



"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.145

June 2008

Walker Chronicles (part 5)

The Caves at Cavan

(Yass, Thursday April 27)

'I was the first of the party to awake and get up and, having dressed and seen the horses fed with such food as we could get, got the whole party afoot. By seven o'clock we were on our way to the caves, which we did not reach until past ten. We then lighted a fire and had breakfast on the ground, for which we had all abundant appetite.

'Afterwards we proceeded to examine the caves. The entrance is by a narrow fissure, a little way up the side of a hill, rising out of a deep valley, so covered by rocks that no-one would be led to suppose there was any opening. The cave soon opens however, and for some space its floor slopes inwardly, and a few dozen yards brings us to a spacious and lofty chamber. The walls and roof are of uneven surface, and presenting fantastic shapes and appearances, but there are here few stalactites. Its further extremities seem closed by rocks of limestone, encrusted by the substance, once liquid, now hardened, which constitutes petrification.

'Over and through, amongst a very rugged and, especially for ladies, a very difficult path, we scrambled for some considerable distance. Sometimes we had to go through very small apertures on hands and knees. At other times, we had to surmount high rocks. Sometimes the caves opened out into spacious apartments, wide and lofty; at other times they were narrow and low. Here and there we met with stalactites and with pools of water.

'The most beautiful specimen of the former is called Ebden's altar, and is really very pretty. A mass of crystallised, though opaque, stalactites, in colour and appearance as somewhat resembling alabaster, hang over a mound of the same material and is altogether a very picturesque object.

'We did not explore, I should think, one half of the various caves or branches, nor do I suppose that one half of them are yet discovered, as it is most probable that a great part of the hill is perforated, but we saw

enough to give us, I should think, an idea of the whole. The caves are certainly worth visiting.'

A discussion ensued about how they compared to other caves in more famous parts of the world. Mention was also made of the Wellington caves. Some of the native colonists felt that Cavan caves were wonderful, but others told of 'extraordinary works of nature and art.' Thomas pondered amidst the conversations. 'Although on a party of pleasure, which I enjoyed much, and whilst laughter and jokes and merriment were the order of the day, my reflections were not a little tinged with melancholy.'

Whilst the intrepid band of cavers were busy exploring, the men who remained behind to guard the carts decided to let loose the horses. Amongst the rest was 'Flibberty, who as usual, soon made use of his liberty in scampering off.'

Thomas recalled, 'The first news that I have on emerging from the bowels of the mountain was that my horse was lost. Mr O'Brien kindly proceeded to search for him, and on finding him with great difficulty, and after a severe chase, they ran him into a stockyard and (he was) caught once more!'

From the caves we proceeded homewards to Yass, stopping at Cavan homestead to refresh, and it was nearly eight o'clock ere we reached this, having travelled at least thirty miles during the day.'

The next journal entry was dated Saturday, April 29 at Broughtonsworth, Boorowa Plains. Thomas moaned about the horses, some of whom were still missing.

'I most unexpectedly find myself at this



Bulletin Board

June 11 - Carol Baxter, "Breaking the Bank"

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

August 13 - Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers and Committee

place, the property and residence of Mr Broughton and family, from whom we have received a hearty welcome. Macalister and I have come here, driven by Mr O'Brien in his phaeton, to visit the family and to see this part of the country. We have time to do so, owing to the continued absence of our lost horses, and by the incapability of those we have bought to replace them.'

Thomas had purchased a team on the previous Tuesday, but due to a misunderstanding, did not get them till Thursday evening, so another day had been lost.

'Yesterday we got all our things packed, and the carts loaded, and made what we hoped would be a final start. We had not, however, proceeded many yards, ere, coming to a steep hill, we found that our newly bought horses would not go on. They in fact were too tired, and in too low condition to dray the load. After a great many efforts, and giving them every fair trial, we had to condemn them as unfit, and thus again found ourselves at a stand still. You may imagine how annoyed we all were. We had then various plans and propositions before us, but fresh cattle were not to be found for love or money.'

Just then a team of horses were driven by. Thomas enquired about their destination, and was told that it was a team returning to a station further along the Murrumbidgee, through which Thomas as his group were to pass on their route.

'We engaged it to take one of our carts as far as it had to go. The team in our other cart works well. Dutton and Brown are gone on with the carts and Mac and I remain behind. We have sent for horses which are said to be suitable and we intend buying a team of bullocks at a sale by auction, which is to take place at Yass on Monday. I am extremely annoyed at this detention and loss of time, but what can I do? Meantime we are in excellent quarters. No persons could be kinder than Mr and Mrs O'Brien, and no house more comfortable and agreeable than theirs. They seem the Ranken's of Yass.'

Thomas referred to Mr O'Brien as 'excellent and obliging', and to Mrs O'Brien as 'a cheerful and most agreeably pleasant person, with the best disposition - a currency lady; plays and sings very sweetly and makes every one comfortable around, seeming never happier than when contributing to the happiness of others.'

(to be continued)

A glimpse from the past . . .

The Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital

"It is a marvellous thing", said Lord Hampden to the writer, "how few of Australia's richest men do anything to benefit the people."

And, indeed, the number who deserve to be classed as benefactors in our midst is singularly small.

A bright and laudable example was set by the late Mr. Thomas Walker of "Yaralla", Concord who, in his will, provided that not less than one hundred thousand pounds should be spent in building and maintaining a Hospital for Convalescents at Rocky Point on the Parramatta River.

About thirty acres of land were also donated by him and these beautiful buildings were erected and money invested to bring in about four thousand pounds a year for the upkeep of the establishment.

Here are entertained, free of any cost to themselves, those who are well enough to leave hospitals or doctors' hands and not yet strong enough to go to their own homes.

The Hospital receives 32 men, 32 women and 12 children, girls from 4 to 12 years old and boys from 4 to 8. One of the pavilions is devoted to male patients, one to the females, and the Children's Hospital, endowed by the late Miss Joanna Walker, is reserved for the weakly juveniles.

Save clothing, everything was provided, the washing being done free of cost: nay, if patients catch the 2 pm boat from the Circular Quay on Tuesdays or Fridays the attendant sister pays their steamer fare.

Away from the polluted atmosphere of the city and surrounded by everything that tends to sanitation, a restful patient has nothing to do but eat, drink, get well, and be grateful. The dormitories are large and airy, clean as the newest of new pins, and every bed so comfortable as to compel a pang of regret at leaving.

Vegetables and fruit are grown in the orchard and garden. Cows, poultry and pigs are kept so that, practically, only tea, fish, meat and bread require to be bought.

A beautiful croquet lawn attracts some players and a boat on the river is at the service of those visitors who desire a pull for pleasure and exercise.

Without visible parsimony the affairs of the Hospital are managed economically, the amount set apart for its main-

tenance having never at any time been exceeded.

As a foundation distinctly apart from public charity, this Hospital stands out as a kindly example to those who have ample means but whose hearts need direction on the road trodden by the generous man whose marble presentment meets the eye of the visitor coming into the entrance hall, the late Thomas Walker of "Yaralla".

(The above quotes are extracts from a Quarterly Journal issued by Rich & Co., General Merchants of Sydney, in November 1904.)

(Note: One of its best know patients was Henry Lawson, who's poem, "The Unknown Patient", was penned whilst he was convalescing in this Hospital.)

The Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital continued until 1979 when it was no longer financially viable and its control was transferred to the NSW Department of Health. Since then it has housed the Rivendell Child, Adolescent and Family Unit, which caters for young people with mental health problems and their families.

Rivendell takes its name from the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien. In *The Hobbit Rivendell* is a place to rest and recuperate - a sanctuary for those on difficult journeys.



Have you been to TWCH (Rivendell) yet?

Our next Open Day at The Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital (Rivendell) is on Sunday, 27th July. Please spread the word to all your friends and neighbours and invite them to join us for the day. The grounds are open from 9:30 am until approximately 3:00 pm. Cost is \$15 for adults, \$10 concession and children free. Rotary will have their BBQ trailer there if you want to buy lunch and we will be selling Devonshire teas. Bookings are essential so call Lois on 9744-8528.

If you would like any leaflets or posters to distribute, just call us.

Mark the date in your diary now - Sunday, 27th July

Life in the 1500's

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, *Don't throw the baby out with the Bath water.*

Houses had thatched roofs - thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying *"It's raining cats and dogs"*.

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, *"dirt poor"*. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entranceway. Hence the saying a *"thresh hold"*.

(Getting quite an education, aren't you?)

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been

there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, *"Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old"*.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could *"bring home the bacon"*. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and *"chew the fat"*.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the *"upper crust"*.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of *"holding a wake"*.

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and take the bones to a bone-house, and then reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (*the graveyard shift*) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be, *"saved by the bell"* or was considered a *"dead ringer"*

And that's the truth. Now, whoever said History was boring!!!

(Ed: Thank you to member John Harding for this interesting article. If anyone else out there comes across something they think would interest members, please forward it on - but please include the date and source if it is a published article that could be covered by copyright.)

June Guest Speaker

This meeting should be of particular interest to us all. Carol Baxter is speaking on her recent book, "Breaking the Bank". This is about the audacious Bank of Australia robbery in 1828. To quote from Trish's book, *The Walkers of Yaralla . . .*

The Australian Scrapbook reported: *'Australia's first bank robbery, which remained unprecedented for many years in its skilful planning and daring execution'*. The basement vault had walls nine feet thick and was considered to be burglar-proof. *'Near the vault an underground drain carried waste water down to Sydney Cove. Working from inside the drain, the thieves removed the brickwork at a point near the bank and then dug a tunnel to the bank itself. Judging from the scraps of food left behind, this must have taken them about a week. Once they reached the foundations of the bank they first removed a large cornerstone and then gradually widened the hole until there was enough room for a man to crawl through.'*

To learn the rest, come along to our meeting on the 11th June. Visitors welcome.

England's Oldest Botanical Garden

The sign on the gate bears the quaint name "Chelsea Physic Garden", situated on the Thames Embankment midway between Albert Bridge and Chelsea Bridge. This lovely garden is probably England's oldest botanical garden still in existence.

Founded in 1714 by the Apothecaries Society, who leased the land from Sir Hans Sloane at a yearly rental of £5. In 1721 Sloane gave the garden to the Society on condition that it remained a botanical garden for all time.

The Physic Garden may be regarded as the forerunner of the more famous Kew Gardens, since many of the original plants, and Kew's first curator, came from the Chelsea garden.

Now administered and maintained by the Imperial College of Science, the old Chelsea Physic Garden still produced medicinal plants for teaching purposes. Horticultural and agricultural research is also carried on.

(Michael Howes, History of Medicine Vol.2;No.2, May 1971)

Museum Update

It's all starting to happen!

The Bent Street building will be emptied out this week and Council will be calling in the painters to freshen up the walls as well as the carpet cleaners. Once this is done we will be able to move the bulk of our goods into the main section.

We will have a short time before the back area will be built in to become our store room but, in the meantime, we will need to move the items we have stored down below the Senior Citizens Centre into our side of the area.

There are lot of different items, but some of them are heavy and we will need extra help. If you would be able to spare some time - on a weekend - to help with this work please contact Lois.

Of course, once we have everything moved in we will need a lot more help in getting things set up.

If we are to make this museum the success we have proposed to Council in asking for the use of this building, we will need the co-operation of all our members.

We will particularly need more volunteers to man the museum when it is open. We are proposing that it will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm every Wednesday and Saturday. This will be reviewed after our first 6 months of operation. We would hope to be able to have two people on duty at all times during these hours.

The work is not hard and is actually quite rewarding so please give it your consideration and put your hands up when the call comes out.



With this new beinning for our museum, we will need a considerble amount of money to make sure it becomes more professional in its displays and educationa l research opportunities.

One way for everyone to help with this is to donate to our Garage Sale.

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 to help us raise some of the much needed money to go towards our new location.

Your help would be appreciated.

New Service from Canada Bay Libraries

The Library Service is planning to start an "author talk" programme.

The first talk has a family history focus.

Come and meet local writer Angelo Loukakis on Friday, 20th June at 2:00 pm as he takes us on a journey of tracing our own family history, based on his book and the SBS series "Who Do You Think You Are?"

To ensure a place contact the Concord Library on 9911-6210. The booking fee of \$5.00 includes refreshments.

27th Annual Doll Fair

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 July from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm at Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope Gardens (cnr Stanhope Parkway and Sentry Drive).

Admission: Adults \$6 or \$10 for 2-day pass; Children under 15, \$2; no concessions.

Everything for the doll and bear lover, collector or maker. About 200 tables catering for all aspects of doll making, doll houses and more.

Enquiries to Margaret on 4393-9973.

This information came from member Barbara Hancock who was a guest speaker at one of our meetings speaking of the Concod Post Offices.

Barbara has been helping us in identification of dolls in our collection and has also restored several of the dolls that were in need of some TLC. Many thanks, Barbara, for your help.

Interesting Web Sites

To those with internet connections and a bit of spare time, visit Alan at www.walksydneystreets.net.

Alan, a 93 years young grandfather, walks every street in the 277 suburbs of Sydney taking interesting, fascinating and strange photographs, over 1000 of which are posted on this site.

His site has turned a simple idea into a real treasure.

Log in and search for your suburb and see what surprises lurk in your own backyard!

Note: Do you have any interesting sites you'd like to recommend?

From the Secretary's Desk

Welcome to the following new members:

Robin Huang of Strathfield, Marta Karsay of Strathfield South and Gwen Buchhorn of Strathfield. We look forward to getting to know you better as time goes by.

Museum re-location: Now that things are beinning to happen we will need more volunteer help for: moving items from storage below the Senior Citizens' Centre across to the area allocated for our storeroom; moving items from Wellbank Street to the new building; organising displays and storage of items not required for immediate use; volunteering to man the museum when it is open.

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

Election of Officers and Committee: Just a reminder that our elections will be held at the 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!

All positions will be declared vacant and all you need to do is put your hand up to volunteer or, if you feel a bit shy about this, have a quiet word in the ear of any of the members, who would be happy to nominate you. If you do intend to stand but won't be able to attend the AGM you will need to let us know beforehand.

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.

For Your Diary

Wed. 11th June - General Meeting

Wed. 25th June - Walker Estates

Wed. 9th July - General Meeting

Wed. 23rd July - Executive Meeting

Sun. 27th July - Rivendell Open Day