



'Nurungi'

(Remembered)

Official Newsletter of the City of Canada Bay Heritage Society

email: heritage@canadabayheritage.asn.au

www.canadabayheritage.asn.au

EDITOR
LOIS MICHEL
9744-8528

PRESIDENT
ALAN WRIGHT
9743-4869

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

GENERAL MEETINGS

1st Saturday of month
(except January)
at 12:30 pm in the
City of Canada Bay
Museum
1 Bent Street, Concord
9743-3034
followed by
our Guest Speaker
at 2:00 pm sharp.

Museum Committee

Meets on 3rd Wednesday of month
at 10:00 am at museum
(everyone welcome)
Chairperson
Lorraine Holmes,
9743-2682

Walker Estates Committee

Meets as required
Chairperson
(vacant)

CITY OF CANADA BAY MUSEUM

1 Bent Street, Concord

Open Wed & Sat
10am to 4pm

Guest Speaker
on 1st Saturday of each
month at 2:00 pm

Phone: 9743-3034
during museum hours
or email
museum@canadabayheritage.asn.au

No.227

DECEMBER 2015

Bush Rangers at Homebush

Louisa Anne Meredith was born near Birmingham, England in 1812. After marrying in 1839, she and her husband Charles set sail for New South Wales.

She was a most remarkable woman. Despite a lack of formal education she became an accomplished writer, artist and botanist at a very early age. Her first book was published whilst still in England when she was just 20, *Poems* (1835), followed by *Romance of Nature*, or *The Flower Seasons Illustrated* (1836).

She kept a diary from an early age and used these as inspiration for her books.

Louise embraced her life in Australia wholeheartedly and became an active member of the community and quite a prolific writer and painter. She had over twenty books published in different genres on a variety of subjects. *Some of my Bush Friends in Tasmania, native flowers, berries and insects drawn from life* is considered Australia's first book



of verse, though is equally a lesson in nature studies, with detailed paintings of Tasmanian native insects and plants. beautifully presented with botanical detail.

Within four years of arriving in Australia she had written *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* (1844) and *My Home in Tasmania* (1850).

Not only do her books contain surprising detail of nature, but also of everyday life, giving us a glimpse into another time. Her discussion of special events, such as Christmas and local dances, show what life was like in Colonial Australia in the 18th Century. In *My Home in Tasmania* she wrote: "*Holly there was none, but the picture frames and sideboards were gaily and gracefully adorned with lovely native shrubs, and a wreathy crown or garland suspended from the drawing room ceiling; whilst plentiful bouquets of garden flowers made the house bright and fragrant. . . So that, although not the real proper, genuine, original Christmas to me, it was*

a very bright and pleasant parody upon it."

In *Over the Straits: A Visit to Victoria* (1861) she describes a dance. She writes "*The room was filled with men and women of the working class in their everyday dresses; men in fustian coats, blue and red, and serge shirts; the commonest cord or fustian trousers, trade-grimed or mud-bespattered. The women, young and older, in dowdy common gowns, shawls, bonnets, and walking shoes. These people, in the most orderly and correct manner imaginable, were dancing quadrilles, polkas, waltzes, etc., generally with great precision, sobriety, and good manners.*"

The following excerpts are taken from her *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales*.

Lapstone Hill

In the afternoon we encountered a storm of lightning, thunder and rain, just before reaching Lapstone Hill, and whilst we wound down it we enjoyed as perfect a picture of a landscape as ever eye beheld. How I wished, and wished in vain, for some rare artist to see it with us!

I have before endeavoured to describe Lapstone Hill: but if beautiful then, how much more so was it now, with tall and graceful gum trees loaded with white and honied blossoms.

Before us lay the green Emu Plains, the broad Nepean, and town of Penrith. One half of the sky was black as night, the other half of the Janus-faced heaven was blue, and bright with sunshine and over both ... beamed a beautiful rainbow.

The whole scene was so indelibly painted on my mind, I can fancy now that I see each individual rock and tree that helped to make up the beautiful whole.

Entry into Parramatta

We reached Parramatta about noon, and remained, in luxurious idleness, at the pretty inn I had so much liked on our previous visit, for a day or two.

We then embarked in a steamboat named the *Rapid* or the *Velocity* or some like promising

DIARY DATES

DEC 5 - Christmas Party

Meetings resume in February 2016

title, on the Parramatta river, and moved away from the wharf at a most funereal pace, which I for some time accounted for by supposing that other passengers were expected alongside, but at length found, to my dismay, that it was the best speed with which this renowned vessel could travel without fear of an explosion.

One advantage it gave us was a good and deliberate view of the scenery on either side; a moderately quick draughtsman might have drawn a panorama of it as we slowly puffed along.

Some of the cottages and villas on the banks were very prettily situated, with fine plantations, gardens and orange groves around them, and nice pleasure boats moored beside mossy stone steps leading to the river.

As we neared Sydney the banks became much more rocky and picturesque, skirted and crowned with pretty native shrubs, with here and there a fantastic group of crags, like a little fort or castle, perched among them.

A Sydney Christmas

We now made a few weeks' sojourn in Sydney. For some days before Christmas, in our drives near the town, we used to meet numbers of persons carrying bundles of a beautiful native shrub, to decorate the houses, in the same manner that we use holly and evergreens at home.

Carts heaped up with the green blossomed boughs came noddingly along, with children running beside them, decked out with sprays and garlands, laughing and shouting in proper Christmas jollity.

I like to see this attempt at the perpetuation of some of our ancient homely poetry of life ... It seemed like a good and healthy memory of *home*; and I doubt not the decked out windows and bouquet-filled chimney in many a tradesman's house gave a more home-like flavour to his beef or turkey, and aided in the remembrance of old days and old friends alike.

Bushrangers

In January 1840 we removed to "Homebush", an estate within eleven miles of Sydney, on the Parramatta river, where we proposed residing for a year or two.

During nearly the whole time of our residence here the public road near us was infested by a gang of bushrangers, or rather footpads, who committed many robberies on persons travelling past; but although we and our servants constantly traversed the dreaded road, we were never mo-

lest. One day we met the clergyman of Cook's River, who, on his way to dine with the Governor at Parramatta, had been stopped by three of the party, who took his money and a valuable watch.

They one day took from a poor woman even her wedding ring, and for several months continued the same practices on this, the most frequented public road near Sydney.

The Mounted Police

In the case of the more formidable gangs of bushrangers, who by their outrages often become the terror of a wide rural district, the "mounted police" is an excellent and efficient force.

It consists of picked and well-paid volunteers from the regiments in the Colony, and the officers are generally brave and intelligent young men, who, when they look for a bushranger, generally find him.

During our stay at Bathurst, a party of the mounted police went in search of a very daring gang of bushrangers, or, as they are sometimes called "bolters". After some search, the officer in command, Lieut. Hilliard, divided his force, taking one route himself, accompanied by a single trooper, and sent the rest in the opposite direction.

He had not gone far before he found the gang of seven desperadoes comfortably bivouacking, with eleven stand of arms, loaded, beside them; and by a sudden and gallant attack, secured them all, and brought them into Bathurst; his prowess being duly appreciated by the settlers, who presented him with a valuable token of their gratitude.

Loiusa next describes some of the less welcome wildlife to be found on the Homebush estate. Note that when Louisa mentions a "Mr Meredith" firing at the dingoes, she is referring to her own husband Charles—naming customs were a little more formal in the 1840s!

Dingoes

Another unpleasant class of neighbours were the native dogs or dingoes, evidently a species of wolf, or perhaps the connecting link between the wolf and dog.

These creatures were very numerous around us, and their howling or yelling at night in the neighbouring forests had a most dismal and unearthly kind of tone.

They are more the figure of a Scotch colly, or sheep-dog, than any other I can think of as a comparison, but considerably larger, taller, and more gaunt-looking, with shaggy, wiry hair, and often of a sandy colour.

Their appearance is altogether wolfish, and the expression of the head especially so, nor do their ferocious habits by any means weaken the likeness.

We had a number of calves, which, for greater safety from these savage animals, were kept at night in one of the old orchards adjoining the house, but several of the poor little ones fell victim to the dingoes.

Shortly after our arrival at our new residence, we were one night alarmed by a fearful outcry among the calves and Mr Meredith, who instantly divined the cause, got up, and found several dingoes dragging along one of the youngest of the herd; as they ran away he fired, but the night being thickly dark, the brutes escaped.

The cries of terror among the poor calves had brought all the cows to the spot, and the indescribable moaning and bellowing they continued until morning showed their instinctive knowledge of the danger.

The poor wounded calf was so much injured that it died the following day, and its unhappy mother, after watching and comforting it as long as life remained, never ceased her cries and moans till she entirely lost her voice from hoarseness: I have rarely seen anything more distressing than the poor animal's misery; and to prevent such an occurrence again, the youngest calves were always locked in the stable at night.

Finding that our veal was not to be obtained, a party of dingoes made an onslaught on our pork, and very early one morning carried off a nice fat pig, nearly full grown.

Luckily pigs are not often disposed to be silent martyrs, and the one in question made so resolute a protest against the abduction, that the noise reached Mr Meredith, who immediately gave chase, and soon met the main body of porkers trotting home at a most unwonted [*unusual*] speed, whilst the voice of woe continued its wail in the distance.

On coming to the spot, he found two dingoes dragging off the pig by the hind legs towards a thick scrub; he fired, wounding one, when both released their victim and made off, the poor pig trotting home, telling a long and emphatic story of its wrongs and sufferings, from which it eventually recovered.

In about two hours after this, a lame white dingo, the same which had been so lately shot at, boldly chased my two pet goats into the veranda!

Australian Pathways: Spring 1998

(to be continued)

Traffic Control Comes to Sydney

As the number of the vehicles in the city increased there were considerable worries about safety and the number of accidents. The Transport Commission decided to experiment with 'electromatic' signals for automatically controlling the traffic. In 1921 regulations were passed which required motorists to signal their intention to stop or turn.

The world's first traffic lights began operating on August 5, 1914 at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 105th Street in Cleveland, Ohio

Australia's first traffic lights were installed in Melbourne at the intersection of Collins and Swanston Streets in 1928.

New South Wales followed soon after. On 13th October 1933, at precisely 11:00 am the first traffic lights in NSW began operating, installed at the intersection of Market and Kent Streets, Sydney. The Minister for Transport, Colonel M. Bruxner, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Chaffey and the Commissioner for Road Transport, Mr. S.A. Maddocks were present to see the device put into operation.

This crossing at Kent and Market streets was the main thoroughfare for a mix of traffic, including heavily laden horse-drawn carts travelling between Pyrmont and Darling Harbour wharves and the central business district.

The first sets of lights were more ornate and less statuesque than those of today. The traffic light controller box was ornamental and painted silver and the light posts were horizontally striped black. Four posts, each carrying three sets of three-coloured lights, were erected at the street corners, and broken "stop" lines painted in yellow on the roadway.

Signal changes were effected through

special "detectors fitted in the road surface. These registered the passage, speed and direction of every vehicle passing over them, and the appropriate light signals were shown automatically, being exactly adjusted to the traffic flow at the moment.

Motorists took to the innovation surprisingly quickly and a number of policemen who had been detailed to help educate motorists in the system had little to do. The lights worked automatically and streams of traffic halted or moved on rapidly in compliance to the red and green lights. Between each movement of traffic, the lights were amber, indicating a breathing-spell for the clearing of traffic from the intersection.

There were occasional incidents which temporarily marred the evenness of the system's working. An elderly lady, who had several children in the back of her motor car, stopped in the middle of the street and halted traffic for some minutes while the operation of the lights

was explained to her.

A number of men, evidently pleased to see that the traffic policeman was missing from his accustomed spot, drove gaily across the intersection in defiance of the red lights.

The Superintendent of Traffic, Superintendent Carter, said that motorists could not be expected to fall in with the system at once, but the result of the first day's working was satisfactory. He did not believe that traffic policemen would no longer be needed because constables would still be necessary to detect offenders against traffic regulations.

It was another four years before more traffic lights were installed. Outside Sydney the first sets of traffic lights were installed at Tudor and Beaumont streets at Hamilton in Newcastle in 1940, at the intersection of Crown and Keira streets in Wollongong in 1955 and in Lochinvar near Maitland and Tamworth in 1966.



Pedestrians crossing at Sydney's first electric traffic signal.

'Tis the Season to Jingle and Mingle

and where better to do it than at our

Christmas Afternoon Tea

on Saturday, 5th December, 2015 at 2:00 pm

at our Museum

A small contribution towards catering would be appreciated - BYO liquid refreshments

Obituary - Mr. Thomas Walker

After a brief illness, the abovenamed gentleman died yesterday at his residence Yaralla, Concord.

The deceased was a very old colonist, and was well known to a large section of the community. He was born in Scotland, and came out to Sydney about the year 1822.

Upon his arrival he entered into the employment of Messrs. William Walker and Co., of Battery Point, who carried on the business of general merchants. The senior partner in the firm was his uncle. He remained in the employ of the firm for a considerable time, and displayed marked business ability.

On the retirement of the partners the business was transferred to him and a cousin. The enterprise, however, did not afford sufficient scope for Mr. Walker's commercial talent, and he devoted himself to higher speculative pursuits.

By the time he reached middle age Mr. Walker had accumulated a very large fortune. Being a man of great energy, he took a prominent part in the management of a number of the companies that came into existence a generation ago. For many years he was a director of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company. It is understood that he was one of the founders of the Bank of New South Wales; at any rate, he took a prominent part in its management. Almost from the time it was established, and for many years preceding his death, he filled the position of its president.

By degrees Mr. Walker withdrew, for various reasons, from the directorate of the financial institutions with which he was connected, with the exception of the Bank of New South Wales. He had a peculiar pride in that institution, because it was the first bank established in Australia that attained proportions which made it worthy to be compared with the great monetary institutions of England and America, and in occupying the position of president one of his highest ambitions was realised.

Like many of the best men in the community, Mr. Walker had a constitutional dislike for active politics, but he took an interest in political topics, and when occasion required, he proved that he could discuss them with great ability. He wrote a number of letters and pamphlets on the land question when it was before the country in connection with the present Act, and it was generally acknowledged that they displayed considerable intellectual vigour, and more than ordinary knowledge of

the subject. Mr. Walker was in favour of the system of agricultural areas, and he never wavered from the conviction that in sanctioning free selection all over the country the State did irreparable injury to the pastoral industry.

If Mr. Walker had large means, it has to be said also that he used his money wisely. He delighted in acts of beneficence, and during his lifetime gave away many thousands of pounds for the relief of the suffering and in aid of various charitable enterprises. To some extent he acted upon John Wesley's famous rule, "Make all you can; save all you can; give all you can."

It is well known to many people that Mr. Walker kept an agent constantly employed in searching out, inquiring into, and relieving cases of distress. The amount of money he dispensed in this manner was considerable. Often he himself was his own almoner, and he took pleasure in visiting the numerous persons whom he relieved. His most munificent act of charity was performed in April 1882, just before his departure on a short trip to the old country. He placed at that time a cheque for £10,000 in the hands of his friends Mr. Thomas Buckland and Mr. Shepherd Smith, to be distributed by them amongst certain benevolent institutions. The following is an extract from the letter which he wrote to them on the occasion :—

"On the eve of saying - for a short time only, I hope - good-bye to the colony in which I have so long been a resident - my object in leaving being to regain good health, impaired by the incessant overwork to which I have of late been subjected - I desire to evince my sympathy with those of my less fortunate fellow-colonists, young and old, who are afflicted in diverse ways by the ills and evils that beset civilised humanity, by distributing a sum of money amongst those institutions established among us with a view to care for and relieve such sufferers. I most willingly would have personally made the distribution, but requisite preparations for my departure have so entirely engrossed my time that I have not been able to find space in which I could accomplish the pleasing, though somewhat onerous, task." The duty was wisely performed by the gentlemen selected by Mr. Walker, and the money was distributed amongst 20 charitable institutions, in sums varying from £100 to £800.

Mr. Walker's family, in this colony, consists of a daughter and a sister. Mr. Walker's wife died a long time ago. The deceased gentleman was an ardent

believer in the principles of Christianity, and recognised the obligation which the Founder of the system imposed on believers to do good to all men according as they had opportunity.

It is said of him by a gentleman who knew him for half a century that he never spoke evil of any man. Mr. Walker was not prominent in the sense in which that term is usually understood; but he lived a pure life, and relieved much misery and suffering, and in doing that he established a claim to be always regarded as one of the worthiest of our citizens.

(SMH: 3rd Sept, 1885 [Trove Newspapers])

My Mean Mother

I had the meanest mother in the world. While other kids had lollies for breakfast, I had to eat cereal, egg and toast. While other kids had cans of drink and lollies for lunch, I had to have a sandwich. As you can guess my dinner was not only different from other kids - I had to eat it at a table and not in front of the television.

My mother also insisted in knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were on a chain gang or something. She had to know who our friends were, where we were going, and she even told us what time we had to be home.

I am ashamed to admit it, but my mother had the nerve to break child labour laws. She made us wash the dishes, make our beds and even learn to cook. That woman must have stayed awake at nights, just thinking up things for us kids to do.

By the time we were teenagers our whole life became even more unbearable. Our old-fashioned mother refused to let us date before we were 15, and insisted that boys had to come to the door to collect girls from our family, instead of tooting the car horn for them to come running.

She really raised a bunch of squares. None of us kids was ever arrested for shoplifting or busted for dope.

And who do we thank for this? You're right - our mean mother. Every day we hear cries from both our people and our politicians about what our country really needs.

What our country really needs is . . . more mothers like mine.

History is strange: most days people step on it, drive by it - and most often ignore it. Yet history is there for all to see.