



# "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

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## CONCORD HERITAGE MUSEUM

5 Wellbank Street  
Open 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
on 1st and 3rd  
Wednesdays & Saturdays

**No.139**

**December 2007**

## Christmas in the Antipodes

Australia's first association with Christmas occurred in 1768 soon after the start of Captain Cook's voyage when the Endeavour was ploughing through the South Atlantic towards Cape Horn. Our history might have been very different had a storm blown up that December 25 for on the evidence of naturalist Joseph Banks "during the Christmas festivities all hands got abominably drunk".

According to Banks "all through the night there was scarce a sober man on the ship". He concluded his diary entry with the observation: "Weather, thank God, very moderate or the Lord knows what would have become of us."

A year passed and at Christmas 1769, with Australia's east coast still awaiting discovery, the Endeavour was off New Zealand. For Christmas dinner Joseph Banks while out in a boat had shot several geese. These were made up into goose pie for the officers and eaten "with great approbation". As for the crew, Christmas meant only one thing. Banks again noted: "In the evening all hands were as drunk as our forefathers used to be upon like occasions."

The story of Christmas in Australia does not include holly or mistletoe, a roaring Yuletide log or snow drifting down outside lamp-lit windows. But neither is it invariably a recital of drunken celebrations although liquor does figure prominently in our Christmas history.

On Christmas Day 1787 the First Fleet with its 1000 prisoners, marine guards and civilian officials was pushing eastwards in the heavy swell of the Southern Ocean towards Van Dieman's Land. Marine Captain David Collins, who later became Governor of Tasmania and recorded the first history of the new colony at Port Jackson, wrote of the day: "We complied with the good old English custom and partook of a better dinner than usual. But the weather was too rough to permit of much social enjoyment." Apparently Collins was speaking for himself because a marine sergeant named J. Scott fared rather better that Christmas Day.

A letter described how he and some companions dined off "a piece of pork and apple sauce and a piece of beef and plum pudding" - and they then "crowned the day with four bottles of rum".

The first Christmas celebrated on Australian soil was at the 11-month-old colony of Sydney in 1788. Food supplies were not yet low through non-arrival of stores ships, so although the Christmas fare was rough there was still plenty of it. The convicts ate

salt meat and biscuit but were allowed a special ration of rum while the officers were invited to dinner with the Governor. In full dress uniforms they arrived at the slab building that was Arthur Phillip's first Government House to enjoy roast goose and toast King George III in brandy and port wine.

According to David Collins, Sydney's 1788 Christmas was "observed with proper ceremony and the chaplain, Richard Johnson, preached a sermon in the open air". But that did not stop someone that afternoon breaking into the house of Mr. and Mrs. Pugh and stealing a quantity of flour. Neither did the sermon deter two convict women, Amelia Levy and Elizabeth Fowles, who took the opportunity to pick up two drunken marine corporals and prostitute themselves in exchange for a shirt each.

Stealing of stores was the most prevalent crime in the colony although punishable by death. Actually a few days before Christmas a convict named James Daly had been hanged for the offence. Before he mounted the gallows up on the slope of The Rocks, Daly tried to save himself by a dramatic declaration that a female convict had lured him into robbing the official storehouse. The statement brought no reprieve for Daly, but next day after investigation the woman had her hair shaved off and she was forced to don a canvas smock daubed with the letters RSG - Receiver of Stolen Goods. Warned of severe punishment if seen without this garment, she was a prominent figure in Sydney that first Christmas Day.

By the time Christmas of 1789 rolled round, a two-storey Government House of brick had been completed on what is now the corner of Bridge and Phillip Streets. For most Sydneysiders the Christmas fare was poorer than the previous year. The weekly



## Bulletin Board

**12th December** - no meeting, but make sure you come to our Christmas barbecue. **Booking essential on 9744-8528**

**January** - no meeting

**February 13** - Gregory Blaxell, speaking about Banjo Paterson, apart from his poetry he led a very exciting and interesting life.

**March 12** - Bill Allen speaking about the Sydney Ferries

**April 9** - Nick Blascovic from Canada Bay Council; topic to be advised

*Please mark the dates in your diary now so you won't forget and please bring along any of your friends who might be interested.*

rations had just been reduced to 2.2 kilos of flour, 0.9 kilos of rotten salt pork and about a litre of peas. The Governor and his staff fared better. They sat down to a Christmas dinner that included three turtles and a large cabbage grown by convicts at Parramatta. Thereafter food supplies in the colony gradually improved and citizens seemed more concerned with obtaining liquor for their Christmas revels.

Thus on Christmas night of 1791 a band of thirsty souls broke into the marine store at Parramatta and stole 100 litres of rum.

Then in 1795 a settler named Webb was arrested for distilling for his festive season "an ardent and diabolical spirit from wheat". In 1799 the celebrations of a band of former convicts became so boisterous they culminated in an attempt to "wilfully and maliciously burn down the wooden jail at Parramatta".

A traditional Australian Christmas picnic was held as early as 1806 when Captain John Macarthur and his wife invited their friends to spend the day and have dinner with them in a charming rural spot. This turned out to be Cockle Bay, now known as Darling Harbour. But in 1806 one guest wrote of its salubrious atmosphere and picturesque beauties. "This day we had a glorious dinner," wrote Kelly in his diary. "Two black swans, one roasted, the other a sea pie — a three decker - in the large iron pot. It was first rate."

In 1824 Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane invited local Aborigines to a Christmas feast in Sydney. They had no trouble consuming several roasted bullocks, 400 loaves of bread, 42 plum cakes, two large casks of soup and two tubs of potatoes. In addition there was a hogshead of rum watered down to a third of its normal strength.

By 1828 Sydneysiders were able to realise their blessings and one newspaper compared the traditional English Christmas with Australian - to the latter's advantage. "When the Yule log burns in the mother country's hearths", it summed up, "we thrice-happy Antipodean Christians go forth to cool grottos and fern gullies where joyously on thornless seats by trickling rills we'll laugh the sunny hours away."

By 1836 the new colony at Adelaide had been founded by Colonel Light. History records that the settlers celebrated Christmas that year "in a temperature of 100 degrees with parrot pie and plum pudding."

The Christmas of 1815 found Captain James Kelly, a well-known Hobart whaler and ship owner, circumnavigating Tasmania with four companions in an open rowboat. On Christmas Day a heavy gale was raging and the oarsmen put in at Rocky Point on the island's west coast.

Christmas celebrations in Melbourne in 1839 resulted in the city's first duel. Two young blades, Peter Snodgrass and William Ryrie, got into an argument while drinking on Christmas Eve at the newly formed Melbourne Club. A fist-fight started but friends separated them and both men were hustled out of the select club and escorted home. They did not meet again until both visited the club on the night of January 1, 1840. The argument resumed and ended when both men, well primed with wine, agreed it could only be settled with weapons.

Accordingly, armed with pistols, they faced each other at dawn next morning on Batman's Hill where Spencer Street Railway Station now stands. Snodgrass was shaking with fright, so much so that the hair-trigger pistol he held by his side suddenly belched fire. With a squeal of anguish Snodgrass collapsed on the ground, hit in the big toe by his own accidentally discharged pistol.

While he was being treated by a doctor the disgusted spectators grabbed the doctor's top hat, stuck it on a stump and took pot shots at it until all the ammunition had been exhausted.

By that time the great era of Australian exploration was starting and wherever they might be the expeditions tried to celebrate Christmas in the traditional manner. Thus Ludwig Leichhardt and his companions in 1844 sat down to a Christmas dinner of suet pudding and stewed cockatoos.

Not so fortunate was Peter Warburton on his expedition to Central Australia in 1873. On the verge of starvation, having killed and eaten their last camel days earlier, he wrote on December 25:

"We cannot but draw a mental picture of our friends in Adelaide sitting down to their Christmas dinner whilst we lie sweltering on the ground and starving and would be grateful to have the pickings out of any pig's trough."

Not everyone was happy about the distinctive traditions that had gradually developed around the Australian Christmas. A disappointed migrant wrote home from Sydney after the 1846 Christmas: "One looks in vain in Australia for those quaint and venerable usages which are associated with Christmas and with which we in dear England are so familiar."

Similarly fed up was a gold miner on the Victorian diggings who in 1861 wrote home to England: "Christmas and New Year passed in riot and disorder and every evil thing that accompanies the too-easy acquirement of wealth."

By that time the open-air Christmas dinner started by John Macarthur and his family had become an Australian institution. A Melbourne newspaper in 1866 reported that thousands were flocking to the beaches for Christmas. "They apply themselves with British vigour to diminishing the stock of comestibles and drinkables," it went on. "After dinner they betake themselves to cricket, quoits, kiss-in-the-ring, dancing and other pastimes."

The "drinkables" have always had a large part in Australian Christmas celebrations. E.S. Sorenson, an old-time chronicler of Australian life in the outback, tells in one of his books of a Christmas visitor to a Bourke pub.

After a fortnight's uninterrupted seasonal celebrating he asked the publican how many days before Christmas. Told Christmas had come and gone and it was then New Year's Day, the old bushman thought for a moment and then asked: "Did I keep up Christmas?" Told he had had a roaring time the visitor was content. "That's all right then." He said. "So long as I kept up Christmas I'm satisfied."

"Let's have a drink and a Happy New Year to you and many of them."

*Acknowledgment "Parade" Reprinted with permission from the "Pioneer Gazette", newsletter of the 1788-1820 Pioneer Association*



*To all our members, volunteers and friends . . .*

*You're invited to join us for our Annual Christmas Barbecue  
on Wednesday, 12th December, 2007, commencing 6:30 p.m.*

*at Rhodes/Rotary Park (entry via Hospital Road, then Fremont Street)*

*Cost: \$10 per head. All food supplied. B Y O liquid refreshments*

*Please join us to celebrate the end of a successful year and toast our future and our new museum*

*Please phone Lois on 9744-8528 to advise numbers no later than 9th December for catering purposes*

*Congratulations*

To Vince Scerri on receiving a 2007 NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award for the wonderful work done on the Yaralla Dairy.

As Vince said in his email: "This is not just for me but for all those members and friends who made this work possible."

So, again congratulations to Vince and also to his whole team. We are all proud of you.

## The Western Suburbs Horse & Pony Club, Concord

There were so many young kids with horses in Concord in the 1950s so one of my neighbours decided to form a club so we could all go to shows and ride of a weekend.

His name was Frank McLachlin, who lived at 1 Warbrick Street. He had a beautiful big chestnut horse.

We used to go on rides to Putney and Lane Cove River at De Burghs Bridge to swim the horses and also we would ride to North Rocks Park for shows.

We used to hold meetings in the Concord Memorial Hall.

In those days the Council would let us tether our horses on chains in Greenlees Park, which used to be a big paddock, or Edwards Park, which we called "the soccer ground".

Old Bill Enright, who had his stables and paddock in Smithes Lane, used to do all the horse shoes for us as he was the local farrier.

Bill Green

*Bill has also sent a copy of the Rules & By-Laws of the Club for our archives.*

*(This contribution is from Bill Green, a former resident now living in Kellyville. We have printed two other articles from him in previous issues, and look forward to more to come. As he says in his letter: "I will sit down one day and start to write a bit about Concord when I learn to use my computer properly". We look forward to more from you, Bill.)*

*Get Well Soon*

Our thoughts are with Jennifer Jones (Bob's wife) who is recovering following an operation and hope she'll be up and about in the very near future.

## National Boer War Memorial Project

The National Capital Memorials Committee has allocated a site in ANZAC Parade, Canberra, to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association for the funding, design and construction of a Boer War Memorial to commemorate the soldiers and nurses who left Australia between 1899 and 1902 to serve in South Africa.

The Government has stated that Australia-wide community support must be demonstrated before it will give any financial assistance. It is estimated that about \$3 million will be needed to complete the memorial by the designated deadline of June 2010.

### They were the first ANZACs



Australians and New Zealanders fought together during the Boer War.

It is estimated that some 23,000 Australians and 6,057 New Zealanders served in the Campaign with 606 and 232 respectively dying in South Africa.

The soldiers fought in many of the 37 campaigns and engagements which were recognised by the issue of clasps. Each was embossed with the name of the battle. Australians qualified for 18 clasps and the New Zealanders 13.

The ANZAC's quickly established enviable reputations as superb fighters using their bushcraft, riding and shooting skills to produce formidable fighting units and future commanders.

### Victoria Crosses - the highest award for exceptional valour

During the Boer War six Australian and one New Zealander were awarded the Victoria Cross



### Pardon may be sought

The British made political scapegoats of three Australians, Harry "The Breaker" Morant, Peter Handcock and George Witton, sentencing them to death. Morant and Handcock were shot and Witton gaoled in England. Due to the furious reaction of the Australian Government, Witton was later released and pardoned.

The Boer War Memorial will arrange a Military Tribunal of Review and then, if appropriate, ask the Queen to grant posthumous pardons for Morant and Handcock.

## Boer War Memorial Cast in Bronze

The memorial will feature a mounted trooper cast in bronze with plaques.



The Boer War Memorial in Adelaide would be an acceptance centrepiece for the Canberra memorial. However, a National Competition must be conducted to select a final design for the memorial. In addition to the mounted soldier there will be provision for plaques showing, for example, aspects of the Campaign and the VC winners: F.W. Bell, N.R. Howse, J. Rogers, J.H. Bisdee, L.C. Maygar, G.G. Wylly and W.J. Hardham (NZ).

### Donations needed to help fund the memorial

For the project to succeed it will need public support. Donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible and can be made via the internet at [www.bwm.org.au](http://www.bwm.org.au) or mailed to BWM, Building 96, Victoria Barracks, Paddington, NSW, 2021.

### Why a Boer War Memorial?

The Boer War is significant because, apart from World War I and World War II, the nation lost more soldiers there than in any other conflict, including Vietnam.

It should not have taken all this time for Australia to formally recognise their sacrifice.

## The Truth About Reindeer

*Remember this at Christmas time.*

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeers grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeers retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring.

Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl.

We should've known . . . ONLY women would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.



# YOU'RE INVITED

**Wed. 5th December - The Annual Lighting of the Christmas Trees, with Festive Carol**, presented by Concord Hospital as a community event. It will commence at 6:00 pm on the front lawn of the Hospital.

Highlights include Aurora Australis Chorus; St Ambrose & Concord West Public School; Andrew Klemens from The Bon Jovi Show & Jadie Welsh from Sydney Cove Band VIP; Scottish Choir; Santa and his helpers.

Support the Haematology Department and buy a Star!

**Wed. 5th December - Strathfield District Historical Society's Christmas Dinner** at Strathfield Recreation & Community club, 44 Augusta Street, Strathfield at 6:30 pm. Cost \$25, including dinner and drinks. RSVP Jan Jenkins, 9764-1174

**Tues. 11th December - Mayor Angelo Tsirekas' Volunteers Morning Tea** - 10:30 am - 12 noon at Concord Community Centre, Gipps Street. This is to thank loyal volunteers, and others who have contributed to the local area, for the important role they play to ensure the community has access to so many different services and facilities.

RSVP (acceptances only) no later than 3/12/07 to Joanne Steen or Dianne Foster on 9911-6503 or pamayor@canadabay.nsw.gov.au

**Fri. 14th December - Concord Garden Club's Christmas Party** - to be held at 2:00 pm at Concord Community Centre. Speakers will be Kim Hamilton on cactus and succulents. Acceptances to Marjorie Hogan on 9744-2007.

## For Your Diary

Wed. 12th December - Christmas Barbecue

Wed. 9th January - NO general meeting

Sat. 12th January - Working Bee at Museum - commencing 10:00 am - AND THEN ON AN ONGOING BASIS FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS

Wed. 23rd January - Executive Meeting

## Our Museum There's lots to be done

We need to start work on clearing out our old museum in the immediate future. To this end we will be meeting there on Sat., 12th January at 10:00 am to start the formidable task of sorting and packing the many objects.

Can you spare some time to help with this? There will be some heavy lifting so men are invited to come and give a hand as well.

We are also in need of good, clean cardboard cartons (not too large) and newspaper if you can help.

We anticipate that this work will take quite some time but it will all need to be done by the end of March, ready to move it to the new premises.

If you can let Lorraine Holmes (9743-2682) or Lois (9744-8528) know if you can help and what days (week day or weekends) you can spare time, this will help us to draw up a roster.

As well as the work of packing we need to draw up a Management Plan for the new Museum to show how we intend to make it self-supporting. If you have any expertise in this type of planning, please let us know.

We will also need to open the new museum on a more regular basis - and this will require more volunteers.

If we are to make this wonderful opportunity work we need as many helpers as possible in all phases. **Will you put your hand up to help?**

## From the Secretary's Desk

**Christmas Barbecue:** Don't forget to let us know if you will be coming to our end-of-year Christmas Barbecue on 12th December. We will need to know by 9th December for catering. Family and friends are also welcome.

**Significance Assessment Training for the Museum:** Those who attending this training workshop have gained a good insight into the most important part of the museum, researching and cataloguing exhibits. This will be a great asset for the future.

**Museum - packing of our artefacts:** This will commence on 12th January and over the next few months we will need all the help we can get. Can you spare some time? The more volunteers the lighter the load for all.

**Yaralla Open Day:** We have applied to hold our next one on Sunday, **13th April**. Would our volunteers please put the date in your diary now so you don't double book.

## Information sought:

We have had an enquiry from someone seeking information on the hulk of a sailing ship which was on the Parramatta River in the late 50s to mid 60s - near the punt and Sanders Boatshed.

Does anyone have any information on what it was, why it was there, and what happened to it?

If so, please phone the secretary on 9744-8528

*To all our readers, members and friends alike,*

*we wish you a*

*Very Merry Christmas*

*and a*

*New Year*

*filled with all you would wish for.*

*We hope you have enjoyed our regular newsletter and look forward to your continued support in the future*

