



"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.142

March 2008

The Walker Chronicles (continued)

On the Way to Yass

Moses Inn, Goulburn Plains: Monday, April 17

Thomas continued his journal about that day's travel. *'We had today a tolerable good journey, considering the round we have made. From Gray's Inn on the new line of road, we crossed over to the old line, along which we travelled, first through Wombat Brush, about seven miles of dense forest of bad land, until we came to the Wollondilly River, which we crossed.'* They left the main road and went to Arthursleigh estate, breakfasting with Mr McArthur's nephew Mr Linton.

'It is excellent grazing ground for sheep, chiefly granite ranges of not great elevation, thinly timbered and well covered with grass, the grass however looked very brown for want of rain. It is well watered by the Wollondilly, which meanders round it. We saw some of the flocks looking beautiful, the lambs about a month old. There are about 180 acres in cultivation. The buildings on it are not very extensive, the cottage is small but the whole is characterised by neatness and appropriateness.'

Onwards they rode to Joe Peter's old place, now owned by Major Lockyer. The overseer gave them lunch and showed them around the farm, which Thomas described as the worst country residence he had visited, however, *'he has the best shearing shed I have yet seen.'*

They left that property about four o'clock, and rode for several hours to reach Moses Inn. *'We have almost all day been travelling parallel with the Wollondilly, which we crossed four times. I have, upon the whole, been very disappointed with the country we passed through. I expected to have found it much better.'*

'We have seen little or nothing of the new line of road now making, laid out by Major Mitchell, which I am told is a great improvement on the old; it is much straighter and more level, and avoids crossing the Wollondilly altogether. We rode on horseback to Lockyersleigh and came from thence in our gig, which we had previously sent on by the new line to await our arrival.'

Surveyor General

Following the death of John Oxley in 1828, Major Thomas Mitchell became the Surveyor General.

In 1830 the Surveyor General had been given the control of the Surveyor of Roads and Bridges. That year the position of Commissioners of Survey were abolished, the duties being transferred to the Surveyor General. He gained control of the Colonial Architect from 1833 to 1835.

In 1837 supervision of roads was handed over to the Royal Engineers, as Major Mitchell was absent so often on his own journeys of exploration.

This would explain Thomas Walker's many comments on the terrible state of existing roads, given that this journal was written in 1837.

Thomas received a letter from home, which had been posted the previous Saturday. *'I replied by that (post) which leaves tomorrow morning, and (the letter) will arrive in Sydney on Thursday morning. This is very quick communication considering all things, and is a great convenience.'*

The next few days passed in a similar manner, riding to various properties, being well received and refreshed, then proceeding to other properties as they worked their way south-west towards Yass. Thomas expressed disappointment at the sparsely timbered and often grassless plains. *'I am told I see it at an unfavourable period, the*



Bulletin Board

March 12 - Bill Allen speaking about the Sydney Ferries

April 9 - Update on the Museum relocation

May 14 - 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.

drought having been long and severe.'

He described Doctor Gibson's property at Goulburn as having 'an air of snugness and comfort about them, a resemblance to an English farmer's establishment, which I have yet met with to such an extent nowhere in the colony. His cottage is built in the Flemish style, and covered with roses, honeysuckle, ivy, and vines, which deprive it of that newness and nakedness which usually distinguishes the colonial country houses.

It is sufficiently spacious, with good large rooms, and furnished comfortably. The offices are all very good, and well arranged, mostly built of stone or brick, with a coating of lime and gravel, whitewashed; not made of the uncouth, rough, stringy-bark slabs of which such buildings are usually made in the colony.'

Businesses were also thriving. 'Mr Bardley (sic) is building a granary and steam-engine flour mill of sixteen-horse power thrashing.' He noted that half-acre town allotments were selling for £15. 'It will doubtless increase pretty fast, Goulburn is well situated for an inland town.

It is now half-past eleven and my bed stands invitingly by.'

The following day Walker and Dutton only advanced about nine miles towards Yass, but did an enormous amount of riding to see several lakes in the area. 'McFarlane lent me a horse and, accompanying me on another, took me to see Lake Bathurst, about six or seven miles off, and to inspect the country between this and it.

I was disappointed with it; we came upon it from a country by no means good, and at a part from which the water had receded, so that we seemed to enter on a sea beach when the tide was at the lowest, only that the beach was not sand, but alluvial deposits. The water had amazingly decreased of late years, and does not now occupy half the surface it formerly did, leaving a dry level plain all around, quickly becoming covered with grass of a peculiarly nutritious quality.

The blacks say, however, that there are two deep holes in it containing springs and unless we have a succession of wet seasons, will likely be the only portion of Lake Bathurst in which

water will be found. This, once a large sheet of water, will therefore likely be soon a mere 'flat'. Even before it became so dry, the blacks stated that they had known it as dry land. So these lakes seem nothing more than a collection of surface water, the result of a series of wet rainy seasons. A recurrence of which would doubtless cause much damage, for our arrangements are all made under the apprehension of seasons quite the reverse.'

They returned to the home of the McFarlane brothers, whom Thomas describes as 'two middle-aged highlanders, who had emigrated a few years previously and, with industry, sobriety and skill in their profession of farmers and graziers, had obtained small grants of land, bought stock at favourable times and prices and had increased their flocks of sheep, cattle and horses. They are proverbial for integrity and kind-heartedness, as well as shrewdness and good judgement.'

That night was spent at Jackson's Inn in Gunderoo. 'We had but little rest last night, from a noisy party who were drinking here. I wish we were fairly out of the reach of any white people, and could occupy our own tent and mattresses. After tomorrow we may be able to do so for we shall reach Yass, where our baggage is awaiting us, but I must resume my Journal.'

After leaving the lake, Mr McFarlane left them and 'Dutton and I proceeded towards Mr T. A. Murray's reaching his house about half-past five.' While there, they turned both horses out to graze and had no small difficulty catching them again. Thomas rode a horse called Flibberty, aptly named. This mount caused him endless trouble, getting up to many escaping tricks and then appearing to have a 'sheepish' manner when finally caught. 'He was led back with a halter about his neck, after having shown off, and been prancing over the plain with all the airs of perfect freedom, and I could not help apostrophising him as a great fool, in having after his show-off, and with all his affectation of wisdom and independence, allowed himself to be run into and entrapped in a stockyard. It is the last time he will be let go without spansalls or a tether rope but the fault was mine. I ought to have known him better and to have recollected his tricks of old.'

(to be continued)

Thomas Walker's Garden at Yaralla.

In 1856 when Thomas Walker commissioned Edmund Blackett to build him a 'cottage' he developed the property into a Victorian Estate featuring a large house, garden and paddocks for grazing. It was sited to take advantage of the views both up and down the Parramatta River and was isolated from the main road which led to Parramatta. Thomas planned for the relationship of the house to the river as he understood its siting was important, both aesthetically and practically in living in isolation.

The short walk down to the river would enable transport to the house by water, rather than face the dangers of travel along the Parramatta Road.

At this time, aesthetic principles of garden design were changing from the simple geometry style called 'squared' which had characterised earlier colonial gardens. This squared layout primarily related to the front facade of the house such as the first Government House. The new style that took over from this simple geometry was the Picturesque style, which embodied a more studied, leisured atmosphere with features such as wandering paths, clumped shrubs and trees set in wide lawn. The Picturesque was suited to the scale of Thomas's estate and its sublime setting.

Consistent with the Victorian interest in horticultural matters, many varieties of plants were established which is reflected in the diversity of planting still evident in the garden today. The variety of plants included both native and exotic plants. Particularly favoured natives included *Ficus* and the 'marker' trees, the *Araucarias*. It is not clear when the original planting of pine trees (*Pinus radiata*) along the drive was established but it is probable that the trees were planted around the 1860s in the initial establishment of the Estate. The long driveway from Concord Road along with the remnant Turpentine forest of the Cumberland Plain to the east and the west of the driveway had the effect of isolating the estate.

Leading to the main door of "Yaralla" the long drive terminates in a broad turfed oval. Here the dominant tree is the *Cedrus libani* in the centre of the oval which is about 13.5 metres in height. Other significant trees near the house are *Calodendrum capense*, *Chamaecyparis funebris*, *Magnolia grandiflora* and *Syzygium francisii*. The majority of these plantings forms part of the original landscape layout undertaken by Thomas.

The gardens to the north east, north west and south east of the house would have been developed with the house as the main garden areas facing the river. The use of the picturesque landscape style has been expressed with the positioning of trees to gain selected vistas of the river. The combination of natives such as *Eucalyptus botrioides* and exotics including *Pinus roxburgii* is typical of Victorian plantings.

The Italian garden was also developed and built as part of Thomas's original garden layout reflecting the fashion of the times.

The river entry plantings developed concurrently with the main house, circa 1860, relating to the

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Raising children is like being taken hostage by midget terrorists. (Ben Elton)

I've got "Sometimer's"; sometimes I remember and sometimes I forget. (Spike Lee)

A smile is a light in the window of your face that shows that your heart is at home.

Is Our Heritage Worth Fighting for?

I'm sure you've all been reading about the proposed changes to the Heritage Office and are concerned about the effect this could have on Heritage Buildings and Sites in New South Wales. We have received the following alerts from two well respected organisations, which we feel are worth bringing to your notice. Please feel free to act on any of these.

The National Trust and the War on Heritage

The major restructure at the Department of Planning is yet again set to denigrate the value of heritage with the announcement of the 'dismantling' of the Heritage Office. The Office has been emasculated with most of its staff relocated elsewhere in the Department and only a 'core' left to service the Heritage Council. This move reinforces the view that heritage is a very low priority for government, being seen as the obstacle to development. Most notably, the Heritage Office has been sidelined under Part 3(A) of the NSW Planning Act, which enables Minister for Planning Frank Sartor to approve developments deemed 'State significant', overriding heritage and environmental policies and legislation.

In the recent past government papers on planning and planning reviews have been pouring into the National Trust.

For example, the current State government planning review outlined in the paper 'Improving the NSW Planning System', seeks to reduce the power of local government and to stifle the public's freedom to comment on development applications. The concept of state-

wide default codes put forward in the review, a one-size-fits-all plan, will seriously erode the special character of places of environmental or heritage value and the distinctiveness of important streetscapes. It is a virtual mirror image of the UK proposals, where heritage advocates are up in arms because of the threat to its 'green belts'.

A related concern is that Land and Environment Court cases are playing like broken records in local government areas like Kuring-gai. Rehashed versions of previous DAs already rejected by the LEC on heritage grounds are brought before the Court as 'new' DAs. But the National Trust, in partnership with the community, remains tenacious in opposing inappropriate development - it has been fighting for conservation of natural and built heritage in Kuring-gai and throughout NSW since 1945.

And what of the current 'review' of the Heritage Act? Submissions have not been made public by the Minister but the Trust will continue to publish its views and community's concerns on its website. The final report has been submitted to the Minister, with nobody privy to its contents except the Department of Planning.

In response to another recent review, that of the Biodiversity Banking Scheme, the Trust advocated vehemently that development should not automatically take precedence over biodiversity conservation. Biobanking must be ecologically rather than economically driven, and is of such urgency that it should be dealt with on a global basis as is the case for climate change, via Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

It is sad but true that the National Trust may be the only community advocate left to fight for heritage. Its own survival is seriously under threat because of drastic cuts to government grants. As a non-government charity, now more than ever financial support is crucial to the Trust's ability to campaign during this particularly volatile period when our heritage is under grave threat. Our future may be on the line but we will continue to act as the government's conscience, advocating for the conservation of our natural and built heritage for those who come after us. It is the be all and end all of our existence

Dr Zeny Edwards
President, National Trust of Aust (NSW)

Heritage Review Alert!

The Secret Review: Background

Last August Planning Minister Frank Sartor announced a review of the NSW Heritage Act. Submissions were invited but to date they have not been released, and no interim discussion document was published. The review panel's report was due to be handed to the Minister at the end of December 2007.

Since then there has been no release of its recommendations. However these appear to be already being implemented with the appointment of the review's chair as the new Chair of the Heritage Council, and the downgrading of the Heritage Office to a branch within the Department of Planning.

This process is being undertaken without any public scrutiny or community input, and without the review being released. We call on the Minister to release the Heritage Act review so that the community can discuss decide whether this is what we want to happen to our heritage.

The Secret Review: What Next?

Rumours abound about what is coming next. Until we see the report it is difficult to comment on specifics, but areas of particular concern include:

Membership of the Heritage Council - will the council continue to have community rep-

resentation with members appointed for their professional skills and experience? Or will there only be members appointed by the Minister?

Heritage Advisers - what will happen to the funding and training for local government throughout the state, used now to employ heritage advisers?

Heritage Grants - \$2.635 million was allocated in 2008-2009. Local societies around NSW know and value these grants. Will the grants continue?

What You Can Do

Until the secret review is released we are working in the dark. If there is nothing to hide then the review should be made public so that the process is transparent. You can help by contacting your local Member of Parliament asking for the review to be released.

You could also write letters to your local paper or telephone your radio station. Tell them what heritage means to you and your community. Heritage is one of the things that makes local communities special. Your streets, museums and heritage places are important to tourism and the local economy. Let's make sure that heritage is not undermined by this secret review

Marie Metzke, Manager, RAHS.

The accompanying letter stated: This morning representatives of the RAHS, the National Trust, History Council of NSW and various other community groups met to discuss what action we could take in the light of the actions of Mr. Frank Sartor, Minister for Planning. We hope the attached information will prompt you to act if you believe, as we do, that heritage is worth saving.

If you could copy the RAHS in to any emails you send to local press, Members of Parliament, or other interested parties, we could keep track of the action. Please direct your emails only to the following address: executive@rahs.org.au

Open Day at Yaralla Sunday, 13th April, 2008

Calling all volunteers - if you will be available to help on this day please let Sandra Elliott know as soon as possible. You can reach her on 9797-1040 or 0412-350-288.

Also, don't forget to come along to the Volunteers' Meeting on Saturday, 5th April. This is for ALL volunteers, not just the tour guides. We'd also like to be able to take your photograph on this day for our new Identification Badges to be worn on the day.

Would you like to be a Guest Speaker?

Since Feb 2004 I have given 324 talks about Yaralla and other heritage subjects to Rotary, Probus, Historical groups and other societies. I also have 12 advance bookings in my diary. Many present me with gifts such as wine, a pen or mug as a thank-you.

Recently I talked on the subject of Lord Elgin's Marbles at Ryde-Eastwood Probus club. Here I received a most unusual gift - and wish to acknowledge it because this one was so unusual.

One of their members, Brian Downes, is a talented artist. He knows the theme of the subject in advance of the talk and prepares a background sketch relating to the topic. As the speaker presents their talk, he draws them into the picture, adding the correct colour eyes and hair. He usually adds some feature to show why they are interested enough in that area to be prepared to talk to others.



As you will see from these sketched columns, I'm at the Parthenon, seated on the back of a statue of Zeus, having a wonderful time.

Some months I have to turn down requests to speak as I'm already booked. I really do enjoy giving these talks and urge any interested tour guides/members to contact me if they would like to become a guest speakers for other organisations.

If you think you would like to give a talk on Yaralla, come along to such an event with me. See how easy it is to do. I can provide any overheads and a projector, as I have two available. It's like giving a talk at Yaralla, only the audience doesn't move around.

These clubs are most appreciative of our time and often provide a wonderful meal or morning/afternoon tea. Some also provide travelling expenses. Please think about it and let me know.

Trish Skehan, Publicity Officer.

Yaralla Update

After a well earned break over Summer the volunteers working on the Dairy for the past twelve months are rested and ready to move on to a new project. The western side of the Dairy has been restored and is now used for serving Devonshire teas on our Open Days.

A display of old photographs of the Dairy precinct, including a plan of its original fixtures will be up soon.

The northern and southern doors on the eastern side of the building are being restored by Vince with his expertise and usual dedication.

We have engaged a painter/decorator, Peter Manganas, to finish the gables, eaves and facade of the dairy, thanks to the efforts of local member Angela D'Amore in obtaining a \$2000 grant for the work.

An improvement in the state of the grounds should be evident very soon as the new landscape contractor, Green Options, begins the task of clearing and rejuvenating the gardens.

The Indian Room is home, even if it is in a thousand pieces! After more than

thirty years in exile most sections of the Indian Room are once again back on the Yaralla Estate. Our thanks to member Roger Saliba and his offsider for transporting the many, many sections so carefully. Now we need some photographs to be able to try to reassemble it.

Sandra Elliott

Thomas Walker's Garden at Yaralla (cont)

location of the main jetty (demolished in the 70's). There are two established clumps of giant bamboo (*Dendrocalamus giganteus*) set in similar concrete work to match the Grotto. These clumps are deliberately planted so as to enclose and restrict views to the rest of the estate. The path changes direction so that the house is hidden from the river entry until one moves through the clumps and up the rise to the open lawn area. This design is a typical example of the Picturesque landscape style. This is a major section of the garden as it links the house to its river setting retaining the character of the area as evidenced in historical photographs.

The rose garden has formed an important part of the Estate and was probably established under Thomas Walker. The rose garden is an integral part of the Estate and one of the showpiece sections that is strongly associated with Dame Eadith Walker.

Sandra Elliott

From the Secretary's Desk

Museum Relocation: Work is progressing slowly - but there has been much to do. Linda will be back with us on Mon 17 & Tues 18 March (*check with me closer to dates to make sure this hasn't been changed*) when we will need to finalise our Business Plan and identify the article to be selected for our initial displays.

Following that, Linda will be away for a month and during that time we will need to get as much packing done as we can. If you can spare any time mid-March to early May to help with this work it would be greatly appreciated. Let me know any dates/times you could be available.

Volunteers' Meeting - Saturday, 5th April at 10:30 am in the Dairy: At our last Volunteers' meeting quite a few matters were discussed and suggestions put forward to improve the organisation of the Open Days at Yaralla.

Our new Tours Organiser, Sandra Elliott, is most anxious to have another meeting of volunteers to bring you up to date on these things and make preparations for the next Open Day on Sunday, 13th.

All guides, and other volunteers, as well as anyone contemplating becoming a tour guide, are asked to make every effort to come along on this day.

Any house tour guides who have drawn up a "Points Guide" or anything similar for their tours are asked to bring these along on the day so that we can set up a folder similar to the one that was prepared for the grounds tour guides. This would be particularly helpful for new guides to assist them in learning the ropes.

We also need to make sure that all volunteers are aware of their actual duties and times. As well, we need to make you more aware of the many other things that have to be done before and after the tours so that more than one person has the knowledge to help if the occasion arises.

Please come along and give Sandra your support as she takes on this important but time-consuming job.

For Your Diary

- Wed. 12th March - General Meeting
- Mon. 17th March - Museum Committee
- Tues, 18th March - Museum Committee
- Wed. 26th March - Executive Meeting
- Sat. 5th April - Volunteers' Meeting
- Wed, 9th April - General Meeting
- Sunday, 13th April - Open Day at Yaralla
- Wed. 23rd April - Walker Estates