



# "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  
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**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.167**

**March 2010**



Fairmile ML 820 built by Halvorsens and launched 19 June 1943. [Photo: Lars Halvorsen Sønsg]

### Green Point Naval Boatyard, Mortlake

This facility, on the southern bank of the Parramatta River and downstream from Halvorsens, built 20 Fairmiles from hulls pre-fabricated in England.

At Green Point they assembled the hulls then outfitted them with all their necessary equipment and armaments.

It was claimed that when the yard was working at full capacity, it was capable of producing a Fairmile every 16 days. However, this looks a little enthusiastic. If we look at the first Fairmile built there (ML 424), it was laid down on 24th September, 1942, launched on 29th November (66 days) but was not commissioned until 28th January, 1943. The last one built (ML 812) was laid down on 16th July, 1943, launched on 27th October (104 days) and commissioned on 4th December.

*"The boatyard's head shipwright was Darkie Griffin, one of the renowned Griffin Bros, boat builders of Sydney," recalls Jack Ruxton, a Queenslander who worked at Green Point.*

*"The Chief Engineer was George Horsborough, a brilliant naval engineer, but little was known of him outside the yard. Cecil Boden was the naval architect and the general manager, George Johnson was the chief electrician and at the time was the course electrician at Harold Park Raceway. He used to sling the boys beaut tips on the trots and dogs.*

*"My father, called Rucko, was a cabinetmaker but used to work there as a shipwright. He was also the yard bookie.*

*I was Young Rucko and the star spinner at the two-up ring operating every lunch hour at the back of the yard."*

On 22nd August, 2004, a previously unnamed cove between Mortlake Point and Breakfast Point on the Parramatta River was officially named Fairmile

Cove, Mortlake. It commemorates the building of the 20 Fairmiles at the Green Point Naval Boatyard.

Most people know Green Point as Mortlake Point, the name it was first given in 1837.

However, by 1857 the point had become known as Bachelors Point and by 1890 was called either Bachelors Point or Green Point.

Green Point and Fairmile Cove have been entered into the State's Geographical Names Register as a permanent tribute to the sailors who manned these mini-gunboats. This has been done after consultation by the Geographical Names Board and was supported by the City of Canada Bay Council and the Fairmile Association of Australia.

There are some wonderful stories associated with the exploits of the Fairmiles, or the exploits of their 16-man crews, during their period of service during WWII. These stories will be the focus of next month's article.

(to be continued)

*This article was published in "Afloat", Feb 2006. It is reprinted with permission. Gregory Blaxell is an historian and author. He has been boating offshore and in the harbour for more than 25 years. His latest book is The River: Sydney Cove to Parramatta.*



**Bulletin Board**

**Wed. 10th March** - Vic Grant, President,  
Matthew Flinders Society of Aust.  
**Wed. 14th April** - to be advised

## More Aviation Antics

### Walter Oswald Watt 1878-1921

Oswald Watt came from Bournemouth, England and learned to fly in 1911.

Frustrated by the slow response of the British authorities' enlistment procedures, he instead joined the French Foreign Legion's Aviation Militaire in 1914.

Ossie flew as a combat pilot in the famous Escadrille 44 squadron, but transferred to the Australian Imperial Force two years later.

He attained the rank of Major in command of No 2 Squadron in France.

Regarded by many flyers as 'the best Commanding Officer the AIF ever had', he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of the Australian Training Wing in England.

After the war Oswald moved to Australia. In 1921 he dived into a Sydney harbour-side pool, struck his head on a submerged rock and drowned.

In his will, he left 500 pound to the Australian Aero club for a gold medal to be annually presented to the 'Australian who puts up the most brilliant flying performance during the year.'

Given that this might encourage foolhardy or dangerous flying, the award wording was later amended to 'the most notable contribution to aviation during the year.'

The first recipient in 1921 was Francis Briggs for his long distance flight from Melbourne to Perth in a DH4.

Trish Skehan



Terry Robinson receiving his award as Arts & Culture Citizen of the Year 2009 at Council's Australia Day Ceremony

## In the days of door-to-door deliveries

Lots of local services came to the home. The postman came twice daily and also on Saturday morning - a cheery man with a piercing whistle.

The milkman came twice daily - you left your billy out for him - and he called on Monday for the money. He always left a quarter of a pint of free cream at Christmas. We had an extra milkman in the afternoon - the "cheap" one - only 3 pence per pint (usually 3-1/2 pence) and he yodelled so you could run out to catch him with the billy. But after mum saw him drinking out of his measuring pot we gave him up.

The baker also came twice daily and both he and the milkman had horse-drawn carts and both horses knew the rounds and where to stop.

The ice-man came twice a week and carried in the large block of ice in a hessian bag. (There was an ice works at the back of the Bank of NSW building which is in Victoria Road).

The rabbit-o man came on Wednesdays, 6 pence a rabbit. My mum was cross when they went up to 9 pence. He cried his wares and you ran out and stopped him and he skinned the rabbit right there - a highlight of the day!

The clothes props man and the bottle-o man also clobbered by with horse and cart and cried their wares.

However, the grocery man came every week from McIlwriath's and most of the area was also served by fruit and vegetable men who carried a sample basket in to your door and then went back and took your order from the cart, or you could go out and select from it yourself.

Newspapers were delivered twice daily and once on Saturdays and Sundays.

(Shirley Hood: from *Reflections, memories of earlier times in the Drummoyne Municipality* a joint project of Drummoyne Council and the Drummoyne Community Centre.)

### JUST FOR A LAUGH



### Bad Fortune

A guy called Jacob finds himself in dire trouble. His business has gone bust and he's in serious financial trouble. He's so

desperate that he decides to ask God for help. He goes into the synagogue and begins to pray.....

"God, please help me, I've lost my business and if I don't get some money, I'm going to lose my house as well, please let me win the lotto".

Lotto night comes and somebody else wins it.

Jacob goes back to the synagogue.....

"God, please let me win the lotto, I've lost my business, my house and I'm going to lose my car as well".

Lotto night comes and Jacob still has no luck!!

Back to the synagogue.....

"My God, why have you forsaken me? I've lost my business, my house, my car and my wife and children are starving. I don't often ask you for help and I have always been a good servant to you. Why won't you just let me win the lotto this one time so I can get my life back in order?"

Suddenly there is a blinding flash of light as the heavens open and Jacob is confronted by the voice of GOD himself.

**"JACOB, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO MEET ME HALF-WAY ON THIS ONE, BUY A LOTTO TICKET!!!"**

### Yaralla Open Day - Sunday, 2nd May

#### Volunteers - we need your photograph!!

To all volunteers who still need identification badges, can you please supply a photograph (passport or instant from shopping centres, or other if you have a good head shot) to the Secretary as soon as possible so we can have the badges ready for the day.

# The First Bushranger - John Black Caesar

## A hungry man

Born in the West Indies, John Caesar fled to England to escape plantation slavery. Ironically, he soon found himself transported to Australia on the first fleet.

A huge man, the small rations of the colony compelled him to steal in order to sustain himself. David Collins, the colony's Judge-Advocate, wrote in July 1789:

*"This man was always reputed the hardest working convict in the colony; his frame was muscular and well calculated for hard labour; but in his intellects he did not very widely differ from a brute; his appetite was ravenous, for he would in any one day devour the full rations for two days. To gratify this appetite he was compelled to steal from others, and all his thefts were directed to that purpose."* (Collins)

## Caesar escapes for the first time

On 29 April 1789, Caesar were tried for theft. A fortnight later Caesar, described as "an incorrigibly stubborn black," bolted with some provisions, an iron pot, and a soldier's musket. Garden robberies became frequent.

*Caesar stole a musket . . . from Abraham Hand, a marine, and took to the bush. However, any intention he had of living off the land was soon abandoned because of the scarcity of game. Instead, he began prowling around the outskirts of the settlement with a loaded musket, stealing what food he could find. On May 26 he narrowly escaped capture after he had helped himself to the rations of a gang who were making bricks at Brickfield Hill, and on the night of June 6 he was caught by a convict named Wm. Saltmarsh while attempting to steal some food from the house of the colony's assistant commissary for stores, Zachariah Clark.*

## Phillips dilemma.

Caesar's capture presented Governor Phillip with something of a dilemma. The Governor had to protect the colony's scarce food supply; but he saw value in Caesar as a labourer.

*He was such a wretch, and so indifferent about meeting death, that he declared while in confinement, that if he should be hanged, he would create a laugh before he was turned off, by playing off some trick upon the executioner. Holding up such a mere animal as an example was not expected to have the proper or intended effect; the governor therefore, with the humanity that was always conspicuous in his exercise of authority vested in him, directed that he should be sent to Garden Island, there to work in fetters; and in addition to his ration of provisions he was to be supplied with vegetables from the garden.* (Collins)

## Caesar escapes a second time

In December 1789, Caesar escaped for a second time.

*"Caesar the black, whose situation on Garden Island had been some time back rendered more eligible, by being permitted to work without irons, found means to make his escape, with a mind insensible alike to kindness and to punishment, taking with him a canoe which lay there for the convenience of the other people employed on the island, together with a week's provisions belonging to them; and in a visit which he made them a few nights after in his canoe, he took off an iron pot, a musket and some ammunition."* (Collins)

## Caesar surrenders

In this second escape, Caesar was absent only a week and a half:

*Sunday, 31st (December 1789): Caesar, a notorious Convict and a Native of Madagascar, delivered himself up to the Officer at Rose Hill. He had been absent since the 22nd of December when he ran off with a canoe from Garden Island & on the 25th paid them a visit in the night & stole a Musquet, which he dropt in a Garden at Rose Hill a few nights since being closely pursued: The account he gives of his subsisting himself so long a time was, that when he saw a party of Natives with anything on, or about their Fire, that he frightened them away by coming suddenly on them & swaggering with his Musquet, then helped himself to whatever they had left; in this manner he made out very well without Ammunition, sometimes robbing Gardens: When he lost the Musquet he found it impossible to subsist himself, he was then attacked by the Natives & wounded in several places & escaped from a party of them through a very thick brush when he surrendered himself.* [Bradley]

## Caesar is pardoned and transported again

On 6 March the Sirius and Supply sailed for Norfolk Island, taking with them nearly a third of the population - including Caesar.

*One hundred and sixteen male and sixty eight female convicts, with twenty seven children, were put on board; among the male convicts the governor had sent the troublesome and incorrigible Caesar, on whom he had bestowed a pardon.*[Collins]

## Caesar returns and is flogged

Caesar returned to Sydney in 1793 and, still incorrigible, took up his former practice of subsisting in the woods by plundering the farms and huts at the outskirts of the towns. He was soon taken; severely flogged but merely declared with exultation and contempt, that "all that would not make him better."

## Caesar becomes a hero

Caesar was not the only troublemaker in the colony. Of even more concern was Pemulwy, an Aborigine who was leading a guerrilla warfare of resisting to the colonist. Caesar seriously wounded Pemulwy, and

was proclaimed a hero throughout the colony.

*"It was however reported, that he had done meritorious action, killing Pe-mul-wy, who had just before wounded Collins (the native) so dangerously, that his recovery was a matter of very great doubt with the surgeons at our hospital, whose assistance Collins had requested."* (Collins)

## Caesar escapes, forms a gang and is outlawed

In 1795, Caesar escaped once more and formed a gang of fellow runaways. Hunter proclaimed a reward of five gallons of rum on 29th January 1796.

*"The many robberies which have lately been committed render it necessary that some steps should be taken to put a stop to a practice so destructive of the happiness and comfort of the industrious. And as it is well known that a fellow known as Black Caesar has absented himself for some time past from his work, and has carried with him a musquet, notice is hereby given that whoever shall secure this man Black Caesar and bring him in with his arms shall receive as a reward five gallons of spirits.*

## Caesar evades capture

*Notwithstanding the reward that had been offered for apprehending Black Caesar, he remained at large, and scarcely a morning arrived without a complaint being made to the magistrates of a loss of property supposed to have been occasioned by this man. In fact, every theft that was committed was ascribed to him; a cask of pork was stolen from the millhouse, the upper part of which was accessible, and, the sentinels who had the charge of that building being tried and acquitted, the theft was fixed upon Caesar, or some of the vagabonds who were in the woods, the number of whom at this time amounted to six or eight.* (Collins)

## Caesar is murdered...

*. . . information was received that Black Caesar had that morning been shot by one Wimbow. This man and another, allured by the reward, had been for some days in quest of him. Finding his haunt, they concealed themselves that night at the edge of a brush which they perceived him enter at dusk. In the morning he came out, when, looking around him and seeing his danger, he presented his musket; but before he could pull the trigger Wimbow fired and shot him. He was taken to the hut of Rose, a settler at Liberty Plains, where he died in a few hours. Thus ended a man, who certainly, during his life, could never have been estimated at more than one remove above the brute, and who had given more trouble than any other convict in the settlement.* (Collins)

Author: Chad Swanson

Source: [www.convictcreations.com/history/caesare.htm](http://www.convictcreations.com/history/caesare.htm)

## From your Museum Committee

We need to encourage more residents to visit our wonderful museum. To encourage this the committee has devised several events to be held during the next 12 months.

However, at the moment we are only a small group - we need your help to be able to make these happen.

**For Seniors' Week in March** we are organising "**Thanks for the Memories**" where we will encourage local residents to come and see our exhibits of yesteryear and to view our collection of old photographs on the big screen. We hope that this will prompt their memories and encourage them to either record their recollections on tape for our oral histories or put pen to paper.

**For History Week in September** we are planning "**Faces in the Street**" exhibition. We are asking for photographs, together with some information, of people who have contributed to the City of Canada Bay in some way over the years. This can be people who are no longer with us or it can

be people still living in the area. We are just looking for everyday residents, people you could have met or can meet walking in the street. This may pertain to shops or businesses you worked in that are no longer there, it may be where you work now, it may be the local Scout Master, sports coach, school teacher, shop assistant, volunteer, maybe a kind hearted neighbour. We just want everyday people who are "**faces in the street**".

**Some other suggestions** are: a Posties Party (this is like a Tupperware party only with clothes - in all sizes); Fire Safety in the Home; slide night of old photographs; Cavalcade of Fashion (a project put on by a group of people who collect and preserve old clothing). Would you like to add your suggestions to these?

It is hoped that members will support these ventures either by helping to organise them or coming along and bringing friends and neighbours.

If our museum is to be a success we need the help of all our members.

## From the Secretary's Desk

**New Member:** Welcome to Pauline Tyrrell, who has now joined our Society.

**Seniors' Week & Oral History Project:** Our museum will be open for two weekends and one Wednesday from 20th to 28th March for this event. We plan to show our old photographs of the area as well as show visitors around the museum. In this way we hope to be able to trigger their memories. Our aim is to capture these memories on tape for future generations. Morning and afternoon teas will also be provided.

We will need several people to be on duty at all times to help with this, so if you can spare some time we would be most grateful.

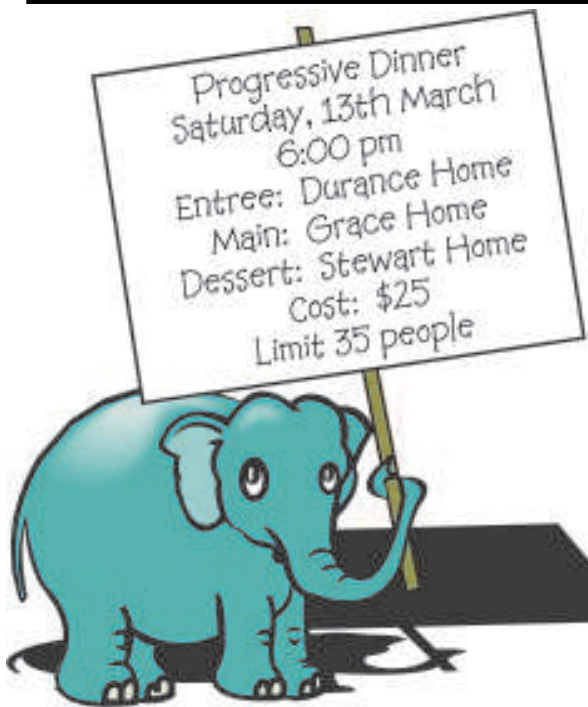
**Please let me know if you can help - 9744-8528**

**Yaralla Open Day:** As most of you will have noticed, I had the wrong date in the last issue of Nurungi. It is on Sunday, 2nd May.

**More Guides Wanted:** We are desperately in need of more guides - grounds and house. It's not a difficult job and we supply you with all the information you need. Why not come along on the 2nd and do a tour with one of our regular guides to see just how easy it is.

**Bushells Display:** Do you have any memorabilia or photographs you can let us have for this project? Do you know anyone who worked or still works there who could help us?

**Stop Press - March guest speaker.** Vic Grant's address will be "The Naming of Australia" and "My Love Must Wait - the Life of Matthew Flinders". He will show the very first map of Australia and a copy of Flinders' diary while a prisoner on the Isle of France, now named Mauritius. Other books of significance will also be shown.



### For Your Diary

- Wed. Feb. 24 - Executive Meeting
- Wed. Mar 10 - General Meeting
- Sat. March 13 - Progressive Dinner
- Sat 20 to Sun 28 March - Seniors Week and Oral History Project (see details in Secretary's column)
- Wed. Mar 24 - Executive Meeting
- Wed. April 14 - General Meeting
- Wed. April 28 - Executive Meeting
- Sun. May 2 - Open Day at Yaralla

### YOU'RE Invited

Members, families and friends are invited to our **Progressive Dinner.**

Places are filling fast so if you intend to come please phone Errol Grace on **9743-4301 ASAP.**

Members are asked to supply food for this event. Errol is in charge of co-ordinating so please phone him to let him know what you would like to bring to ensure that there is a wide selection.

**Entrees** will be at 1 Elphinstone Street, Cabarita.

**Main course** at 27 Boronia Street, Concord West

and

**Dessert** at 28 i Hilly Street, Mortlake.

All profits to go towards our Museum



Our long-forgotten Garaga Sale is now back on the agenda. It will be taking place in the near future.

If you have been saving things for us - or if you want to have a clean-out now - then it's time to get things organised.

We will let you know when we want them brought down to the museum.