



"Nurungi"

Remembered

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY
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MEETINGS
General Meetings
2nd Wednesday of month
(except January)
at 7:30 pm in the
City of Canada Bay
Museum
1 Bent Street, Concord
9743-3034

Executive Meetings
4th Wednesday of month
at 7:30 pm in the
Museum
(all members welcome)

Walker Estates Committee
meets when required.
Bob Jones, 8765-9347

Tours Organiser
Sandra Elliott
9797-1040

Museum Committee
meets irregularly at the
museum
For details contact
Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

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Lola Sharp, 8753-0659

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Bob Jones, 8765-9347

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CITY OF CANADA BAY MUSEUM

1 Bent Street, Concord

Grand Opening
Saturday,
16th May, 2009

No.157

June 2009



It's Time!!

No, it's not political!

New building! New display cases! New ideas! New enthusiasm!

**It's the opening of the City of Canada Bay Museum
1 Bent Street, Concord**

**Official Opening by Mayor Angelo Tsirekas
at 11:00 am on Saturday, 16th May.**

This is a joint project with our Society and the Drummoyne Historical Society.

**The museum will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm - everyone is welcome - and
you can even buy your lunch from the famous BBQ trailer of the
Rotary Club of Concord**

Come along, bring your family - young and old, friends and neighbours to see this newest addition to the amenities of City of Canada Bay.

There will be a whole week of celebration with the Museum being open every day until Sunday, 24th May. Hours will be 10:00 am to 4:00 pm except Sundays when we will open at 11:00 am.

After that we will be open every Wednesday and Saturday from 10:00 am until 4:00 p.m.

Now for the hard sell!

We need volunteers to come aboard to help us keep the museum running. It's not onerous work. In fact, you will be learning more about your suburb and its history, you will be meeting interesting people as they come to visit, and you'll be bringing your own unique knowledge of the area to share with others.

Also, because the original Concord Museum was established in 1972 and run by the Concord Heritage Society, most of our information and artefacts pertain to the original Concord Municipality, we do not have a lot of information from the other side - the Drummoyne Municipality. We need photographs, artefacts, stories, etc. from there to make our museum more embracing of the whole area.

In other words - we need your help to make us even better!



Bulletin Board

May 13 - Kerima-Gae Topp, President,
Parramatta Branch of the National Trust
- "Australia - the Weird and Wonderful" -
a "show-and-tell" presentation.

Bretha's gin

Walker's journal recorded a chance meeting with another tribe of Aborigines while riding through the wilderness one afternoon. At the sight of so many strange men, mounted on large snorting beasts, the young lubras and older women grabbed the children and ran screaming into the thickets. The noise brought their menfolk running, spears and clubs at the ready.

Thomas and his men pulled up their horses and prepared for a confrontation. However, the sight of native men travelling with the group managed to calm them, as they warily surrounded Walker's group in the clearing.

Neither of the aborigines was conversant with the dialect of this new tribe, but Bretha, still anxious to claim a gin, tried to explain this to those natives by way of mime and gestures about his own particular needs. Presently a fine-looking person was brought forward and Bretha, eager to finally have a mate, became extremely friendly with this shy individual, who stood before him, modestly covered in a long cloak with head hung down. As Bretha's ardour grew, he caressed and kissed the native, while a crowd of elders and children stood by, amused at the scene taking place in the heart of the wilderness. Thomas anxiously awaited the outcome.

When Bretha could no longer contain his ardour, he whipped off the long cloak, obviously ready to make love to his companion, only to find that the object of his desire was another male!

The tribe roared with laughter at his discomfort and embarrassment. The party of weary travellers observed the incident uneasily, surprised that the natives would play such a practical joke upon a group of total strangers. Bretha saved the day by joining in the laughter and merriment, much to Walker's relief.

Soon an obviously female member of the tribe arrived, escorted by some

elderly women, who made it very clear that they acted as chaperones to the young lubra. She appeared to be totally bored with the whole proceeding. The elders demanded a tomahawk, in exchange for the girl. Wives were regarded as mere articles of property, they explained, while tomahawks would be considered ample equivalent amongst the tribe. But Bretha did not possess such a treasure, nor would any of the men spare one of their own, even for such a worthy companion.

The natives were adamant; no tomahawk, no gin. Slowly the girl sauntered away, followed by her guardian, and so the matter was concluded.

As darkness fell, the tribe melted back into the undergrowth more silently than they had arrived. The party, much relieved, made camp for the night. Bretha remained a bachelor, at least for the time being.

Thomas felt strongly about the aboriginal situation and the impact that our civilised population had on their lives. The sentiments that he expressed in 1837 were still being expounded in the twenty-first century.

'Let us therefore redouble our individual exertions of benevolence, feeble and inadequate as they must be, to ameliorate the sad condition to which we have reduced them.'

Admitting 'a few episodes of undistinguishing revenge and cruelty,' he alluded to the basic instinct of our common nature to retaliate under suffering and aggression, and asked, 'Under a foreign invasion, what would have been the amount of our forbearance.'

(NOTE: For those readers who have come late to reading these excerpts from Thomas Walker's diary, we reprint the original introduction by Trish Skehan, published in *Nurungi* No. 140, January 2008. Back issues of our newsletter can be found on our web site, www.concordheritage.asn.au)

The Walker Chronicles Explained

Extracts from *A Month in the Bush of Australia*. Journal of one of a Party of Gentlemen who recently travelled from Sydney to Port Philip - with some remarks on the present state of the farming establishments and society in the settled parts of the Argyle Country..

This journal was intended only for the circle of the writers own family. Later the journal was published anonymously by Mr J Cross of London in 1838. However, various historic documents indicate clearly that it was written by Thomas Walker. Thomas Walker, a resident of Lower Fort Street in Sydney, ventured into the Australian bush in April 1837, accompanied by several gentlemen, a party of servants, and an Aboriginal guide. Their remarkable journey from Sydney Town to Port Philip would take over seven weeks, culminating in a voyage to Van Diemen's Land in June 1837.

Thomas offered profuse apologies for inconveniences in his writing, stating that he wrote whilst seated on the ground, paper propped on his knees, mostly at the end of each long, fatiguing day.

He need not have been so modest. I recently re-read Walker's journal after an interval of ten years. Once again I found a stirring and imaginative writer, one whose voice rang clearly through the pages. His vivid descriptions of life in the Australian bush are a remarkable tale of courage, hardship and mateship, as the party shared their experiences in *Australia Felix*.

Bear in mind that those intrepid explorers had no main roads or street maps to follow, that they ventured from place to place by word of mouth, pointed directions, and vague bush signs to follow Major Mitchells' line. Major Mitchell's own account would not be published till after this journal went to press.

During the next few issues of our magazine, we will read about life on a colonial farm, visit a great cave system, cross mighty rivers, battle bushfires and thunderstorms, and make contact with several Aboriginal tribes in the outback of Australia. As Thomas opens his heart and soul to the reader, we learn so much about this man who made Yaralla possible. I trust that you will enjoy his adventures.

Trish Skehan, Public Relations Officer

Word of the day

GOOGLE: The number 10 raised to the power 100 (10^{100}), written as the numeral 1 followed by 100 zeros. (Coined at the age of nine by Milton Sirota, nephew of Edward Kasner (1878-1955), American mathematician.)

Usage: Google is the leading internet search engine. Its mountain View, California, headquarters, the Googleplex, is named for the very large number the googolplex.

Some of the biggest tech companies have based their names on obscure words that henceforth will be known mainly for their association with the proper nouns they have become. Apple will always be a fruit as well as a computer and software company.

Sister Ellen Savage and the Sinking of the Hospital Ship Centaur

The *Centaur*, 2/3rd Australian Hospital Ship, was a motor passenger ship converted in early 1943 for use as a hospital ship. In November 1941 it had rescued survivors of the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* after it had been sunk by HMAS *Sydney*.

On 12 May 1943 the *Centaur* sailed unescorted from Sydney carrying her crew and normal staff, as well as stores and equipment of the 2/12th Field Ambulance but no patients. It was sunk without warning by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine on 14 May 1943 about 50 miles east north-east of Brisbane.

The ship had been appropriately lit and marked to indicate that it was a hospital ship and its sinking was regarded as an atrocity.

Of the 332 who sailed from Sydney, only 64 survived. These survivors spent 35 hours clinging to rafts and debris before being rescued. The 2/12th Field Ambulance had virtually been wiped out. Sister Ellen Savage, the only one of twelve nursing sisters on board to survive, though injured herself, gave great help to the other survivors and was awarded the George Medal for this work.

Sister Ellen Savage, GM, AANS

Sister Ellen Savage was asleep in her bunk when the *Centaur* collapsed around her – she recalled:

Another nurse and myself were awakened by two terrific explosions and practically thrown out of bed ... I registered mentally that it was a torpedo explosion ... In that instant the ship was in flames ... we ran into our commanding officer, in full dress even to his cap and 'Mae West' life-jacket, who kindly said 'That's right girlies, jump for it now.' The first words I spoke was to say 'Will I have time to go back for my greatcoat?' as we were only in our pyjamas. He said 'No' and with that climbed the deck and jumped and I followed ... the ship was commencing to go down. It all

happened in three minutes.

The suction of the sinking *Centaur* dragged Sister Savage down into a whirlpool of moving metal and wood. Here her ribs, nose and palate were broken, her ear drums perforated and she sustained multiple bruises. Then she was propelled to the surface in the middle of an oil slick.

She found her way to a raft that was part of the *Centaur's* wheel-house. During the 36 hours on this makeshift raft she gave whatever medical care she could to survivors despite being badly injured herself.

Commemoration

Few disasters during the second world war touched Australians as deeply as the loss of the *Centaur*. At Caloundra, Queensland, a memorial on a cliff points out towards the *Centaur's* final resting place. Another memorial was unveiled at Point Danger, Coolangatta, Queensland, in 1993 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the sinking. The tragedy is also remembered in practical ways. In the late 1940s The *Centaur* Memorial Fund For Nurses in Queensland raised the enormous sum, for that period, of fifty thousand pounds. This money was invested to fund activities in memory of the nurses who went down with the ship. There is also a memorial window at the main entrance to Concord Repatriation General Hospital, Concord West, where Sister Savage had worked.

In 1943 the *Centaur* quickly became a symbol of Australian determination to win the war. This attack on a clearly marked and illuminated hospital ship was taken as further evidence that Australia faced a brutal and uncompromising enemy.

Posters appeared to raise money for war loans showing the sinking ship and carrying the words 'Avenge The Nurses'. And when a mosaic was put in place commemorating the women's services in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial, it was the

image of the *Centaur* which was used to illustrate the sacrifice involved in such service. It is the only reference in the Hall to an actual event in any of the wars in which Australians have fought and died. 'Remember the *Centaur*' the mosaic seems to say - this ship symbolises the courage of Australian women in war and reminds us of all Australians who served in war and have no graves but the sea.



Mosaics in Hall of Memory - Australian War Memorial

The walls and dome of the hall are lined with one of the largest mosaics in the world, the work of Waller, unveiled in 1959. The mosaic inside the dome depicts the souls of the dead rising from the earth towards their spiritual home, represented by a glowing sun within the Southern Cross. The figures on the walls – a soldier, a sailor, an airman and a servicewoman – recall the Australian experience of the Second World War. Over six million pieces of glass tesserae, or tiles, imported from Italy, were used in the composition; the installation was overseen by Italian craftsmen and took three years to complete.

More Aviation Antics: The theory of the deliberate error

Sir Francis Chichester 1901-1972. Better known for single-handedly sailing the yacht *Gypsy Moth* in the first Trans-Atlantic yacht race, which he won by a week, Sir Francis was also a well-known aviator.

He flew a *Gypsy Moth* aeroplane from New Zealand to Australia in 1930, via

Lord Howe Island. To help locate the island, Chichester devised a navigational system, calling it the '*theory of the deliberate error*'. This was widely used by pilots in WWII.

In 1931, after setting out on a solo 'around-the-world' flight, Sir Frances reached Japan safely, but hit power

lines when leaving and crashed.

Severely injured, Chichester took five years to fully recover.

He flew a *Puss Moth* from Sydney to London in 1936.

He circumnavigated the earth solo in 1966.

He was knighted in 1972.

Thank You

We would like to extend our special thanks to all those who have helped in getting our museum to the stage it has now reached:

City of Canada Bay Council for providing the building for our use and for all their other assistance;

Sarah Rawlings, Council's Cultural Development Co-ordination, for being with us all the way;

Linda Raymond, Museum Advisor, brought in by Council to assist us in the early days of packing up and moving. She taught us much of what we now know about running a museum and for this we will be always grateful;

Karen Coote, another Museum Advisor brought in by Council to help in the final stages of setting up the museum and signs - we couldn't have done the job as well without her. Her advice has been invaluable. Thanks also to her assistant who, among other things, hung all the wonderful photos and paintings.

Council's Outdoor Workers who assisted with the major work of moving all of our things from the pre-fab on Wellbank Street to our new building - showcases, furniture, boxes, bags, etc. A mammoth job well done and always cheerful, smiling and helpful. They even came back later to help us clearing out unwanted showcases and moving other heavy and bulky objects.

Rotary Club of Concord members who, on two occasions, have come to our aid in moving heavy objects

in and out of the museum and around the storage area.

Paola Razza from Mirvac, who supplied material and labour to build our kitchen, laundry and school/toy section.

And last, but by no means least, our wonderful Museum Committee: two who deserve special mention are Terry Robinson and Ray Lane, who worked hard and long in setting up the new cupboards and their lighting systems and also building the Arnotts Display and special plinths; but just as important are Meg Bean, Sandra Elliott, Betty Fletcher, Lorraine Holmes, Harry Kimble, Jann & Brian Ogden, Betty Robertson (our wonderful "cleaning" lady) and Lorna and Alan Wright, who all worked for many, many hours in packing up our old museum, unpacking, sorting and storing in our new home and then arranging the displays. It has been a huge learning curve for all of us and we all deserve a huge pat on the back.

And a special thank you to Lorraine Holmes who, when we had our clean up on Saturday, sat outside with the things put out for the rubbish and managed to sell enough to raise almost \$150 for our funds.

The City of Canada Bay Museum will always be a monument to these wonderful people and with the new-found skills and knowledge we have all gained over this last 12 months, the museum will continue to grow and be something the whole community can be proud of.

Once again, thank you everyone - we couldn't have done it without each and every one of you.

From the Secretary's Desk

Museum Opening: Don't miss out on the Official Opening at 11:00 am on Saturday, 16th May. Everyone welcome.

Help Wanted for Opening Week: Can you spare some time to help man the museum, particularly for the opening week - 16th to 24th May. But also for the future, when we will open every Wednesday and Saturday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. If you can spare a day, or even a half day at those times, please phone me on 9744-8528 so we can prepare rosters.

Rivendell Open Day: This will be on Sunday, 5th July. To all our volunteer guides, please contact Sandra on 9797-1040 as soon as possible to let her know you will be available. We will also need our regular Devonshire Tea ladies, so she'd like to hear from you too.

Concord West Public School is celebrating its 80th birthday next August and would like to hear from anyone who has had any involvement with the school over the past 80 years. If you have any information, photos, year books, old uniforms or anything you think may be of interest or if you would like to be involved, you can contact Margo Iredale on 0412-959-178 or cwps80birthday@gmail.com.

Museum Building: We are hoping to source extra income by inviting other groups to use our meeting area at the museum for activities or meetings. If you know of anyone seeking such an amenity, please ask them to contact us.

Museum Committee: Over the coming months there is still much work needing to be done. We need to unpack and sort properly all of the artefacts that are not currently on display. They then need to be photographed and entered into the computer data base ready for future use. None of this needs very special skills, even two-finger, computer illiterate people can easily handle the work. Please put your hand up, we need you!!

City of Canada Bay Access Committee invites you to a disability forum.

The free forum invites people with a disability and their carers and disability service providers to come along and participate in a morning of information sharing and networking while enjoying a delicious morning tea.

The focus will be on disability and transport. There will be representatives from the Ministry of Transport, Council and community organisations who will speak on the topic.

When: Thursday, 28th May, 10 am to 12 noon.

Where: Concord Library, Wellbank Street, Concord.

RSVP: for further information please phone Council's Community Service Team before Thursday, 21st May on 9911-6523 or email cynthia.prasad@canadabay.nsw.gov.au

Out of the mouths of babes:

Dress-up: A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his tuxedo, she warned, "Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit". "And why not, darling?" "You know that it always gives you a headache in the morning".

Death: While walking along the footpath in front of his church, our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his collar wilt. Apparently his 5-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin.

Feeling that proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton wool, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased.

The minister's son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said: "Glory be unto the Faaather, and unto the Sonnn, and into the hole he goooses".

For Your Diary

Wed. May 13 - General Meeting

Sat. May 16 - Opening of the City of Canada Bay Museum

Wed. May 20 - Standards Committee Meeting

Wed. May 27 - Executive Meeting