



"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
This position is vacant

Tours Organiser

Sandra Elliott, 9797-1040
ttoille@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

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CITY OF CANADA BAY MUSEUM

1 Bent Street, Concord

Open Wed & Sat
10am to 4pm

Phone: 9743-3034

No.184

December 2011

The Walkers of Rhodes

(This is an article on Pioneer Families of Australia, written by C.H. Bertie and published in "The Home", Feb 1, 1933)

Amongst the flotsam and jetsam which has found a home in my collection of Australianiana is a sheet of foolscap on which is written "List of Property, wearing apparel, etc., taken on board the City of Sydney for Mr. Walker, Rhodes." The list embraces a wondrous array, from carpet bags to "one cask crushed sugar", and on the back of the sheet someone has written that the ship left Sydney Heads on Wednesday, August 2, 1845, but returned on the following Sunday and finally departed on Monday the 8th idem.

This old sheet will serve as a medium to introduce us to **Mr. Thomas Walker of Rhodes**, the founder of a family in Australia, whose history is entwined with that of several other pioneer families.

For the beginning of the family of Walker we must go back to the eighteenth century, to the city of Leeds in Yorkshire. Here, John Walker was born in 1754, a son of the Recorder of Leeds, and this John married, in 1786, as his second wife, Mary Rogerson, whose mother was a daughter of Mr. Brooke of Rhodes Hall near Leeds.

Mrs. Mary Walker, it is stated, owned the greater part of Leeds. The couple had four sons and two daughters. One of the sons, Abraham, went, as a young man, to Tasmania, where he married Jane, the daughter of Captain Welsh. A grandson, Edward Brooke, also settled in that colony and married Rose, a daughter of Walter Powell.

We are more particularly concerned with Thomas, the third son of John and Mary, who was born on December 3, 1791. This young man entered the army of the Duke of Wellington before he was eighteen years of age; was attached to his staff, also to the 16th Light Hussars (afterwards the 16th Light Dragoons).

He entered the Commissariat Department, served during the Peninsular War, and was present at the Battle of Waterloo.

When the wars were over, Thomas Walker, in company with a fellow officer

of the Commissariat Department, William Cordeaux, accepted the offer of the position as Deputy Commissariat-General in New South Wales, and on board the transport "Friendship" the two officers arrived in Sydney Harbour on January 15, 1818.

This was during the reign of Lachlan Macquarie and, under the firm hand of the Governor, the colony of New South Wales was just emerging from its infantile condition and showing signs of growing into a lusty State.

In this development Mr. Walker assisted by his work in the Commissariat Department. In 1818 he was sent to take charge of the Commissariat at Port Dalrymple in Tasmania. In 1821 Mr. Walker was back in Sydney in charge of the office at headquarters. Later we find him in Windsor, where he remained for a few years, when he was transferred to Parramatta and, in 1825, he was back again at Port Dalrymple.

As an officer of His Majesty's Army, Mr. Walker was in demand at social events, and amongst the houses where he was a welcome guest was the home of the Honourable John Blaxland. "Newington", the well-known mansion of Mr. Blaxland, was not built in the period of which we write, but a smaller house held his hospitable family.

The second daughter of the house was named Anna Elizabeth, and on January 4, 1823, Mr. Thomas Walker and Anna were married.



Travellers on the railway from Strathfield to Hornsby may note a large factory building about half a mile beyond the Rhodes platform, just before the train crosses the river into Ryde. Before this factory was built, some ten years ago, the traveller would have seen on the spot, prettily situated on the bank of the river, a picturesque and spacious old stone cottage with wide flagged verandahs, roomy stables and outbuildings standing in an old-world garden.

I am not sure that it was ready to receive his bride but it was then, or soon after, that Mr. Walker took her to live in that cottage, and for nearly a century the property remained in the family. Mr. Walker named his estate Rhodes after his mother's ancestral estate. Here the first child, named Harriot May, was born on October 19, 1823.

In 1830 Mr. Walker was sent to Tasmania to take charge of the Commissariat Department of that Colony. He received later a grant of land near Longford, where he settled as a farmer adding to his estate by purchases, and on this he erected another Rhodes House, which still stands.

This slip of paper quoted previously, suggests that in 1845 the family paid a visit to Mrs. Walker's father at Newington.

In 1861 Thomas Walker died in Tasmania, and in 1870 his widow brought her family back to the old Rhodes on the bank of the Parramatta River.

I have used the word "spacious" in describing the old stone cottage, and I think we might apply the same term to our forefathers' ideas of the size of a reasonable family. Five sons and nine daughters were born to Mr. and

Mrs. Walker. Of these, the eldest, Harriot May, was married at Longford, Tasmania on June 1, 1854, to the Hon. James Norton of "Ecclesbourne", Double Bay, Sydney.

Mr. Norton was the founder of the firm of Norton, Smith & Co, solicitors, still happily in being. Mrs. Norton died in 1850 leaving one son and three daughters. Her sister, Gertrude, still further cemented the connection between these two old families by marrying in 1860, William Norton, Barrister-at-law, a brother of the Hon. James.

The youngest daughter of the pioneer, who received the name of Adela Russell married, in 1870, George Nixon, son of Bishop Nixon, the first Anglican Bishop of Tasmania.

In May 1927 there died at Blackheath, New South Wales, within two months of her 92nd birthday, Marion Laura Garnsey. This lady was the sixth daughter of Thomas Walker and, on May 3, 1833, she was married to the Rev. Charles F Garnsey, the well-known rector of Christ Church, Sydney.

In an obituary of Mrs. Garnsey, it is stated that "... she faced the responsibilities of her new position with a courage that was always one of her strongest characteristics." These words became understandable when we learn that Mr. Garnsey, at the time of his marriage to Miss Walker, was a widower with ten children. One of his sons is the Rev. A.H. Garnsey, Warden of St Paul's College, within the University of Sydney.

Mrs. Garnsey, as her biographer says, "... made many friends by her geniality and kindness to all who came her way. Staunch loyalty was of her very warp and woof."

Three of the daughters of Thomas Walker were unmarried, and in the old house on the Parramatta these good ladies lived together after the death of their mother. One of them has left a worthy memorial which is likely to keep her name in the centuries to come.

Her name was Annie Frances and she was born in the Parramatta River Rhodes, where she died in 1913 at the age of 82 years.

In the Mitchell Library is preserved a collection of paintings of the native flora of Australia from the brush of this Miss Walker.

The collection covers a wide range, and on one occasion a friend remarked that she must have travelled far to get such a range of the subjects for her brush.

"On the contrary", replied the artist, "I have not wandered far afield, but I have placed under tribute all sorts and conditions of men, governors, explorers, travellers and even swaggies to bring specimens to me."

She resided for some time with her grandmother at Newington, and this gave her opportunity to meet her victims.

Miss Walker also wrote poetry, and another of her activities brought pleasure to many homes. Fifty years ago seeds of plants for gardens were not so easily obtained as today, and this good lady was in the habit of growing seeds and distributing them with a prodigal hand. In many homes emigrants from the old country had reason to bless Miss Walker when they looked at their gardens and saw the Sweet Williams, the Marigold, or other flowers dear to them in the homeland.

The other two sisters lived to a ripe old age at a third Australian Rhodes in the suburb of Strathfield.

Of the sons of Thomas Walker, three died unmarried. The second son, Arthur George, who was born at the Sydney Rhodes in September 1828, married in 1854 Lachlan Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Dr Thomas Scott, R.N., and grand-daughter of lieutenant Thomas Davey, Governor of Tasmania.

By this wife, Mr. Walker had issue: Arthur Ernest Scott; Herbert Francis, who married Mary Cleveland, daughter of Thomas Scott of Newcastle; Percy Ehrenswood; Ross Lewin Blaxland of Iveridge, Tasmania, on which estate he was born; and Lachlan Scott.

Mr. Walker married secondly in 1889, Mary Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Blaxland of Cleves, Parramatta River, the fourth son of Gregory Blaxland, brother of the Hon. John.

Mr. Arthur Walker settled at Addington, Ryde, near Sydney.





*Members, Relatives & Friends
are invited to attend our
Christmas Afternoon
at the Museum*

*on
Saturday, 3rd December at 2:00 p.m.
Light Refreshments - BYO Liquid Refreshments
RSVP: 30/11/11*

We would like to see as many of our members as possible, particularly our newer members, join us for this Christmas function. It's a great opportunity to get to know one another, to see what goes on in the museum, to learn about the work we do - and just to have a pleasant afternoon. Please, won't you make the effort? We want to get to know you too.

Working Bees

We are calling on members to put their hands up to help us tidy up the store-room, move boxes, etc., to be able to install the new shelving recently purchased with the help of Council's Community Grants.

This will make it much easier for us to sort our general collection and to know just what we have and where it is stored. In this way we will be able to locate any items needed to support future display.

We will be holding the working bees every Wednesday and Saturday during museum hours.

We only need two or three people at a time to get started so if you can help please phone the secretary and tell her which day(s) you can help so she can prepare a roster.

This is something any member can do to help us out. It only becomes hard work when the work load falls on just a few shoulders - and we don't want to overwork our regulars.

Won't you please put your hand up?

Quotable Quotes:

"A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes." — Hugh Downs

"In seeking truth you have to get both sides of a story." — Walter Cronkite

"Why not go out on a limb? That's where the fruit is." — Will Rogers

Significance Assessments

All the more important items held by our Museum need to have a Significance Assessment carried out to show why they are important.

This means researching the object itself, as well as the donor, how it was used, etc., etc.

Unfortunately, way back in the 1970s when we started our collection we did not know a great deal about museum management so we don't have a lot of the reference material we need.

A lot of this work can be carried out on the internet or by other means, but we need the help of our members.

Please spare us a little of your time for this very important work.



We are currently updating the data base on our textile collection and need help.

Do you, or anyone you know, have knowledge of types of fabrics, embellishments, etc. and can help us with the description of each item.

What we need is someone to tell us the type of material, the type of embellishment (eg, lace, tatting, crochet, - hand made, machine made, etc.) and give us some idea of the era.

We have approximately 400 items, for some of which we have details, but many are simply described as cotton and lace, which we know is not quite correct.

Please contact the secretary if you, or someone you know, would be willing to help us.

Wanted!!

Do you have any old Nursery Rhyme Books you no longer need? Condition doesn't matter as we need to pull some apart. Keep an eye out at fetes, etc. if you don't have any.

We also would like any stuffed toys that represent characters in nursery rhymes - e.g. mother goose, cat, dog, cow, etc.



Display Plans for 2012

February - Valentine's Day - need anything that says "Romance"

March - Seniors' Week - Collecting Oral Histories - need volunteers

April through May - The War at Home, World War II - need support material

June - Royalty - QEII 60th Anniversary of ascending the throne - need support

July - ?

August - Concord Council Anniversary

September - History Week - to be decided

October - ?

November - ?

December through January - The True History of Nursery Rhymes.

Do you have any suggestions on what we can do to support any of these projects? Do you have any suggestions for the vacant months?

How I met Russia's Czar, Prince Nicholas

My name is Allan John (Jack) Chilvers. In WWI I was in the British Navy in the submarines, which were very primitive at that time. My submarine was the E8, built in 1912, launched in 1913 and completed in 1914.

On 15 August 1915 we sailed to join the Baltic Flotilla. We had a number of escapes from German Patrol Boats and at one stage damaged our propellers. On 22 August we met up with another of our submarines in Reval Harbour where we would be stationed while the Russian Revolution was taking place.

On 3 October, 1915 one of our torpedoes hit the Prinz Adalbert, a German armoured cruiser. It exploded and sank with the tragic loss of 650 men. This resulted in a temporary withdrawal of all German heavy warships from the Baltic.

This success was recognised by both the British and Russian leaders. The entire crew were each awarded the Russian cross, The Cross of St. George 4th Class, for their part in the sinking of the Prinz Adalbert.

This medal is not normally awarded directly to the recipients by the Russian authorities but, in this case, five crew members received their decoration directly from the Czar, Prince Nicholas of Russia. Admiral Kanin, the Russian

Commander-in-chief, decorated the remainder of the crew.

As well as the Russian Cross I received the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

On coming to Australia in 1919 I transferred to the Australian Navy and served as a Chief Petty Officer on several ships. On completion of my service with the Australian Navy joined the Naval Reserves.

Submitted by Irene Davidson, his daughter. Jack Chilvers moved to Ellis Street, Concord in 1935 and spent the rest of his life there until he passed away in 1956.



The crew of the E8 submarine



Another item from our popular "Faces in the Street" project



Two Irishmen were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking up.

A blonde walks by and asked them what they were doing. Paddy replied, 'We're supposed to be finding the height of this flagpole, but we don't have a ladder.'

The blonde took out an adjustable spanner from her bag, loosened a few bolts and laid the flag pole down.

She got a tape measure out of her pocket, took a few measurements and announced that it was 18 feet 6 inches...

Then, she walked off.

Mick said to Paddy, 'Isn't that just like a blonde! We need the height and she gives us the length

Where are all our members:

We have approximately 125 members. Some live interstate or in the country but most are within the Sydney area. However, every month we appeal for help, information, make requests, and so on BUT never get an answer. Perhaps you think someone else will have put up their hand so you don't have to. Well, they haven't - and we need your help. We need you! We need your knowledge! We need your support!

We have what we are told is one of the best volunteer-run museums in the State and we are very proud of this. But our committee is very small and we are all getting older. We need to pass on our knowledge before it is too late. Please help!

From the Secretary's Desk

APOLOGY . . . APOLOGY: I thanked the wrong person for their carpentry work in our last issue. It was Mike Fisher who did this great job for us. For some reason, I always mix these two people up. Mike, please accept my apology and my thanks.

ANOTHER GREMLIN sat on my shoulder last month . . . when I put down the wrong time for our Christmas Party. Date and Place were correct but the time is 2:00 pm.

Can you please let us know if you will be coming, and how many. Also, if you are able to assist with the catering it would be much appreciated. Please let us know what you intend to bring so we can make sure we have a good mix of refreshments.

VALENTINE'S DAY: We are planning a Valentine's Day display for February. Do you have any old Valentine's Day Cards or other such tokens you could lend us for the month? Anything that says "Romance" would be helpful.

SENIORS WEEK (March 2012): In conjunction with the Local Studies section of the Libraries we intend to collect Oral Histories. If you know anyone who would be willing to tell us their story on tape, please let us know. It is only through these that we collect the small, intimate histories of the area and its past and it is most important that these be preserved before they are finally lost.

STORE ROOM: Once our new shelving is installed and our collection sorted we will need special archive boxes to store things. Karen Coote has offered to teach us how to make such boxes for ourselves. We plan to hold the course early in the new year. Would you be interested in learning this skill?

ORAL HISTORIES: As part of this work we need to transfer the old tapes onto our computer to preserve them and make them accessible to the general public. This is not hard work, just pushing a couple of buttons and listening as the tapes copy over. Also to jot down points of interest in each tape to make research easier.

HELP WANTED! Just to reiterate, we need your help with: working bees; significance assessments; textile identification; items to support displays; clerical work; computer work; public relations, oral histories, ideas and suggestions and anything else you might think of.

Even articles or items for Nurungi would be most welcome.

See you at the Christmas Party