



# "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  
[ttolite@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ttolite@optusnet.com.au)

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

**Oral History Committee**  
Betty Fletcher, 9713-1384  
Julia Stewart, 8765-9067

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**CITY OF CANADA  
BAY MUSEUM**

1 Bent Street, Concord

**Open Wed & Sat  
10am to 4pm**

**No.161**

**September 2009**

**Walker Chronicles (part 20)**

## Thomas Walker's Final Observations

Thomas made his final observations.

*"In going through the settled parts of the colony, I was struck with surprise in finding so many roads and tracks through the bush. They lead from one station to another.*

*Having now traversed so large a portion of New Holland, I may mention two or three general features of the country which, to me, appear remarkable. One is, that with an interminable stretch of forest, there is very little timber fit for use in building, Scarcely anything but shunted gum and box trees are met with, fit only for fuel.*

*"Another remarkable feature is the small extent of good land compared with the poor and barren, excepting on the banks of rivers. Perhaps, nearer the Australia Alps, and on other ranges to the eastwards of our course, the country may be better.*

*The great deficiency of interior water-carriages, and even of water for the use of men and beast is also a striking feature, and must long prevent this country becoming so great as its extent, climate and locality would lead one to expect. Its coast may be settled and inhabited, but the boundless interior will only possess a thin population"* (The End)

## Cheating the Post Office was a popular sport until it was stamped out . . . In no time at all the PMG had licked the problem

**BACK in 1838**, James Raymond, first in Australia to hold the title of Postmaster-General, sat in his office in George Street, Sydney, pondering how to foil the rascals who sent letters "pay on delivery" through the post only to have them repudiated at the other end,

He knew that many who sent letters to the Outback had code marks on the envelope to indicate the sender was well so that the receiver would get the message at a glance and refuse to pay the postage.

Raymond was floundering to make the Post Office pay with such customers when, flopping on his desk, came a pamphlet by an English crank, Roland Hill, who advocated pre-paid stamped covers for letters.

Raymond beat Hill to the punch. He wrote Governor Gipps that he should be allowed to sell, for a penny each, sheets of paper embossed with the Post Office seal, which would allow letters to be delivered free, of further charge, in Sydney.

**World-beater**

Gipps bumped up the price to 1½ pence a sheet, or 1/3d a dozen, which was still cheaper than the twopence that the Post Office was having such difficulty collecting on delivery.

Thus it came about that Australia had the

first stamped letters in the world, 18 months before Roland Hill's suggestion was adopted in Britain.

But if James Raymond thought he had beaten the postal free-loaders he was mistaken.

The pay-on-receipt system continued until 1849, to the rising indignation of recipients.

In 1849 an Act of Parliament decreed that all postage be prepaid and arranged for Australia's first stick-on stamps to be produced and sold by the Post Office.

Three migrant engravers were hired to prepare the copper plates with impressions for 25 penny, 25 threepenny, and 24 two-penny stamps.

Payment to engravers was grossly unfair. The engraver of the penny stamps got £10. The threepenny man got £7 while the two-penny creator got the lordly sum of 12 guineas.



**Bulletin Board**

Sept. 9 - Marie Riley - Stories from the Kincumber Orphanage

Oct. 14 - Marilyn Collins, Artist - painting around the Hawkesbury

For designing these postage stamps, the engravers were given, as a model, the reverse side of the Great Seal of New South Wales. This depicted convicts landing at Botany Bay to be received by benevolent industry - depicted by a bale of merchandise, a beehive, a pick-axe and a shovel.

Our first stamps were printed in red, blue and green.

The original 1838 embossed letter sheets are now scarce, while a used Botany Bay stamp is worth £20 and an unused one several hundred.

Our first stamps were unperforated. When a top-hatted customer bought a stamp, the officer solemnly cut it off with a pair of scissors and stalked over to a pot on the counter to dab a gob of gum on it.

Up to 1838 when Raymond, a fugitive from Irish rebels after giving evidence in a murder case, had invented the embossed mail letter, the mail in Australia had had a somewhat checkered career.

Lieut-Governor Paterson, in charge in 1800 after Governor Bligh had been kicked out by rebels, was rightly incensed by smart boys among his sinful flock who bluffed their way on incoming ships, said they'd been sent for the mail, and ran away with it.

### Ex-convict

He decided only one man should be allowed to collect the mail and appointed Isaac Nicholls, an ex-convict, landowner, ship-builder and superintendent of convicts—who also had a chain of pubs—to do the job.

Nicholls, our first postmaster, boarded every ship, collected the mail and took it to the first post office, in his substantial house in Lower George Street. He charged 1/- for every letter delivered, 2/6 for every parcel up to 20 lb. and 5/- for parcels over that weight.

He thoughtfully advertised the names of people to whom letters and parcels were addressed in Australia's first newspaper, the *Gazette*, so they could collect them.

At first, soldiers, constables; and boatmen who carried official despatches through the colony were permitted to carry letters to certain settlers.

This was inconvenient. Deliveries were irregular. In 1828 our first district post offices were established at Parramatta, Bathurst, Campbelltown, Windsor, Liverpool, Penrith and Newcastle with a total staff of 12.

In 1828 Governor Darling, tired of having to wait for his mail, appointed Donald Mc-Gregor, our first letter carrier or postman, at £54/12/ a year, with

strict instructions to make Government House his first call.

Since then there have been a lot of firsts. The first overland mail to Melbourne was established in 1838 when the contractor, Overlander Joe Hawdon, hired Jack Bourke to link up with the Sydney service at Yass,

### Death-defying

Bourke, like his counterpart the Pony Express in America, had to swim flooded rivers and fight off hostile natives. At one time he helped a settler's wife survive a siege by a black killer and his gang.

The first carriage of mails by rail came in 1855. Citizens in country towns and villages posted their letters right on the train and thus made sure they left the town.

To distant parts in the Outback and along the coast, mail was carried by coach, horseback, camel or ship and later, in settled areas, by bicycle.

The first motor mail run was inaugurated between Broken Hill and Menindie in 1911. The authorities had so little faith in the new-fangled petrol engine that they sent a horse-drawn coach after it to make sure the mail would go through,

The first aerial mailman in Australia was Frenchman Maurice Guillaux, who carried mail from Melbourne to Sydney in 1914. Qantas inaugurated the first regular air mail service to Britain in 1934.

Next step, of course, is space mail, but we may have to wait a bit for that.

Today there are 8148 post offices in Australia with a total staff approaching 104,000. Quite an advance since Isaac Nicholls opened the first post office in Lower George Street with himself and two men 161 years ago.

*This article was written by William Joy. We have no information who published it or the date.*

*(For our younger readers, or those who have forgotten: 12 pennies = 1 shilling = 10 cents; 20 shillings = £1 = \$2. )*

### Take Time

*Take time to dream – it is  
hitching your wagon to a  
star.*

*Take time to love and be loved  
– it is the privilege of the  
gods.*

*Take time to look around – the  
day is too short to be selfish.*

*Take time to laugh – it is the  
music of the soul.*

*(an Old Irish Prayer)*

## More Aviation Antics.

### Who Flew First?

Eric Weiss, better known as the famed American escapologist, Harry Houdini, arrived in Australia in 1910. He had a French Voisin box-kite-type aeroplane, with a 60hp engine, which he flew at Digger's Rest in Victoria on 18 March 1910. Several witnesses attested to the one-minute flight which was recognised as the first powered flight in Australia. He later delighted crowds when he flew at Rosehill Racecourse.

However, reports that a South Australia mechanic, Fred Custance, had made a powered flight in Adelaide on the 17 March caused controversy. Fred's flight lasted for five minutes, but officials could not get accurate verification from eye-witnesses to the Bleriot monoplane's flight around a paddock at Bolivar. They declared the reports to be 'conflicting and inconclusive', so Harry holds the official record by default.

The first flight by a machine designed and built in Australia was made by John Robertson Duigan, who single-handedly built his bi-plane, inspired by pictures found in a magazine. John had started trying to fly a glider in 1909 but was not successful. He flew his newly constructed four-cylinder engine plane, 35 feet in length with a 24 ft wingspan, at Mai Mia on 16 July 1910. The first flight covered only 7 metres at an altitude of 12 feet, but later flights covered 180 metres before an audience of startled observers.

John returned to England in 1912, where he had obtained his Certificate of Electrical Engineering ten years earlier. He joined the Royal Flying Corps when war broke out, and flew in France with the No 3 squadron, then returned to NSW and started his engineering business.

George Taylor, born in Sydney in 1872, worked with Lawrence Hargrave on experimental box-kites in the 1890's. When the Aerial League of Australia was formed in 1909, Taylor became the first secretary, with Hargrave as President. George joined the Australian Army Intelligence Corps, and worked on experiments in air-flow over curved wing surfaces. He flew an army biplane glider at Narrabeen Beach and on 5 December 1909 made a flight of 258 yards over the sand hills. This was the first heavier-than-air flight, and preceded Houdini's flight by several months. Confused? So am I!

*These are just a few fascinating facts extracted from Flying the Southern Skies, The lives of 200 aviators in Australian History by Hal Sewell.*

## Yaralla Seasons

Is this not the saddest picture you have ever seen?



*The Norwegian Cottage in the grounds of Yaralla c.1970, not long before it was demolished*

With the bay in the distance it appears to be supported by the dying trees, no doubt something to do with the chemical contamination of the Parramatta River.

A once loved place now derelict with just the ghosts of the past keeping it up.

A far cry from 'the heady days before the War' when only the laughter of children could be heard along with that of the local birdlife.



*The Norwegian Cottage in the grounds of Yaralla c.1912*



*The Norwegian Cottage in the grounds of Yaralla c.1926*

## Out of the Mouths of Babes

A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found!" the boy called out. "What have you got there, dear?" With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

## Quiz for people who know everything

*This is a quiz for people who know everything! I found out in a hurry that I didn't. These are not trick questions. They are straight questions with straight answers*

1. Name the one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends.
2. What famous North American landmark is constantly moving backward?
3. Of all vegetables, only two can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year. What are the only two perennial vegetables?
4. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?
5. In many liquor stores you can buy pear brandy, with a real pear inside the bottle. The pear is whole and ripe, and the bottle is genuine; it hasn't been cut in any way. How did the pear get inside the bottle?
6. Only three words in standard English begin with the letters 'dw' and they are all common words. Name two of them.
7. There are 14 punctuation marks in English grammar. Can you name at least half of them?
8. Name the only vegetable or fruit that is never sold frozen, canned, processed, cooked, or in any other form except fresh.
9. Name 6 or more things that you can wear on your feet beginning with the letter 'S.'

Answers are on the back page. No peeking!

## Museum News

Our museum is moving forward at a steady pace.

Thanks to our good friend Gregory Blaxell (*author of The River - Sydney Cove to Parramatta*) we have obtained the services of a postgraduate student in Museum Studies from Macquarie University, Jacqueline Soggee, to help us research, identify and catalogue our collection of maps and drawings.

This is a mammoth task but will be of great benefit to us.

We are now starting to plan the next change of some of our displays. Three items discussed at our last meeting were: Lodges and Friendly Societies; Sculling and Rowing on the Parramatta River; and Yaralla.

For the first mentioned we are seeking regalia, photographs, certificates and other memorabilia. Can you help?

For the second one, this will involve research and sourcing photographs. Can you help?

For the latter, thanks to our Trish, we have more than enough information to produce this exhibit.

If you have some spare time, why not become a part of our enthusiastic Museum Committee. It's a pleasant way to learn more about this wonderful area in which we reside. If you are a newcomer to the area, it would be a great opportunity to learn the history of the place you've moved to.

You can give as much or as little of your time as you wish and work on any task that takes your fancy. You would be most welcome.

## Annual General Meeting

Another successful financial year and come and gone and our thanks to all who have made it successful.

Lola Sharp, our Oral History Chairperson, did not stand for re-election this year due to family commitments. (*Congratulations on the new grand daughter, Lola.*) We hope you'll still find a little time to drop in and say hello now and again.

Thank you, Lola, for all the work you have done, not only with Oral Histories but also working with Council records. This has been much appreciated.

The AGM was a success with a record number of members in attendance and, as a plus, we now have four new members on the executive committee. Betty Fletcher and Julia Stewart accepted the positions of Co-Chairpersons of the Oral History Committee and Harry Kimble and Terry Robinson accepted the positions of member of the Executive Committee.

We welcome you and hope your stay with us will be fulfilling and enjoyable and we look forward to plenty of fresh ideas to guide us forward.

Our Executive Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month (except December) at 7:30 pm in the Museum. Members are always welcome to attend.

# YOU'RE INVITED

**The Beautiful Art of Calligraphy**” at Concord Library until 31st of August. Drop by and see our own collection of Illuminated Addresses.

**1920's Fashion Show & High Tea** - Sunday, 27th September at 2 pm at Rivendell, Thomas Walker Estate, Concord West. A fundraiser for Concord Hospital's Clinical School. Cost \$50 per person. Contact Concord Hospital, 9767-5256, to book.

**Born Digital Records: What next?** This workshop, organised by the R.A.H.S., is on Saturday, 26th September, and will show how to deal with “born digital” records which are now such a large part of our life, rather than the digitising of images which were “born” on paper. Many records are now produced on computers, together with membership lists and data bases. How can we be sure these “born digital” records will be accessible and usable in years to come. Time: 10 am to 3 pm. Cost \$17.00 (includes lunch). Venue: History House Auditorium.

**Take Tea at the Garden Palace** - Thursday, 1st October. Sydney's vast Exhibition Building, the Garden Palace, once occupied the whole of the upper terrace of the Botanic Gardens between today's Mitchell Library and the Conservatorium. From its construction in 1879 to its spectacular demise in 1882, it was surrounded by controversy. 130 years after the opening of the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1879 the RAHS invites you to take afternoon tea in the Victorian manner in its Macquarie Street town house, and hear the story of Sydney's great Garden Palace scandal - a scandal which sealed the fate of a floundering government. Time: 2 pm for the talk, followed by afternoon tea and cake, with entertainment. Where: History House, Macquarie Street, Sydney. \$25 for members. Bookings essential. Limited places.

**Darlinghurst Gaol** - Wednesday, 7th October. Deborah Beck, a lecturer and archivist at the National Art School, situated in the former Darlinghurst Gaol, is the author of “Hope in Hell” - a history of Darlinghurst Gaol and the National Art School. She will talk about the Gaol, one of the oldest and best-preserved examples of colonial Sydney architecture, steeped in Australia's early, brutal history and reputedly haunted by convict ghosts. Time: 1 pm. Cost \$5.00 members, \$7 non-members. Venue: History House Auditorium.

For more information on these three events contact the Royal Australian Historical Society on 9247-8001

## Answers to Quiz

1. Boxing
2. Niagara Falls (The rim is worn down about two and a half feet each year because of the millions of gallons of water that rush over it every minute.)
3. Asparagus and rhubarb.
4. Strawberry.
5. It grew inside the bottle. (The bottles are placed over pear buds when they are small, and are wired in place on the tree. The bottle is left in place for the entire growing season. When the pears are ripe, they are snipped off at the stems.)
6. Dwarf, dwell and dwindle .
7. Period, comma, colon, semicolon, dash, hyphen, apostrophe, question mark, exclamation point, quotation marks, brackets, parenthesis, braces, and ellipses.
8. Lettuce.
9. Shoes, socks, sandals, sneakers, slippers, skis, skates, snowshoes, stockings, stilts.

Ed. How did you score?

## Volunteers Barbecue

Calling ALL our volunteers - Walker Estates, Museum or any other capacity - you are invited to attend the Volunteers' Barbecue in the Dairy Complex at Yaralla on Saturday, 19th September from noon on.

All food will be supplied but BYO liquid refreshments.

This is our way of saying “thank you” for all the wonderful support you have given our society over the year. We want you to know that you are really appreciated.

For catering purposes we need to know by 18th September if you will be coming and if you are bringing a partner or children. Please phone Lois on 9744-8528.



Would you like to receive your copy of Nurungi before everyone else? Easy. Ask the Editor (Lois) to send your Nurungi by email so you are not waiting on Australia Post.

## From the Secretary's Desk

**Membership Renewals:** Have you sent in your membership renewal yet? And what about the questionnaire?

**Museum Roster:** We still need more volunteers. This is not a hard job, mostly just “meet and greet” our visitors. Can you spare a half day, or even a day (10:00 am to 4:00 pm) to help us? Just call Lois.

**Yaralla Open Day - Sunday, 25th October.** Have you been in touch with Sandra yet? Phone and email are on the front page.

**Museum Income:** We need your suggestions as to how we can bring in extra income to support the museum. Our meeting room is available for other groups to hold meetings, workshops, etc.

We would like other craft and hobby groups to take advantage of the area to put on their own displays or workshops.

Do you know of any such group?

**Executive Members please note:** We will not be meeting at the museum on 23rd September. Instead, we will be meeting at the Stable Complex at Yaralla at 10:30 a.m.

This will be following at noon by our Volunteers' Barbecue. All volunteers, whether they be Walker Estates, Museum or any other capacity are invited to attend. All food supplied at no charge. BYO liquid refreshments.

**Oral History:** Can the member who borrowed our Oral History Handbook and the book “A Thousand Questions” let me know if they have finished with them. Our new Oral History Co-Directors are looking for them.

## For Your Diary

Wed. Sept 9 - General Meeting

Wed. Sept 19 - Executive Meeting to be held at Yaralla Stables Complex, commencing 10:30 am. this will be followed by our Volunteers' Barbecue

Wed. Oct 14 - General Meeting

Wed. Oct 25 - Open Day at Yaralla

Wed. Oct 28 - Executive Meeting

Wed. Nov. 11 - General Meeting

Wed. Nov. 25 - Executive Meeting

Wed. Dec. 9 - Xmas Barbecue