as well, then please come along and join in the tours to see what it's like.

Special Meeting at Yaralla for all guides and prospective guides. This was an outstanding success with quite a few new members putting their names forward as future guides. The input from all the guides proved helpful to everyone with a lot of new information gleaned and suggestions put forward. At the end several people suggested that this type of meeting should become a regular feature. What are your thoughts?

Assistant Secretary: I'm not sure how long I will be able to continue doing the work I have been and it would be less of a problem if some of our members could assist with the work so they can learn the basics. In this way there could be a smooth changeover at some time in the future.

Annual General Meeting: Make a note in your diaries now - it will be on Wednesday, 8th August. At this time we will receive the reports from the various Committee Chairmen, the President and the Auditor. Also all positions will be declared vacant and nominations will be called to fill the various vacancies.

Have you given any thought to standing for any of the vacancies? New blood and new ideas are always welcome and serving on the committee can be a very satisfying experience. Please give it some thought.

Exile Bay Industries

Major Brothers & Company (Majora Paints)

The third company to purchase land in Phillip Street was Major Brother & Company, a manufacturer of marine paints, boot polish and floor wax.

The company was founded in 1915 and moved to its 1.6 hectare site at Concord in 1924 when it had outgrown its original factory in Balmain.

By the 1930s it employed about a hundred workers and manufactured a million tins of paint per annum.

However, the company sold its land in the 1960s.

This is the last of the three industries located on the northern arm of the bay. There were three industries located on the southern arm - Austral Bronze Crane Copper Limited, Bushells Pty.Ltd.and Tanner Middleton Pty.Ltd.).

Sanskrit Proverb: Look to this day – for yesterday is but a dream – and tomorrow is only a vision – but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness – and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day.

For Your Diary

- Wed. 9th May - General meeting
- Wed. 23rd May - Executive meeting
- Wed. 13th June - General meeting
- Wed. 27th June - Walker Estates
- Sun. 8th July - Rivendell Open Day
- Wed. 11th July - General Meeting
- Wed. 25th July - Executive Meeting
- Wed. 8th August - Annual General Meeting and Election of Committee