



“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
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Other Committees

As arranged
Watch the newsletter

Museum

Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

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.136

September 2007

Antarctica - Terra Australis Incognita

Antarctica is a continent of contradictions: volcanoes erupting from a frozen landscape; miles of snow and ice, yet hardly any snow falls each year; an arid land surrounded by three oceans.

It is Earth's southernmost continent, overlying the South Pole. It is the fifth-largest continent in area after Asia, Africa, North America, and South

America. Europe and Australia are smaller. Some 98% of Antarctica is covered by ice, which averages at least 1.6 kilometers (1.0 mi) in thickness

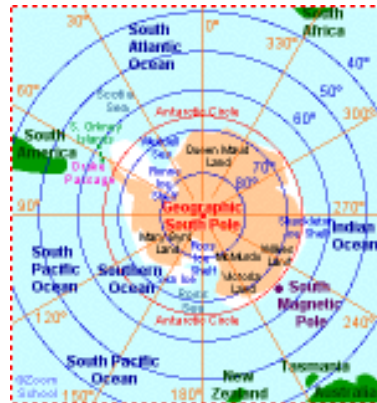
It is the coldest, windiest, and driest place on Earth. The coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth was in Antarctica; it went down to approximately -129°F (-89°C)!. Most of the land of Antarctica is a frozen desert, with less precipitation than the Sahara Desert (under 2 inches = 5 cm a year).

Antarctic ice contains 70% of the world's fresh water (90% of the world's ice). If it were divided up, every person on Earth could have a chunk of ice larger than the Great Pyramid. Although 98% of Antarctica is ice, there is land underneath the ice cover, unlike the Arctic where the ice floats on top of the ocean.

There are no permanent human residents and there is no evidence of any existing or pre-historic indigenous population. Only cold-adapted plants and animals survive there.

This frozen continent surrounding the Earth's South Pole, and the frigid seas surrounding it, are home to many animals. In particular, the Antarctic seas are teeming with life, ranging from microscopic plankton to the biggest animal that ever lived on Earth, the Blue whale

All of the Antarctic animals have adapted to life in extremely cold conditions. Some, like the whales, seals, and birds, have an insulating layer of fat to protect them from the cold. Others, like many fish and in-



sects, have special chemicals in their body that keep them from freezing. Many animals have a compact body form and thick skin to help retain body heat. Birds also have waterproof plumage and downy insulating feathers.

Some animals leave Antarctica during its horrendous coldest months, from June until August. Animals like the Humpback whale

migrate to warmer waters to reproduce after eating huge amounts of krill in Antarctic waters. Many other animals remain in the Antarctic year-round.

For six months every year, the sun shines 24 hours a day at the South Pole. But don't expect it to warm you up much. Winds reach up to 200 mph along the coast. During the dark six months of the year, the Antarctic winter (our summer), the South Pole station has a population of 28 people who can't leave. For seven months, from early February until a plane flies in mid-winter with supplies, their only link to the outside world is via the Internet, phone, and radio.

"What time is it?" is a tricky question in a place where all time zones converge. So everyone in Antarctica officially goes by New Zealand time.

Plant and animal fossils and coal beds indicate it was once warm here. Antarctica, all alone at the bottom of the world, was once part of a larger land mass near the equator and gradually moved southward. What is now the Antarctic was once attached to India, Africa, Australia, and South America. This land mass, Gondwanaland, began breaking apart about 180 million years ago. Plate tectonics, the theory that the Earth's crust is composed of several moving plates, accounts for Antarctica's journey south.



Bulletin Board

Wednesday, September 12 - David Williamson
"Voyage to Antarctica"

Antarctica has the distinction of being the most peaceful place on Earth. No wars have ever been fought on Antarctica. No sovereign country rules it. Tourists and scientists don't need a passport, a visa, or anyone's permission to visit. This "Zone of Peace" is dedicated to science, with a multinational treaty that prohibits mining or acting on land claims.

It has been little more than 100 years since humans first occupied the continent of Antarctica (1899), and a mere 188 years since seafarers first saw the islands of the Antarctic Peninsula (1819). Yet even before they laid eyes on it, most early explorers were convinced a large, southern continent existed. They called it Terra Australis Incognita—the Unknown Southern Land.

The idea went back to the ancient Greeks, who had a fondness for symmetry and balance. There must be a great continent to the south, they postulated, to balance the great land masses in the northern hemisphere. Two thousand years later, the great age of exploration brought Europeans far enough south to test the hypoth-

esis.

In 1520, after he had sailed through the Strait that now bears his name, Magellan speculated that the land to his south, Tierra del Fuego, might mark the northern edge of a great continent. Fifty-eight years later, in 1578, Sir Francis Drake sailed his Golden Hind through Magellan's Strait. He encountered severe weather on the Pacific side and was blown to the south of Tierra del Fuego, then east around Cape Horn. It became obvious that Magellan's "continent" was merely a series of islands at the tip of South America. If there was indeed a southern continent, it had to be further south.

It seems ironic that the severe weather that makes the southern ocean so dangerous, particularly in the south Atlantic, was a key factor in the discovery of Antarctica. Time and time again, sailors blown off course by a storm discovered new land. Often, this new land was further south than any previously known. While attempting to navigate around Cape Horn in 1619, the Spaniards Bartolome and Gonzalo Garcia de Nodal were blown off

course, only to discover the tiny islands they named Islas Diego Ramirez. This would be the most southerly recorded land for another 156 years.

In 1622, the Dutch pilot Dirck Gerritsz reported being driven south to 64°S, where he supposedly discovered a land with snow-covered mountains, a land similar in appearance to Norway. The accuracy of his latitude calculation is suspect, but it is possible that he sighted the South Shetland Islands. In 1675, the British merchant Anthony de la Roch was blown far to the east and south of the Straits of Magellan, to a latitude of 55°S, where he found shelter in an unnamed bay. During his stay at what was almost certainly South Georgia Island, he also sighted what he thought to be the southern continent to the south and east. In fact, what he saw was most probably the Clerke Rocks, which lie 48 kilometers southeast of South Georgia. Their location corresponds to where the shore of Terra Australis Incognita was placed on the Dutch East India Company map of the time, which de la Roche had studied

Note: *Come along to our meeting on Wednesday 12th September to accompany David Williamson on a journey to the Antarctic on a Russian icebreaker, starting from South America and ending in New Zealand. The talk will be accompanied by magnificent photographs of this exciting journey. A night not to be missed!*

The Parramatta River Murders

The Identity of the Man Hanged now Revealed

(In October 2004 we brought you the story of The Parramatta River Murders and the hanging of George Robert Nichols. Graeme Nichols, a descendant of Isaac Nichols, has researched this incident and sheds some light on the event.)

The difficult search for the identity of the man calling himself George Robert Nichols, who was charged and convicted for the murder of John Bridges and William Percy Walker, was not helped by what I consider deliberate attempts to hide his true identity by my forbears, the Nichols family. Even after reading various books on the subject and extensive research into my Family Tree and other sources it has taken quite some time to discover his true identity. One of the books I consulted in the hope of finding some clue or other, very well researched, was *"The Sydney Assassins"* by Leicester Cotton, Lansdowne Press Melbourne, 1964.

Leicester Cotton was unable to identify the principal actor in this unfortunate event, however his research pointed me in the direction where my research should be headed. For that I am indebted to Leicester Cotton.

The interesting thing is that the convicted man who claimed to be George Robert Nichols, son of Isaac David

Nichols was, in the main, telling the truth about his identity.

The information following has been taken from research into various sources, as well as those Leicester Cotton's book suggested. In the end the information identifying the convicted man and his family and parents started falling into place and my final result was able to be confirmed by the NSW Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

My starting point was my brief that as he was accepted everywhere as youngest son of Isaac Nichols Jun. there had to be some truth in that belief. In fact, at the time of his arrest the newspapers had no hesitation in describing him as Isaac's younger son, which indeed he was.

A small paragraph in the *Empire* of 5th April 1872 reads as follows: *"We are requested by a member of the late Mr. Isaac Nichols' family to state that there is no legitimate son of that gentleman now living, and that the present*

George Robert Nichols, being only his reputed son, is not rightly entitled to the name he bears."

Curious! The family didn't want to admit to having a murdered in their midst so admitted to his being illegitimate, which we will come to later. *"Old Chum"* of *Truth* some thirty years later quite categorically stated that Nichols' name was Fitzgerald and he had taken the name Nichols due to an irregular connection with the family. This turned out to be true.

His, the convicted man's, birth was given at the time as 28 August 1838 in London. There is no record anywhere of that birth in England. However, his birth was recorded giving the name of his father and mother, which we will come to later.

Another interesting fact to emerges due largely to the fact that Isaac David Nichols was a master mariner who quite definitely stated that 'George Robert Nichols' was born in London after the family had been living there

for some time. Isaac David and his family were reported as arriving back in the colony by the *Diana* on 27 November 1839. The official ship's list includes "Mr and Mrs Nichols and two children". Note this date!

The next question to arise from the preceding statement is "Who were those members and what was the name of the 'Mrs Nichols' at that time?" Remember, Isaac David's legal wife, Sarah, had left him for a Joseph Yeomans who, incidentally, was an articled clerk to George Robert Nichols, Isaac's brother, about the time he was serving just over twelve months in Newcastle Gaol for conspiracy to defraud. So any children of this union would be illegitimate and not normally entitled to the name Nichols.

Now we are looking for an illegitimate son of Isaac David Nichols and a mystery woman.

So, what do we know with certainty about the convicted man and his parents?

We know that at one time he was a master mariner following in his father's profession. We know that Isaac David had been in England at the time he claimed 'George Robert' was born. We know that 'George Robert' was married with two children at the time of his conviction. We know that he had to be the son of Isaac David and illegitimate. The family admitted to that. We know his age or very close to it. We know where/when he was born. All this is easily deduced from the available verifiable information, shipping lists, etc. But we still do not know his real identity!

So, what does 'George Robert's' marriage certificate reveal?

The marriage certificate reveals that he was born in London, the son of Isaac David Nichols, master mariner, and Catherine Adelaide McCross. His bride was Sarah Sophia Clarke, spinster, of Newtown and the groom's name was Robert Fitzgerald Nichols, his age 25 years, his place of residence Newtown (the district where his father lived), his occupation broker. The marriage took place at St Stephen's Church of England, Newtown, on 7 September 1863. The Sands Directory for 1861 has a Nichol, R., Master Mariner, Campbell St. listed. Is this our Robert Fitzgerald? Maybe. The Sands Directory for 1865 has George Robert Nichols of Pickering & Nichols living at Glebe Road, Glebe and Isaac David Nichols, Master Mariner, living also in Glebe Road, Glebe. So the Nichols family members were living in the dis-

trict. The Sands Directory for 1867 still has Nichol, R., Master Mariner, living in Campbell Street.

We now have his identity reasonably confirmed but we still need his birth certificate. Due to the wonders of computer indexing, which Leicester Cotton didn't have and which would have made the locating of the birth certificate almost impossible, we are able to locate his birth certificate.

His birth was registered in NSW in 1840. Last name, Nichols; given name, Robert F.; father's given name, Isaac D.; mother's given name, Catherine; District, blank.

All this accords with the information on his marriage certificate. It accords with his death certificate, which states "George Robert Nichols, alias Robert Fitzgerald Nichols, clerk, aged 32 years, died 18/6/1872 at Darlinghurst Gaol. Executed in accordance with sentence of Supreme Court." It accords with the date on which Isaac and family arrived back in the Colony, the end of 1839. It explains why there was no record of the birth in London or England. Isaac obviously registered it when he returned from England.

(It is probably worth noting here that one of Isaac David's two friends who stood by him during his trial for conspiracy to defraud and provided one of the needed £500 sureties was one Robert Fitzgerald.)

All we need to find now are the birth certificates for the children of Robert Fitzgerald Nichols and Sarah Sophia Nichols, nee Clarke.

Again, due to the wonder of computer indexing we find the following: Last name, Nichols; given name/s, Robert H; father's given name, Robert F; mother's given name, Sophia; district, Glebe. Also Last name, Nichols; given name/s, Florence F; father's given name, Robert F; mother's given name, Sophia S; district, Glebe.

Allowing for the fact that no single person can absolutely prove their identity beyond any doubt at all, that the best we can do is rely on a birth certificate, which could quite easily be false, or on somebody who has known the person for a period as the person they/we claim to be and will vouch for them/us, the identity of the man charged and convicted of murder and hanged in Darlinghurst Gaol on 18 June 1872 is *Robert Fitzgerald Nichols, illegitimate younger son of Isaac David Nichols; mother, Catherine Adelaide McCroon.*

The unhappy fact that emerges from the extensive research done by

Leicester Cotton is that Robert Fitzgerald Nichols was convicted for the murder of two men that he undoubtedly did no harm to at all.

The work of the police, the evidence of the witnesses, the identifying of the bodies, the case made by the prosecutor and the behaviour of Judge Hargrave himself and the fact the prisoners were not allowed to speak on their own behalf leave no doubt that there was a miscarriage of justice. A suitable villain was found and no further investigation was deemed necessary.

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Watch What You Eat!

For those of you who watch what you eat, here's the final word on nutrition and health. It's a relief to know the truth after all those conflicting nutritional studies.

1. The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
3. The Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
4. The Italians drink a lot of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians..
5. The Germans drink a lot of beers and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians..

Conclusion: *Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you!*

Yaralla Open Day Sunday, 16 September

Calling all guides, potential guides, Devonshire tea and other helpers!

Please let the Secretary know as soon as possible if you will be able to help on the day. We need to get our rosters organised.

We need more guides for both grounds and house tours. Have you considered volunteering in this capacity? We'll supply all documentation you'll need and organise for you to do tours with some of our regular guides to get the feel for it.

Calling all Tour Guides

Following the success of our meeting with these volunteers earlier this year the opinion was expressed that we should do this on a regular basis.

We agreed with this thought and will be holding another meeting on **Sunday, 7th October** commencing at 10:30 a.m. in the Stables Complex.

We would like all guides, whether it be Yaralla or Rivendell, and all potential guides to come along and share their experiences with our last two Open Days. Other members welcome too.

The feed-back from the last meeting was most helpful to all concerned and we need this to help us continue to make these tours the resounding success they are.

Thank You Barbecue for Volunteers

The above meeting will be followed, about 12:30 pm, by a Barbecue to thank all our wonderful volunteers for the time and effort they give.

This includes members and non-members alike who volunteer to work for us in so many different ways (not just Yaralla).

All food will be supplied but BYO liquid refreshments.

Make a note in your diary now.

Things I've Learned

I've learned: that to ignore the facts does not change the facts.

I've learned: that love, not time, heals all wounds

I've learned: that everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile

I've learned: that life is tough, but I'm tougher

I've learned: that opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you miss

I've learned: that a smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks

I've learned: that I can't choose how I feel, but I can choose what I do about it

I've learned: that it is best to give advice in only two circumstances; when it is requested and when it is a life threatening situation.

I've learned: that the less time I have to work with, the more things I get done

Last of the Industries in Exile Bay

Farleigh Nettheim

Tanneries were established in Concord from an early period and three were listed in the district at the turn of the century. Farrell's Tannery was on Wharf (now Burwood) Road from 1884 to 1888 and W.A. Mosley had a tannery there in 1898.

The most longstanding of Concord's tanneries was that of Farleigh, Nettheim & Co., which moved to the district in 1880. At that time Concord was a remote suburb, 'outside the industrial orbit of Sydney, but having at the head of Hen and Chicken Bay, a little plot containing a few pits and a shed and a well where a few hides were now and again tanned'.

The 'little plot' was purchased and the Concord Tannery established. For many years 'King of Mimosa' sole leather and a range of other products were manufactured at Concord, but the tannery of Farleigh Nettheim & Co.Ltd was finally closed and its site sold to the Department of Education for the construction of Concord High School.

Containers Limited

In the 1950s when Wunderlich moved, their site was purchased by the Southern Can Company, which was later incorporated into Containers Limited. This packaging company used the site to produce cans for fruit and vegetable processors and beverage manufacturers until 1982 when the land was sold to neighbouring Wellcome Australia Limited.

Footnote:

Concord attracted many industries to the eastern part of the municipality largely because of the accessibility of the river frontage. Combined with this was the fact that, until well into the twentieth century, Concord was considered to be remote from Sydney's industrial centre. As a result, land prices were lower than in more established industrial areas. The river provided a means of bringing raw materials to a site and shipping finished products away.

In the days before public concern about pollution made such actions difficult, if not illegal, the river also provided a convenient and cheap way of disposing of waste products, many of them toxic.

(Ref: Concord - a Centenary History)

From the Secretary's Desk

New Member: This month we welcomed Ray Lane and look forward to getting to know him better in the coming months..

Annual Christmas Barbecue: Don't forget to make a note on your calendar now to keep Wednesday, 12th December free for our annual party for all our members. Friends and visitors also welcome.

Balustrade Dedication. Don't forget to come along on 26th August to help celebrate another milestone in the work of the Walker Estates Committee.

Yaralla Open Day - Sunday, 16th September. Have you let the secretary know you will be helping on the day? If not, please do so now so rosters can be organised.

To our "would be" guides - if you want to do some more tours with our regular guides, please come along.

We desperately need more guides for the house tours. This is not difficult, with not as much to learn as the grounds tour guides. Please, won't you give it a try?

Our Museum: Good things are about to happen here and we will be looking for lots of help over the next several months. If you have an interest in becoming part of the Museum Committee please let Lorraine Holmes or the secretary know.

Thank You Barbecue for all our wonderful volunteers - Sunday, 7th October. If you have friends you bring along to help on our Open Days, make sure they know they are invited as well. We appreciate them.

For Your Diary

Sun. 26th August - Dedication of Italian Balustrade

Wed. 12th September - General Meeting

Sun. 16th Sept. - Yaralla Open Day

Wed. 26th September - Walker Estates Meeting

Sun. 7th October - Special meeting of tour guides and other volunteers

Sun. 7th October - Thank You Barbecue for all our Volunteers

Wed. 10th October - General Meeting

Wed. 24th October - Executive Meeting

Make a note of these dates in your diaries now - particularly any new members of the Executive