



"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
Vacant

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

MEETINGS

General Meetings

1st Saturday of month
(except January)
at 2:00 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 at Yaralla on the
3rd Saturday of month
at 2:00 pm

Chairperson

Graham Ferguson, 9300-9657

Tours Organiser

Sandra Elliott, 9797-1040
ttuille@optusnet.com.au

Museum Committee

Meets on 2nd Wednesday of
month at 9:30 am at museum

Chairperson

Lorraine Holmes, 9743-2682

Oral History Committee

Betty Fletcher, 9713-1384

* * * * *

CITY OF CANADA BAY MUSEUM

1 Bent Street, Concord

Open Wed & Sat
10am to 4pm

Phone: 9743-3034

No.179

July 2011

The Wrecks of Homebush Bay

Homebush Bay, Rhodes and Newington are fast becoming affluent residential suburbs. They are adjacent to the wonderful Olympic Park and offer a lifestyle that has great appeal; good accommodation, wonderful recreation areas and close proximity to the Olympic Stadium and other sporting venues offering easy access to sporting events. Even cricket has been attempted at the main stadium, now bearing the name of a bank!

Much of the land on which these facilities have been built has been reclaimed from Homebush Bay and the wetlands that surrounded it. Originally dominated by industry, especially at Rhodes, then developed as a dumping ground for almost anything, much of the land was badly contaminated with heavy metals and poisonous compounds. In spite of the remediation programs, there are still many problems concerned with cleaning up the area. Much has been done, much will continue to be done in the future, but the prospects for a pristine environment in the foreseeable future are still bleak.

Many readers would be surprised that parts of Homebush Bay were also once used as a ship-breaking yard.

In 1966, approval for a ship-breaking yard was granted by the Maritime Services Board to several private companies. These companies paid a monthly fee. Vessels were moored in the bay, ready for breaking-up ashore. In 1970, the MSB constructed a ramp for this purpose.

Those vessels known to be broken up from 1970 were *Kookaburra*, *Branston* and *Samson* by Goldfield Metal Traders, *Kara Kara* by Marrickville Metals and two barges by Nicholson Bros Harbour Transport Pty Ltd.

Another ship, *Meggol*, was broken up in the bay but the hull removed and scuttled off Long Reef as part of the artificial reef created there from 1976 onwards.

There are at least four ships' hulls and the remains of several barges and smaller vessels visible in Homebush Bay. These will be protected under the historic *Shipwrecks Act, 1976* which applies to all shipwrecks

over seventy five years old. Relics over fifty years old and located in lakes and/or rivers, are protected under the provisions of the *NSW Heritage Act, 1977*.

The wrecks still visible are the colliers *Ayrfield* and *Mortlake Bank*, the tug *Heroic*, the steel boom defence vessel *HMAS Karangi*, at least one other smaller vessel and some barges, lighters and dredges.

SS Ayrfield

SS Ayrfield (originally launched as *SS Corrima*) was a steel-hulled, single screw, steam collier of 1140 tonnes and 79.1m in length. It was built in the UK in 1911 and registered at Sydney in 1912. It was purchased by the Commonwealth Government and used to transport supplies to American troops stationed in the Pacific region during WWII.



Ayrfield near the entrance to Powells Creek and alongside the residential development on the western shore of Homebush Bay

In 1950, it was sold to Bitumen and Oil Refineries Australia Pty Ltd and in 1951 sold to the Miller Steamship Company Ltd and renamed *Ayrfield*. Under the Miller flag, it operated as a collier between Newcastle and Miller's terminal in Blackwattle Bay. Here is a description of the collier entering Blackwattle Bay:

As a teenager I went to sea on the Ayrfield, one of R. W. Miller's colliers. It took great skill by the helmsman to steer the ship through the opening of the Glebe Island swing bridge in the darkness of night.



Bulletin Board

Sat. 2nd July at 2:00 pm: Brian Lawrenson will be talking about "The Secrets of the Terracotta Warriors. **NOTE change of day and time**

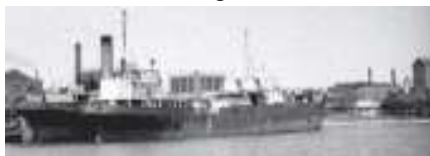
Sat. 6th August at 2:00 pm: Annual General Meeting and Election of Office Bearers and Committee

The ship had to have a reasonable speed to negotiate the opening as there was only a few metres clearance on either side. As we swung to port to berth in Blackwattle Bay, the vessel would slow ready to berth, and if the tide was low with a full cargo on board, the hull would scrape the muddy bottom. Skipper Ron Archer would carry out this manoeuvre effortlessly.”¹

The registration of *Ayrfield* was cancelled on 6 October 1972 and the old collier sent to Homebush Bay for breaking-up. The hull is located near the mouth of Haslams Creek with the bow pointing towards the shore.

SS Mortlake Bank

The stern section and part of the bow of the *Mortlake Bank* are located about 50m north-east of *Ayrfield*. The bow is lying nearly at right angles to that vessel. The *Mortlake Bank* was a steel-hulled, single screw, steam collier of 1371 tonnes and 71.65m in length.



Mortlake Bank and Ayrfield moored at AGL's Mortlake Gasworks in 1970 waiting removal to Homebush Bay for breaking up

It was built at Wallsend-on-Tyne in the UK in 1924 and in 1934 was bought by McIllwraith, McEacharn Ltd of Melbourne and operated between Hexham and Mortlake transporting coal to the Mortlake Gasworks of the Australian Gas Light Company. On 4 October 1972, its registration was cancelled and it was sent to Homebush Bay for breaking-up.

As an aside, it was on 31 May 1942, as the *Mortlake Bank* entered Sydney

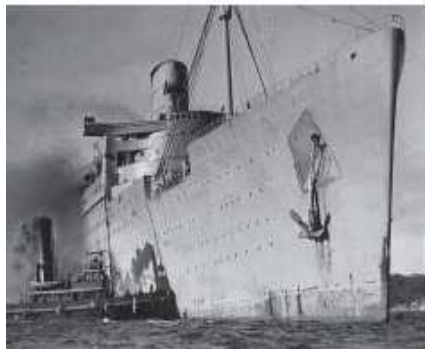


Remains of Mortlake Bank in 2003 near the western shoreline of Homebush Bay

Harbour and passed through the boom net, that the second of the three Japanese submarines (M-24) made its entry under the ship's keel. It was M-24 that fired its torpedos and then avoided sinking from the eschewing bombardment and escaped, only to finish on the bottom somewhere off Long Reef.

SS Heroic

Heroic was a steel-hulled, steam tugboat of 258 tonnes and 38.1m in length. It was built at South Shields, UK in 1909 for Thomas Fenwick [tugboat operators] of Sydney.



Heroic manoeuvring HMS Queen Mary in Sydney Harbour c1940. A similar photo is shown on the plaque located near the wreck site in Sydney Olympic Park

In 1911, it towed the three-masted French warship, *Euré* to Sydney from Noumea for breaking-up. During WWI, it was commandeered by the British Admiralty, renamed *Epic* and engaged in rescue work off the Scilly Isles. By 1919, it was back in Sydney as a working tug. During WWII, it towed *Allara* back to Sydney after that ship had been torpedoed off Sydney.

It was sold to J. B. Mullins in 1973 to be renamed *Bustler II*. However some time after that, it was brought to Homebush Bay for breaking-up. It is located just offshore on the southwestern corner of the Bay. It is heeled over and lying on its port side with its bow pointing south. It is alongside the wreck of HMAS *Karang* that is closer to the mangroves fringing Olympic Park.

HMAS Karang

HMAS *Karang* was a steel-hulled, boom defence vessel of 971 tonnes and 54.25m in length. It was built at Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co. Ltd in Sydney and launched on 16 August 1941. A boom is a net held together by steel rings and supported in the water by floats. The boom gallow, projecting from over the bow of the vessel, was used to lower and retrieve the nets placed across the harbour entrance. A gate was fitted to allow entry of friendly vessels and was



HMAS Karang laying buoys in Sydney Harbour for the Royal Visit in 1954

opened and shut by the boom gate vessel.

The *Karang* was designated as a 'Kangaroo' class, boom defence vessel similar to the 'Bar' class of the Royal Navy. There were four boom working vessels built at Cockatoo Island during WWII for the Royal Australian Navy: *Kookaburra* (launched 28 February 1939), and the sister ships *Koala* (launched 27 March 1940), *Kangaroo* (launched 26 September 1940) and *Karang* (launched 22 December 1941). All four ships assisted in laying the boom defences of Darwin and were there when the first Japanese bombing raid took place on 19 February 1942.

On the morning of Thursday 19 February [1942], the boom defence vessels were in position working the boom, which was nearing completion. The normal activities of the base continued. The first Japanese air attack on Australia opened ... on the patrolling Kittyhawks, on ships in the harbour ... other craft in the vicinity ... and a minesweeper. Following this initial attack by the fighters, bombs fell from high-level bombers. Anti-aircraft fire lessened the severity of ship losses and casualties, which were still substantial.

The *Kangaroo* and *Kookaburra* sustained some damage and one life was lost on board *Kangaroo*. There appears to have been no recorded damage to *Karang* or *Koala*.

Karang was stationed at Darwin until the end of 1943 and from then until 1952 served in Western Australian waters. In 1952, it was present at the British atomic tests at the Monte Bello Islands after which it was refitted at Garden Island in Sydney.

During 1953-54, *Karang* returned to service in Western Australian waters including another stint at the Monte Bello Islands. It continued in service in the west until 1957 when it was placed in unmaintained reserve in Sydney Harbour at Athol Bight where it remained until 1965.

The *Karang* was sold to L. Bookluck of Enmore on 8 September 1966 and partially scrapped. In 1970, what remained was removed to Homebush Bay for breaking-up.

The *Karang* lies on the shore side of the tug *Heroic* with its bow pointing south.

Barges, Dredges, and Lighters

There is a collection of these vessels lying just south of the wrecks of the *Heroic* and the *Karang*. One of these may have served as a crane barge or crane lighter and is similar to

the ex- Maritime Services Board barge (*MSB 16*) that is located on the ship-breaking ramp east of *Ayrfield* and *Mortlake Bank*.

There are several barges, dredges and lighters visible in Homebush Bay but their identification and history are incomplete. The NSW Heritage Office lists the following as working in Homebush Bay during its time as a breaking yard. Some may have been scrapped, some removed and some abandoned where they stood. Those identified were L 989, L 906, L 498, L 409. No. 7 crane, No. 1630 crane, FP 1569, No 2 punt.

(Endnote)

1 Don Goodsir, letter May 2003 to Gregory Blaxell .

This article was written by Gregory Blaxell, 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.

It was printed in Afloat on May 2008 and re-printed with permission.



One of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century was the incredible life-size terracotta warriors, discovered by villagers in 1974.

On Saturday, 2nd July at 2:00 p.m.

Brian Lawrenson

author, writer, speaker and traveller

will be at the

City of Canada Bay Museum

1 Bent Street, Concord

to tell us about

The Secrets of the Terracotta Warriors

This is a social afternoon with the talk to be followed by light refreshments and time to chat with the speaker.

Admission FREE

(donations always appreciated)

Memories of Dr. Freeman

Doctor Freeman was a wonderful man; truly worthy to be called *doctor* in the full meaning of the Hippocratic Oath. He obtained his medical degree at Sydney University, I believe.

My mother claimed my brother was not paid for until he was six months old. To requests by my mother for an account, she received a pat on the shoulder and was told *she had plenty of other things to worry about.*

Two scary words from my early years were *Diphtheria* and *Croup*. Because of the open tips on Ian Parade, the former was rife in the 1930s, and every winter half the school children were absent with croup.

I remember Dr. Freeman attending me when, as he put it, I was a *borderline* case for the dreaded disease. He showed my mother how to make a swab with a piece of cotton wool tied to a skewer and soaked in disinfectant. I still remember my pain and tears as she swabbed my throat.

My siblings were evacuated to my grandparents' farm, along with my mother, and grandmother came to stay with me. Thanks to the TLC, I did not succumb to diphtheria.

The Depression years were long and very soul destroying for many families. A visit from the doctor cost 10/6 (half a guinea), or \$1.05 in today's money. Impossible to pay if you were out of work and unable to feed or clothe your family. The basic wage

was 2 pounds a week, if you were lucky enough to have a job. Many a family in Concord and Mortlake would find a box of groceries or a pair of blankets at their door after a visit from Dr. Freeman - and a bill that never came!

His early diagnosis of Infantile Paralysis (Polio) in a playmate of mine, saved the child from probable death or a crippled lifetime.

Thanks also to his intense care, my grandmother survived blood poisoning and possible amputation from an infected leg when often, before the days of penicillin, amputation or death was the ultimate outcome.

He lived next door to 68 Majors Bay Road and his house is still there. I hope his ghost is too! He worked in conjunction with Sister Jurd, who also lived in Majors Bay Road, and maintained a small maternity unit. I would sometimes see his small black coupe at Sister Buckland's maternity unit on Burwood Road as I walked to school.

He joined the army at the outbreak of WWII and was promoted to Major. He was still in practise when, in the 1950s, while on a visit home I had cause to take my young daughter to his rooms.

Freeman Place is named in his memory and I know there are many Concordians who owe their lives to this gallant man.

Jean Parker (Sanders)

(ED: This is another wonderful contribution to our Faces in the Street project. We hope it encourages you to give us your stories.)

Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers

This will be on Saturday, 6th August at 2:00 pm, where the various officers will present their Annual Report to members. This is your chance to learn exactly what goes on with the various groups within our Society.

It is also the time to elect the various Office Bearers and Committee Chairpersons for the ensuing year.

The work of a committee member is not hard, but it is very important. The future planning for our Society and its Sub-Committees is in your hands and we need your thoughts and ideas to make good things happen.

We need to elect a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, Publicity Officer, Speaker Organiser, Museum, Oral History and Walker Estates Chairperson, and floor members.

Please consider coming along to offer your services to fill one of these positions. If the Society is to progress it needs to bring in new blood, not just rely on the same old people.

The Museum needs your help to . . .

Scan photographs and negatives into the computer; transfer oral history tapes to computer (no computer knowledge needed); tag paintings/photographs to enable easy access for displays; check contents of archive boxes and catalogue them; sort and file archival papers in our filing cabinets; other general clerical work; planning and arranging displays. These are just some of the jobs available. Can you spare some time?

Coming Next Year!

There's a War On! WWII at home.

World War II was a period of dramatic change for the people of NSW. As the cry "There's a War On" rang out men, women and children came together to face an uncertain future. For some it brought new opportunities, adventure, love, lasting friendships and exciting experiences. For others, wartime meant loss and hardship, fear and uncertainty, or a term in a POW/Internment camp as they were suddenly regarded not as friends or neighbours but as "enemy aliens".

There's a War On! World War II at Home is a Museums & Galleries NSW travelling exhibition. It showcases the varied experiences of the men, women and children who fought the war on the home front and includes precious WWII artefacts, memorabilia, photographs and video footage from around NSW.

This exhibition will be at our museum during April and May 2012

However, we need your help in presenting supplementary displays show-

ing the involvement of our area and our people. Can you help?

We need photographs, posters, signs, advertisements, personal stories, uniforms (Land Army, VAD, etc.), identity cards, rationing, wartime weddings (including wedding dresses), businesses working for the war effort (Greenpoint Naval Yard, Tullochs, etc.), blackouts, air raid wardens, war brides, making camouflage netting, comforts fund . . . the list could go on and on.



Do you have anything you could lend us, or any stories to tell? Do you know anyone else you could help? We need to start planning now so please get in touch as soon as you can.



Mural in Fred Kelly Place

(street entrance to the Five Dock Library and Superbard)

If you haven't visited yet, please make sure to see it next time you are in Five Dock. You could easily spend half an hour just looking for object from our useum that are featured there. Unfortunately it doesn't mention us, but we know, don't we? This is only a very small section of the complete works.

Burwood & District Historical Society

- Sixth Annual Christmas in July Dinner & Keynote Address - at ClubBurwood on Friday, 22nd July at 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm dinner. Cost is \$42 per head for a traditional Christmas Dinner (drinks available at bar prices). Guest speakers are Philip and Patricia Taylor (former Mayor and Mayoress of Burwood). Topic: Becoming History-Finding Identities.

RSVP before 22th July. Further details burwoodhist@yahoo.com.au.

Friends of Cabarita Park & Wharf

group is interested in forming a gardening group to "freshen up the gardens" and is looking for volunteers in the area. Can you help? Please contact friendsofcabaritaparkandwharf@gmail.com

Mini Workshops on Museum Management:

If we can get enough interested people we will start these in the near future. Subjects to be covered could be: marking objects, storing the different types of material, significance assessment, making the objects tell a story. They will only take 30 to 60 minutes and we will hand out notes to take away.

We need to have more people with a knowledge of museum management so that they can be ready to take on these tasks.

If you would like to be involved please telephone the secretary on 9744-8528. This is not limited to members only, anyone is welcome to come and learn.

From the Secretary's Desk

MEETING DAYS CHANGED: Please note that, commencing in July, we will be holding our regular monthly meetings on the 1st Saturday in the month at 2:00 pm, in the Museum.

It will start with our guest speaker, followed by question time and light refreshments. The meeting will start after that. Visitors may stay if they wish or leave after the refreshments.

This is an experiment to see whether attendance can be improved and will stay on Saturdays for at least three months to judge the response.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE: This committee needs more members to help us plan our activities for the future and to research and mount the displays. Why not pop into the museum on one of the days it is open to see us and have a chat.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE CONCORD HERITAGE SOCIETY? If you are interested in the continuation of our society and all its activities, please come along to our Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 6th August at 2:00 pm and voice your opinion.

If we don't continue to grow, in numbers and support, then - like many other community groups - we will cease to be a meaningful voice.

We need your help? We need you? Won't you volunteer?

GUEST SPEAKERS: Have you had an interesting guest speaker at a meeting you've attended lately? Why not ask their details to hand on to us so that others may enjoy those talks as well.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS. The end of another financial year is here and it's time to renew your subscriptions.

If you have paid in advance there will not be a renewal form in this newsletter.

Money can be posted, paid at a meeting or the museum or can be left in the green letterbox at the museum entrance.

ANNUAL REPORTS: A reminder to the various office bearers . . . your annual reports need to be prepared for our AGM on Saturday, 6th August. Please supply the secretary with a digital copy if possible,

NOTE: The meetings are currently on the first Saturday in the month.