



"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

Tours Organiser

Sandra Elliott
9797-1040

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.144

May 2008

The Walker Chronicles (part 4)

I Must Sieze the Moments as they Fly

(Yass: Tuesday, April 25)

After the idyllic pastoral scenes of the last few days, Thomas Walker's narrative about his time at Yass would shortly take a dramatic turn.

'I must seize the moments as they fly. We have just returned from visiting the township, Mr C O'Brien having driven us there in his phaeton, with a pair of very dashing greys. O'Brien's residence, where I am now, is a very nice and commodious cottage, very well furnished and with everything comfortable about it. The grounds and garden nicely laid out, but as yet quite in their infancy.'

The O'Brien family made the travellers very welcome and they were to stay the night.

'I have just now brought up my journal and it is half-past four o'clock, and a beautiful afternoon for a walk, so I must go and enjoy it. A great deal of hay and grain is usually grown in Gunderoo, and it is from thence that fodder is at present brought for use on the plains. We saw some maize growing and just ripe. I may also mention that Jobbins told me he had the contract in 1831 or 1832 to supply the commissary in Sydney with fresh beef at 7/10ths of a penny per pound. Now the same contract is taken at four pence per pound. What a change in value of so staple a production of the colony!'

The following morning Thomas discovered that several of their horses were missing. *'We found that Charles, our carter, had allowed Mr Brown's and one of the cart horses to stray, and they have not yet been got back. After much search, they have been found and we expect them today. I trust the carts will proceed tomorrow. Mr Brown and Mr Dutton go with them, leaving McAlister and me to follow next day. O'Brien, who is going to visit his sheep stations on the Murrumbidgee, then goes with us so far.'*

Walker commented on the sultry afternoon and hoped that rain would not set in until after they had crossed the Murray River, which was further south.

While wandering along the banks of the Murrumbidgee *'we came upon a flock of wild ducks, which flew off at our approach. All but one which, having been wounded in the wing, could not fly.'*

Mr O'Brien and I stripped and plunged into the river to endeavour to reach it by swimming. I have thus had my first bath in the Murrumbidgee, and tried the buoyancy of its waters, which it is probable I shall yet come frequently in contact with.' They sent the duck to the kitchen and hastily dried off as several of the women approached.

As there was still time before dinner, they helped several ladies into a boat moored on the river, in front of the house, *'and pulled about till sundown. We spent the rest of the evening "en famille" arranging our party for the morrow.'*

'It was not until eleven o'clock that we were ready to start. Just then arrived Mr McAlister and with him Mr McFarlane and Mr G Stewart, police magistrate from Goulburn, which delayed us some time.'

The Police Magistrate had recently been summoned to the property of Mr E W Riley, where a terrible tragedy unfolded. Mr Riley had committed suicide, after a violent argument with his neighbour who had 'selected' Riley's only waterhole. Although Thomas left most of the gory details out of his journal, because women would be amongst the readers, other party members, particularly Mr Dutton, would record more of the calamity at Cavan, describing how Riley had put a shotgun into his mouth and pulled the trigger. (His wife found him on the hillside, *'at his favourite spot where he liked to stand*



Bulletin Board

May 14 - Les Edwards, Morse Codes Association of Australia, "The Overland Telegraph Line"

June 11 - to be advised

July 9 - Nik Blkaskovic, City of Canada Bay Council, "Concord Foreshore Survey" with many photographs of then and now.

each evening, surveying his domain.' Dutton papers.)

Thomas wrote, *'It was here, at his favourite spot, and whilst engaged amongst his flock, that death, sudden death, overtook him. Truly "in the midst of life we are in death" and "when we think it is yet morning, then night cometh." Here, a few short weeks ago, had the late proprietor of this, his beautiful and beloved estate, been revelling in the confidence of young life, of health and of wealth, surrounded by his wife and children, and all the enjoyments of this life, when arrested in his career, and suddenly called from this transitory, illusory scene to the awful realities of eternal life. Ought we not to apply such lessons? His place is yet just as he left it.'*

Arrangements were made for the funeral and for the grieving widow and her young children. As women could not own property in their own right, being prior to the time of the suffragette movement, another male had to resume control of the estate. Thomas, through his position at the Bank of NSW, had loaned Riley a considerable amount of money, so he was also involved in financial discussions which lasted for many hours.

Despite the shock of the tragic news, it was decided to arrange a tour of Cavan caves on the following day as a diversion for the women and children. Finally they spread beds on the floor. *'I slept soundly till near day-break.'*

(to be continued)

New Concord Library

The new library in Wellbank Street will be officially opened on Saturday, 10th May at 11:00 a.m. The opening will be followed by a day of activities for all, finishing at 3:00 pm

We will have a table there where we can advertise our society and our new museum which will be moving into the vacated library building in Bent Street in the near future.

This will be a great opportunity to introduce ourselves to the wider community, who probably don't know anything about us or our museum.

If you can spare some time to come along and help man the table, even if its only for a short time, it would be greatly appreciated. Please give Lois a call on 9744-8528 if you can help.

Nothing makes you feel older than the discovery that your children's history lessons are what you studied as current events.

Yaralla Update

Thanks to the tireless work of volunteers on the day, as well as an amazing effort in preparation many weeks prior, the Open Day was again a great success.

A success in that it raised \$4,370 for further restoration work on the estate; vital if we are to avoid demolition by neglect. A success in that it provided an opportunity for the many friends of Yaralla to gather together and, with hard work and enthusiasm, reach out to the general public imparting their knowledge and passion for heritage places such as Yaralla.

But, perhaps at this point of time, more importantly a success in that it further increased the number of people who have become aware of the very existence of this heritage treasure just 10 kilometres from the CBD of Sydney.

An awareness was also gained of the tenuous nature of the continued access to this heritage site by the people of NSW.

We had visitors from as far afield as Goulburn, St Ives and Kogarah, emphasising that it is important, not just to Concord, or the Parramatta River foreshore areas, but to the state of NSW and indeed the nation, given its colonial connections, which are still very much evident.

A very sincere thank you to all who worked so very hard and with such good will on the Open Day.

Sandra Elliott

Rivendell Open Day

Our next Open Day at Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital (Rivendell) will be on **Sunday, 27th July**.

Please mark this date in your calendar now and let Sandra Elliott (9797-1040) know if you will be able to help - as tour guides, Devonshire teas or general helpers.

We are also in need of more guides for this event.

If you have been considering taking on this role please contact us so we can supply you with our guides' kit, which contains most of the information you will need. This, with a couple of tours with our regular guides, will show how easy it is.



Membership Dues

Our membership fees have been static for some years now but other costs have been increasing regularly. One of our major costs is our monthly newsletter, "Nurungi", with the greater cost of this being for postage. We are also going to incur a certain amount of expense in setting up our new museum in Bent Street.

After full discussion it was felt that it was time to raise our annual dues to the following:

Adults	\$20.00
Concession	12.00
Family	30.00
Family Concession	18.00
Not-for-profit groups	30.00
Corporate Sponsorship	50.00

Dues notices for 2008-2009 are enclosed. If there is no notice, this means that your dues have been paid in advance.

Another matter discussed was the cost of postage for the newsletter. It was felt that some members who have internet access might be quite happy to receive their newsletter, either as an email attachment or by being directed to our web site when the current issue is uploaded, instead of having it posted.

There will be a box on the bottom of your dues notice for you to tick if you would prefer either of these methods of receipt. If you would prefer to continue receiving the printed copy we are quite happy to continue this.

Collections and the Web: Audiences, Content & Technologies.

This seminar, presented by Collections Australia, with presenters from the Powerhouse Museum, Hurstville Library, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, and many others, will discuss and explore:

- * The importance of online and web tools for effective marketing and promotion of organisations and collections.
- * Creating engaging web and online content.
- * The relationship between documentation of collections, digitisation and online discoverability
- * The latest trends, future directions and best practice in these areas.

This seminar could assist us greatly when we re-open our museum in getting information out to others.

I have booked two places for our society and wonder if any member would like to join me at the seminar.

It is on **Tuesday, 27th May from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm** at the Parramatta Heritage Centre and there is no charge.

If you would like to attend please call me on 9744-8528 as soon as possible so I can confirm the booking.

Australian Overland Telegraph Line

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Australian Overland Telegraph Line was a 3,200 km telegraph line that connected Darwin with Port Augusta in South Australia. Completed in 1872 the Overland Telegraph Line allowed fast communication between Australia and the rest of the world. An additional section was added in 1877 with the completion of the Western Australian section of the line. It was one of the great engineering feats of 19th century Australia^[1] and probably the most significant milestone in Australia's telegraphic history.

Conception and Competition

By 1855 speculation had intensified about possible routes for the connection of Australia to the new telegraph cable in Java and thus Europe. Among the possible routes were either Ceylon to Albany in Western Australia, or Java to Darwin and on to either Burketown in north western Queensland, or across the dead heart to Adelaide.

Competition between the colonies over the route was fierce. The Victorian government organised an expedition, led by Burke and Wills, to cross the continent from Menindee to the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1860. Although the route was traversed, the expedition ended in disaster. The South Australian government recognised the economic benefits that would result from becoming the centre of the telegraph network. It offered a reward of £2,000 to encourage an expedition to find a route between South Australia and Darwin.

John McDouall Stuart had meanwhile also been endeavouring to cross the continent starting from the northern Flinders Ranges, and was successful on his sixth attempt in 1862. He had the proposed telegraph line in mind as he travelled across the desert, noting the best places for river crossings, sources of timber for telegraph poles, and water supplies. On July 24 his expedition finally reached the north coast at a place Stuart named Chambers Bay, after his employer and sponsor.

Now with a potential route, South Australia strengthened her position for the telegraph line in 1865 when Parliament authorised the construction of a telegraph line between Adelaide and Port Augusta, 300 km to the north. This move provoked outrage in Queensland amongst advocates of the Darwin - Burketown route.

The final contract was secured in 1870 when the South Australian government agreed to construct 3,200 km of line to Darwin, while the British-Australian Telegraph Company promised to lay the undersea cable from Java to Darwin. The latter was to be finished on 31 December 1871, and severe penalties were to apply if the connecting link was not ready.

Construction

The South Australian Superintendent of Tel-

egraphs, Charles Todd, was appointed head of the project, and devised a timetable to complete the immense project on schedule. He divided the route into three regions: northern and southern sections to be handled by private contractors, and a central section which would be constructed by his own department. The telegraph line would comprise more than 36 000 wooden poles, insulators, batteries, wire and other equipment, ordered from England.

Todd assembled a team of men from all walks of life: surveyors, linesmen, carpenters, labourers and cooks. The team left Adelaide with horses, bullocks and carts loaded with provisions and equipment for many weeks. The central section would be surveyed by the explorer John Ross. William Dalwood and Joseph Derwent arrived in Darwin on board the SS *Omeo* with eighty men and the equipment required to construct the Northern section of the line from Darwin to Tennant Creek. The southern section from Port Augusta to Alberga Creek was contracted to Edward Meade Bagot.

The northern line was progressing well until the onset of the wet season in November 1870. Heavy rain of up to 10 inches a day waterlogged the ground and made it impossible for work to progress. With conditions worsening, the men went on strike on 7 March 1871, rancid food and disease-spreading mosquitoes amongst their complaints. Weeks later the overseer, McMinn decided to rescind the contract for the northern section. The South Australian government was now forced to construct an extra 700 km of line, placing considerable stress on its teams. It was another six months before reinforcements, led by engineer Robert Patterson, arrived in Darwin.

As the central and southern sections neared completion, Patterson decided to take a different strategy with the construction of the northern section. It was divided into 4 subsections with the majority of the men on the most northerly section. If the construction deadline of December 31 was missed, then the gap could be filled by using a pony express. The undersea cable was finished earlier than expected, with the line from Java reaching Darwin on 18 November 1871 and being connected the following day.

Because of the problems still facing the northern section, the Queensland government called for the abandonment of the project, but work went on nevertheless. By the end of the year there was still over 300 km of line to erect. During this time Todd began visiting workers along the line to lift their spirits. The message he sent along the incomplete line on 22 May 1872, took 9 days to reach Adelaide.

Completion

Running more than seven months late, the two lines were finally joined at Frew's Ponds on 22 August 1872. Todd was given the honour of sending the first message along the completed line:

WE HAVE THIS DAY, WITHIN TWO YEARS, COMPLETED A LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS TWO THOUSAND MILES LONG THROUGH THE VERY CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA, UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO A TERRA INCOGNITA BELIEVED TO BE A DESERT +++

The line proved an immediate success in opening the Northern Territory; gold discoveries were made in several places along the northern section (in particular Pine Creek), and the repeater stations in the MacDonnell Ranges proved invaluable starting points for explorers like Ernest Giles, W. C. Gosse, and Peter Egerton-Warburton who were heading west. Maintenance was an ongoing and mammoth task, with floods often destroying poles. The extreme remoteness of many of the repeater stations also proved a hazard: on 22 September 1874 Aborigines attacked the station at Barrow Creek, and killed two operators. A policeman stationed there, Samuel Gason, later led a reprisal attack.

In February 1875, several Overland Telegraph employees departed Port Darwin and were returning to Adelaide on the ill-fated SS *Gothenburg*. A few days later, they lost their lives in the shipwreck after the *Gothenburg* hit a section of the Great Barrier Reef and sank.^[2]

The final stage of connecting Australia to the world was begun in 1875 when the Western Australian and South Australian governments agreed to build a line across the Nullarbor plain. This equally challenging project was completed in 1877.

References

- National Library of Australia*
- The Wreck of the Gothenburg (1875). On her voyage from Port Darwin to*

NOTE: *If you want to hear more come along to our meeting on 14th May and meet Les Edwards, our guest speaker. Visitors are most welcome.*



Once we have moved out of our museum in Wellbank Street we will be holding a garage sale to get rid of a lot of bits and pieces that won't be needed in our new home.

Instead of a "Spring Clean", why don't you have an "Autumn Clean" and sort out all those items that you no longer need. We'd be very happy to take them off your hands (once the Wellbank site has been emptied) to help us raise some much needed money to go towards our new location.

Your help would be appreciated.

A Privilege to have been part of "Yaralla"

My time spent there was towards the end of 1948, over a three month period of my RPAH 'convalescent' training. I was pleased to be there at that time, it enabled me to have quietness to study for my final general nursing exams.

My first visit back to have "a look see" came about in February 2005, because of my daughter's doings. She wanted to see and hear what I got up to. As you can see in the snapshots*, there were beautiful nurses to associate with. Where are they now? A very happy time, with plenty of laughter. I indulged myself in as much as I could. I played squash, tennis, swam once in the beautiful pool, too much algae!!! Picked roses, unofficially, and cadged cream from the dairy.



I was a head nurse during my time at Yaralla but, when I think of my naivety, I shudder. My how times have changed! When we were on a late morning shift we cooked our own breakfast. The evening before we collected chops, etc., from the fridge in the main kitchen. I was the "mother" cook quite often. My colleagues scolded me for leaving the gas stove pilot light on, simply because none of us smoked and matches could not always be found. "Gardenia" cottage was still there when I left!

I remember very little about the Indian Room. I remember being shown the bathroom with the gold taps, and being told that the late Prince of Wales used it. I was enthralled by the conservatory. It really wasn't done for us to be exploring the home, as we would have liked to do. Other portions I would have to view again to realise the significance of this wonderful home. On the day we visited we could only traverse the grounds.

How intriguing was the pet cemetery and the Norwegian cottage. The magnificent trees, the beautiful sunken garden and the roses! Not quite the same today. I have a copy of the *Walker of Yaralla*, truly remark-

able! I had it rebound. The colour pages came unstuck.

I loved the country aspect, the cattle and the dairy, the sheep.



I am a true country girl. In 1950 I married a dairy farmer and have lived in the Richmond River area ever since. It was lovely to look across the Parramatta River to the 113th AGH, as it was then known. I had visited there briefly as a 17 year old, during a trip to Sydney with the VAD's. We also marched down George Street (I have a photo). I also visited Government House and met Lady Gowrie too!

I have covered everything I can remember. Oh! One more thing - one afternoon I answered the front door; a Police Sergeant was investigating an accident. A lady had been struck by a train at Strathfield Station. I said "Nobody from here, hopefully!" Then I was horrified to recall that my mother was visiting Sydney at the time. I knew she was safe, but the feeling I had I cannot truly describe.

I loved every aspect of that wonderful place. May it remain forever, along with the memory of the amazing generosity of the late Dame Eadith Walker. And, thanks to all the good people who love and care about it too.

Noni Daw



* Thank you Noni for telling us your story and for the lovely collections of photographs to add to our archives.

From the Secretary's Desk

Our Volunteers' Meeting, held early this month was a great success with lots of good suggestions being put forward.

Unfortunately, due to a camera malfunction, we will have to re-take many of the photos for our new volunteers' identification badges.

If you have a small passport or other photo that you like we can scan this instead.

Welcome to the following new members: Helen Eggleton, John Buchhorn and Carole Davidson. We also have three new members joining us next month.

Museum re-location: Thanks to all our willing helpers in the Museum Committee. Most of the museum has now been packed up ready for the move. We are just waiting to meet with Council regarding some work we need doing at Bent Street before the move. Thanks also to the Museum Advisor arranged through Council. We are all learning more about Museum management and this will be put to good use after our move.

We can always use extra help, particularly once we have moved, in getting our exhibitions ready for our grand opening. Currently we are aiming for July - and keeping our fingers crossed.

Once we are open the hours will be longer than previously. We will be opening on every Wednesday and Saturday, from 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m. initially, so we will need plenty of helpers. These hours will be reviewed after the first 6 months.

Opening of new Concord Library on 10th May: Just a reminder that we need help to man our table on this day. Can you help? Even if it's only for a short time.

Rivendell Open Day - Sunday, 27th July. Can you help on this day? Please let Sandra know.

Speaking of Sandra - Congratulations for a job well done for our Open Day at Yaralla this month. You were certainly thrown in at the deep end and you did a wonderful job, and brought lots of fresh ideas to the day.

Election of Officers and Committee: Just a bit of notice that our elections will be held at our AGM on 13th August. Have you given any thought to standing for any of the offices or Committee? Some new blood would be very welcome!

For Your Diary

Wed. 14th May - General Meeting

Wed. 28th May - Executive Meeting

Wed. 11th June - General Meeting

Wed. 25th June - Walker Estates