



"Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY

email: chs@concordheritage.asn.au

www.concordheritage.asn.au

EDITOR
LOIS MICHEL
9744-8528

PRESIDENT
MARK DURANCE
9743-0583

PUBLIC RELATIONS
TRISH SKEHAN
4369-4172

SECRETARY/TREASURER
LOIS MICHEL
3 Flavelle Street
(P.O. Box 152)
Concord 2137
Phone: 9744-8528
Fax: 9744-7591

MEETINGS
General Meetings
2nd Wednesday of month
at 7:30 pm in the
City of Canada Bay
Museum
1 Bent Street, Concord
9743-3034

Executive Meetings
4th Wednesday of
August, October, January,
March, May and July
at 7:30 pm in the
Museum

Walker Estates Committee
4th Wednesday of
September, November,
February, April and June
at 7:30 pm in the
Museum
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Tours Organiser
Sandra Elliott
9797-1040

Museum
Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

Archives & Oral History
Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

Heritage
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

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

No.149

October 2008

Walker Chronicles (part 9)

Hospitality on the road

"Wherever we go, we are offered refreshments, such as the people have to give, meat and damper, milk or tea, always tea, and we thus see life in the bush, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, tough enough it is in most instances, as may be expected amongst unmarried convict stock-keepers and shepherds. We have found, however, amongst the latter, several married men, with their wives and children around them.

"The weather is now beautiful. The rain has freshened up everything, including the atmosphere, which is now cool and clear. I enjoy my ride much, and what with occasionally walking after game and assisting to encamp, I have a great deal of exercise. My health is good. On the day after the first rainy night, when our tent was thrown down and I had to get from under the blankets into the rain to put up the tent again, I felt a slight sore throat and cold in the head. But for all that, I would not put on a neckerchief, which I had thrown aside on leaving Yass, and my sore throat and cold have subsided.

"We do indeed lead a rough and queer life of it, always in the open air, none of us has shaved these last few days past, and in our straw hats, check shirts and bush dress, we must look pretty (strange) figures.

"I have not slept with my clothes off since I left Yass. The glorious freedom we have in the bush has its charm. There is wildness in the place that pleases. Occasionally we meet natives, but they do not frequent our camp.

"I could write a great deal more to you than I do, but I have little convenience or time for the purpose. I can only do so at night when the others are asleep. I shall just describe to you my present position; I am sitting on my mattress in our tent, which is spread between that of Dutton and McAlister. My paper is on my knees, the candle on my hat; in my left hand I hold my ink-stand. Dutton, McAlister and Brown are all fast asleep and between them, they make a noise that would confuse anyone but a bushman.

"Before the tent we have an enormous fire.

At a little distance is the fire and bivouac of the drays of our men, the dogs are amongst the pots, pannikins, kegs, spades and harness, saddles, etc. Our cattle and horse are tethered or spannelled at a little distance off. The night is calm and still. My candle is however just done so I must haste to get to bed and endeavour to sleep despite the noise and some fleas, which I feel are only waiting to get me down. These devils are my greatest torment."

(to be continued)

Calling all Tour Guides and Devonshire Tea ladies (and gentlemen).

We have groups booking to visit Yaralla on week days and they usually want our famous Devonshire Teas as well. These groups can vary from 10 to 50 so that sometimes we may need at least 2 guides on the day as well as several helpers for the morning teas.

We try to keep these groups down to only one each month so as not to be a burden on our volunteers but they still involve several of our members.

These groups bring a very healthy income into our society, which helps with the work at Yaralla. However, we would like to be able to spread the load of work instead of relying on just the same regulars.

Can you spare time to help on these occasions? If so, please contact me so I can draw up a list of volunteers who might be available when the need arises.

Sandra



Bulletin Board

October 8: Richard Oliver, pilot who flew recon. in the war. He has a great yarn to tell.

November 12 - to be advised

The Nichols, the Walkers & Yaralla

In 1797 Isaac D Nichols was pardoned from penal servitude by Governor Hunter and subsequently granted 50 acres of arable land on what he called Nichols' Point, on which the Yaralla mansion now stands. Later he was granted a further 50 acres in the area.

Nichols established a reputation as a hard worker of reliability and substantial business acumen. He was therefore appointed to the positions of Superintendent of Public Works (20 years) and then as the first Postmaster of Sydney from 1809. This work was carried on from his home in The Rocks.

On his death in 1819, Nichols was succeeded by his three sons. One of them, George R Nichols, became the first Australian born person admitted to the Supreme Court to practise as a Solicitor.

In re-establishing "The Australian" newspaper, G.R. Nichols sold or mortgaged much of his private property, including Nichols' Point. The area, by this time, was productive in citrus and stone fruits. Following a court case over the mortgage on the property, the land was forfeited to Thomas Walker. He named the estate "Yaralla", an Aboriginal word for "Camp".

Walker, as a Scottish immigrant, was also a man of enthusiastic ambition. Among his early activities was running a successful merchant business in Sydney, land speculation in Port Phillip (Melbourne) prior to the City's expansion. In 1843 he was elected to the Legislative Council and was also the President of the Bank of New South Wales from 1869 to 1886. Concurrent with Walker's success as a businessman were many acts of philanthropy.

Yaralla House was constructed for Walker and completed in the late 1860s. It was constructed of stone quarried on the eastern side of the property. The quarry eventually served as a swimming pool and garden grotto. The architect was Edmund Blackett, who also designed St Luke's Church, Concord, as well as many other significant Sydney buildings.

Architecturally, Yaralla House is described as Italianate. This style being so called from the features adopted from Italian Medieval castles, including a tower and extensive formal gardens and lawns. Yaralla belongs to an Australian variation of the style – the wrought iron work and three sided

verandah indicative of the local variant.

Many of the artisans employed in the construction of Yaralla were brought out from Europe, such as the Italian artisans who laid out the swimming pool, grotto, gardens and walls.

On completion, the gardens incorporated both native and exotic plants into various formal designs with the lawn areas highlighted by fountains, statues and sundials. At this time the street now called *The Drive* served as the main access to the house, with the main entry gate on Concord Road. The house became the first in Sydney to have electricity, which was powered by Diesel Turbines housed within the grounds.

Following the death of Thomas Walker in 1886 Eadith, his only child, inherited a major portion of the estate. A codicil in his will requested that £100,000 be allocated for the establishment of a convalescent hospital. Eadith ensured his request was fulfilled, but she, her Aunt Joanna and her companion Annie Masefield had to add additional funds to ensure the completion.

Thomas' sister Joanna had been brought out from Scotland to care for Eadith following the death of Thomas' wife. She adopted a young girl, Annie Masefield, to be a companion of the young Eadith.

The Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital was built on land owned by Thomas Walker on the point to the west of Yaralla. The architect was John (later Sir John) Sulman who later married Annie Masefield.

In 1897 Sulman was asked by Eadith to design extensions to Yaralla – these included a new entrance hall and a large dining room as well as the Stables complex and the Dairy.

Yaralla House became one of Sydney's premier residences. There were frequent lavish events such as balls organised by Eadith. Often guests arrived by boat, to be met by a band playing on a pontoon adjacent to the wharf. Eadith also held many children's parties.

Yaralla played host to various members of the Royal family, including the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI) and the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). The squash court within the grounds was specially built for the Prince of Wales' visit.

During a Federal-State dispute in 1914 over the functions of Admiralty

House, the Governor General, Sir Ronald Ferguson, spent a month in Sydney where he resided at Yaralla.

Like her father, Eadith is primarily remembered for her philanthropy and charitable deeds. During the first world war a tent hospital for returned servicemen suffering from tuberculosis was set up in the grounds of Yaralla. Consequently, in 1918, Eadith was awarded a C.B.E. Further recognition came in 1928 when she was elevated to the rank of Dame for services to the Red Cross.

The latter years of Dame Eadith's life were spent as a recluse in an apartment of The Astor in Macquarie Street, Sydney.

When she died in 1937 the estate was valued at £1,650,000, substantially less than her inheritance from Thomas Walker. Much of the difference being monies channelled into the establishment and running of several hospitals, institutions and funds for socially disadvantaged persons. One third of the will was nominated to the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia.

The contents were sold in an 8-day auction held at the property.

Eadith had no heirs so an act of Parliament, "The Walker Trust Act, 1938" was passed in which Yaralla became the Dame Eadith Walker Convalescent Hospital, under the control of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. This has not changed up to the present time.

Some Quotes worth Repeating

Footprints in the sands of time . . . are not made by sitting down.

Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious and immature.
- Tom Robbins

The two most powerful warriors are patience and time. - Leo Tolstoy

If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful. - William Morris

If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need. - Cicero

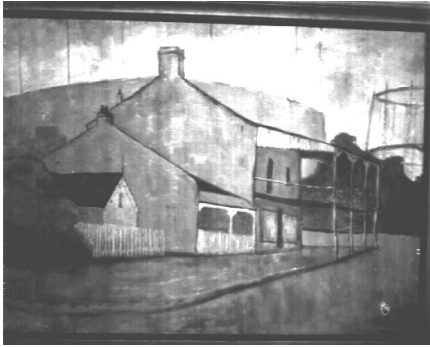
Determine that the thing can and shall be done - and then we shall find the way.
- Abraham Lincoln

Knowledge is power, but enthusiasm pulls the switch.

Found among our collections in the Museum . . .

The Pig & Whistle

Situated in Bertram Street was a building known as the "Pig and Whistle".



According to legend it came by this name because a man used to drive his pigs by way of Bertram Street to the slaughter house. At the time this building operated as an Hotel. This man used to stay outside and whistle for his pint of beer, not daring to go inside for fear, as he said "the thieving cows would get some of his pigs". So it became known over the years as the *Pig & Whistle*.

The building was never a Hotel in the accepted idea of today. After the Australian Gas Light Co. established its works at Mortlake and began producing gas in 1885, many of its key personnel from the Kent Street (Sydney) works lived in the city and nearby suburbs and the journey to the farm and orchard suburb of Concord was an arduous one, particularly when one had to commence work on the morn-

ing shift at 700. am. As some of the employees came on horseback or sulky the *Pig & Whistle* was built to cater for them. It was built and conducted similar to what were known as workmen's' clubs in England.

There was a hitching rail in front to tie the horses and the gas worker could obtain accommodation and breakfast before commencing the early morning shift. In fact it was the Concord Workman's' Club and soon the Mortlake portion of the municipality was its most populous area.



In 1915 it was an estate agency of Mr. Hipgrave who came from Burwood Heights by horse cab and later by tram-car, dressed in morning frock coat, striped trousers, bowler hat and gold topped walking stick or beautifully furled umbrella depending on the weather.

These two paintings, by Robbie Bennett, are part of our collection.

(Ed: Can anyone verify this article or add any further information. As far as I know these buildings no longer exist.)

Museum & Walker Committees.

Although we refer to these groups as Committees they are not Committees in the usual sense. They are not elected but are made up of members who have an interest in these two arms of our Society.

Members not obliged to attend all the meetings of the groups - only when and if they wish to. In fact, they are not necessarily confined to members - anyone who would like to attend would be made most welcome. The only member with any obligation is the person elected as that Committee's chairman.

The Walker Committee meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:30 in the Museum

The Museum Committee currently meets on no set date as we are working to prepare for the opening of our Museum. If you would like to become part of this group just contact the secretary with your telephone number or email address and we will advise you of coming meetings.

Currently we are at a very exciting time - a new building and a whole new display - and Linda, our museum advisor, guiding us in best museum practices to make our new home a place of enjoyment and learning for all the citizens of City of Canada Bay - both young and old.

Come along to a meeting and see if you would like to become part of it

Concord Airport

In April 1928 a resident of Concord wrote to the Council as follows:

A suggestion to the Concord Council.

In these days when thoughts are being liberally focussed on the 'air', and predictions are being forecast by noted airmen as to the near future of air traffic, the time is - I think - opportune for bringing under notice of the Council a theme which has been uppermost in my mind for some considerable time.

The day is not far distant when municipal 'landing' and 'taking off' grounds, with their accompanying aerodromes, will be a necessity.

Now to the Council I would point out that we have swamp land in abundance which can be prepared and turned into a useful and valuable asset for the purposes mentioned. With the open river as a guiding mark, Concord possesses open spaces and unique features not enjoyed by the average municipality, either for aeroplanes or hydroplanes. This is a mat-

ter which deserves serious attention, and one which I think will receive genuine public approval if tackled in the right spirit.

My suggestion to the Council is that it call a public meeting and that some movement be brought into being with a view to obtaining facts, figures and general information which will be useful in bringing under notice of the powers that be, Concord's claims in this direction.

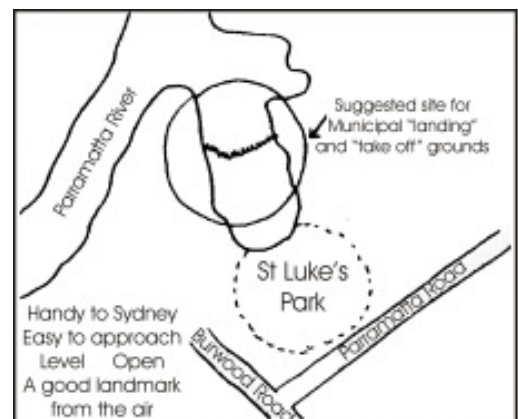
Trusting that this will receive support at the Council table, and the progressive features of same duly noted and recorded.

The gentleman writes further: ". . . the particular area I have in mind as a suitable site for seaplanes and aeroplanes is that section of swampy ground at the immediate rear of St Luke's Park, and the Bay adjoining - and a sketch is enclosed.

This letter and suggestion was duly presented to Council . . . and corre-

spondence between the Prime Minister, Department of Defence and Concord Council followed. The Department of Defence finally advising that they were unable to make funds available for this purpose but would gladly give technical assistance and advice if Council wished to go ahead.

And there, as far as we know, the matter ended.



Ghost Words

"What does c.c. at the end of a letter mean?" I heard a radio listener ask. An interesting question – a carbon copy of a document is a thing of the past since computers came into our lives but we still sometimes see 'cc Joe Smith' to indicate that Joe is to receive a copy of that document. Clearly the writer is still living in a past age where messy carbon paper was used to copy all typed documents.

Not long afterwards, a friend mentioned that her elderly brother had been a telegraphist and I realised it was a word I hadn't heard in a long, long time and emails have long put paid to telegraphy as a career (indeed, when did you last receive a telegram?), just as copying machines spelled the end of copy typists and calculators eliminated comptometer operators. You never hear of these vocations now.

I even remember a time when department stores not only had a chair at each counter, but they had alteration hands to adjust the fit of a dress you wanted to buy. Their badge of office was a pin-studded pincushion strapped to the wrist. The altered garment was ready the next day. These stores also sold corsets and garters, which wouldn't be in high demand these days, and we went to their rest rooms to 'spend a penny' (what a victory for women's lib that we are no longer charged for this amenity!).

There are still a few blacksmiths, saddlers and chimney sweeps around but I doubt that today's young men see these occupations as career opportunities; the milkman and iceman have long since disappeared into history. And when some future historian refers to Bill Hayden's famous remark in 1983 that a drover's dog could have led Labor to victory in the election, will someone ask "What's drover?"

(letter from H. Young printed in OWN MATTERS, August 2008)

Getting out a newsletter is no picnic.

If we print jokes people say we are silly.

If we don't, they say we are too serious.

If we clip things from another newsletter we are too lazy to write them ourselves.

If we don't, we are stuck on our own stuff.

If we don't print every word of all contributions, we don't appreciate genius.

If we do print them the columns are filled with junk.

If we make a change in the other fellow's article, we are too critical.

If we don't we are blamed for poor editing.

Now, as like or not, someone will say we swiped this from some other source.

WE DID!

Things are changing.

Everything is further away than it used to be. It's twice as far from my house to the bus stop and they've added a hill that I've just noticed. The buses don't stop as long either, and I've given up running for them because they get away faster than they used to.

Seems to me they are making staircases steeper than they used to. The rises are higher or there are more of them, or something. Maybe this is because it is so much further today from the ground floor to the first floor.

I've noticed it's getting harder to take two steps at a time now. In fact, about all I can do is to make one step at a time.

Have you noticed the small print they are using lately? Newspapers are getting further and further away when I hold them, and I squint to make out the news.

It's ridiculous to suggest that a person my age needs glasses, but it's the only way I can find out what's going on without someone reading aloud to me.

And that isn't much help because everyone seems to speak in such low tones that I can scarcely hear them.

Times are sure changing. The material in my clothes, I notice, shrinks in certain places around the waist or in the seat. Shoelaces are so short that it is next to impossible to reach them.

Even the weather is changing. It's getting colder in winter and the summers are hotter than they used to be. The rain is so much wetter and I have to wear rubbers, and I guess the way they build windows now makes drafts more severe.

People are changing, too. For one thing, they are younger than they used to be when I was their age. On the other hand, people my age are so much older than I am.

I realise my generation is approaching middle age, but there is no reason for my friends to totter into senility.

I ran into a friend the other day and she had changed so much that she didn't recognise me. "You've put on a little weight", she said. "It's this modern food", I told her. "It seems to be more fattening.

I got to thinking about her this morning while I was dressing. I looked at my reflection in the mirror. Seems they don't use the same kind of glass in mirrors any more, either.

From the Secretary's Desk

Welcome to our new members, Helen Bryant and Harry Kimble. We hope you enjoyed our last meeting and look forward to seeing you again.

Executive Committee: We would like to welcome Jann Ogden as a member of our Executive.

Vacancies: There are still a couple of vacancies on the Committee. You can bring fresh, innovative ideas to the table to take us forward in this coming year. If some of our new members would like to become an active part of our group you will be most welcome - just let us know.

Yaralla Open Day - 26th October: Have you let Sandra know you are available to help on this day? If not, please contact her as soon as possible on 9797-1040 or by email to ttoille@optusnet.com.au. We will also need help before that weekend to make sure all is clean and tidy. Please contact Sandra for details.

Collectors and Antiquers - do you come under these categories, or do you know someone who does? We need advice regarding fabrics, clothes, china, radios, typewriters, cameras, etc., etc. in our collection in preparation for the opening of our museum.

Prime Ministers: Did you enjoy our quiz? Would you like more? Would you like to prepare one?

Articles or Items for Nurungi: Do you have anything to offer? Have you come across any article you think would interest members? Do you have a complaint? Do you have any suggestions? We would be quite happy to give you space and it would be nice not to have to fill in all the gaps myself.

Christmas Barbecue: Make a note in your diaries now - Wednesday, 10th December - for our end-of-year function at Rhodes Rotary Park.

For Your Diary

Wed. Oct 8 - General Meeting

Wed. Oct 22 - Executive Meeting

Sun. Oct 26 - Yaralla Open Day

Wed. Nov 12 - General Meeting

Wed. Nov 26 - Walker Committee

Wed. Dec 10 - Christmas BBQ