

June 2021 - Bulletin No 34

Welcome to the NDHS monthly bulletin which will keep you posted on what's happening during the month.

NDHS Annual Lunch Saturday June 19th with guest speaker Christine Yeats



Christine Yeats

The Society will welcome Christine Yeats, BA, a Past President of the RAHS, who will give a Powerpoint presentation on the topic "Tales from the First Fleet." She will be our guest speaker at the NDHS's Annual Lunch on Saturday 19th June at O'Donoghues Irish Pub.

Christine's area of interest is Australian history, in particular colonial history. She has contributed to a wide range of publications; spoken at national and international conferences and presented talks and workshops for local and family history groups across NSW.

I am sure Christine will provide a most interesting and fascinating talk, not one to be missed.

Payment must be made before Monday 7th June 2021

Exhibition Pagoda at Gang Gang Gallery Lithgow

29 April to 20 June 2021

This Exhibition is a premier event in the 2021 Australian Heritage Festival.

The Exhibition Pagoda at the Gang Gang gallery in Lithgow provides a focus on the Western Blue Mountains iconic Pagoda Country – the 'Pagoda Journey Forum' is being held at the Gallery as part of this exhibition.

The forum will provide an opportunity to hear of the treasures tucked away in the country earmarked for protection under the Destination Pagodas proposal. It will provide insight into the unique landscape, the amazing range of flora within it, the efforts that have been made to protect it to date and the potential for the regional economy that the Destination Pagodas proposal provides.



Pantone Crown at Sunset



*Destination Pagoda.
Photo by Ian Brown.*

Grim Sydney: Belmore (Carters') Barracks

by
Alexander and John Staats

Obscured by the refined colonial sandstone edifices of a prosperous bygone era, and buried beneath the sterile concrete, steel and glass of modernity, are the bleak echoes of Sydney's convict past. In this first of a series of articles, we explore sites of suffering and torment that belong to Sydney city's grim convict heritage.

Brickfield Hill and Carters

Two hundred years ago, the area around modern day Hay Street was aptly named Brickfield Hill. It was here that the tens of thousands of bricks and tiles were kiln-fired and thence dragged into Sydney Town on convict-yoked brick carts. It was dirty, backbreaking work, and dangerous too in wet weather when that (then steep)



*Carters' Barracks, 1842, Mitchell Library [PX*D 123, 4b]]*

end of George Street became a treacherous slippery quagmire down which convicts navigated each tonne-laden brick cart, five times a day.

During Macquarie's time, the slab huts of the brick carters at Brickhill made way for a purpose-built convict barracks to house the convict work gangs that hauled locally made bricks as well as the food carts that brought produce to Sydney from farms at Parramatta. Located on the east side of Pitt Street near present-day Eddy Avenue, the Carters' Barracks housed 200 convicts as well as a stable for government horses. The importance of

the barracks grew after 1829 when Governor Darling ordered that, wherever practicable, convict labour should replace the use of bullocks in government carting operations. Attached to the site was also a 'boys barracks' that accommodated 100 convict boys and seems to have provided some form of elementary technical education.

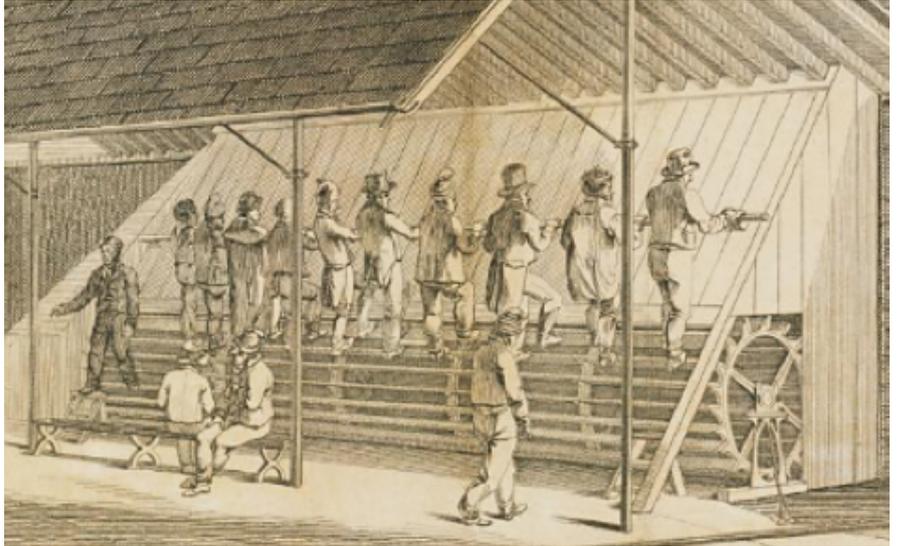
The Treadmill

In keeping with the post-Macquarie era zeal to use penal servitude and corporal punishment as a tool for correcting the 'tarnished morals' of the convict classes, in 1823 the Barracks received a novel addition - treadmills. The treadmill was a productive, but exceedingly cruel, machine of punishment. Based on the design at Brixton Prison in London, two were installed at the Barracks - the larger one powered by 36 men, the smaller by 20.

The contraption was described by a French visitor to Sydney, Hyacinthe de Bougainville, in 1825:

It is a large wheel whose horizontal blades are wide enough to allow a certain number of men to position themselves, each next to the other, on the outside... Holding on to a wooden crossbar that is separate from the wheel and attached at the height of the chin, they climb without stopping from one blade to the next... this labour continues for forty minutes without a break; the men rest for twenty minutes, then they start up again, and so on, for the whole day...

Bougainville's description fails to capture the agony of the treadmill. An 1829 investigative commission into the Sydney treadmill calculated that the treadwheel performed a complete revolution every 30 seconds and each man needed to tread the wheel (in leg irons) until it performed 72 revolutions. This equated to 1344 steps in 'vertical ascent' before a break. Convicts trod the wheel from sunrise to sunset, the equivalent of a daily uphill climb of 40 kilometres in winter, and 45 kilometres in summer.



The treadmill was considered an exacting punishment - failure to keep up, and in step, resulted in legs being mutilated in the blades. Convicts in heavier chains were most at risk of falling behind and all on the treadmill needed careful monitoring for heat stroke and the 'wasting' caused by the relentless exertion of turning the blades of the mill.

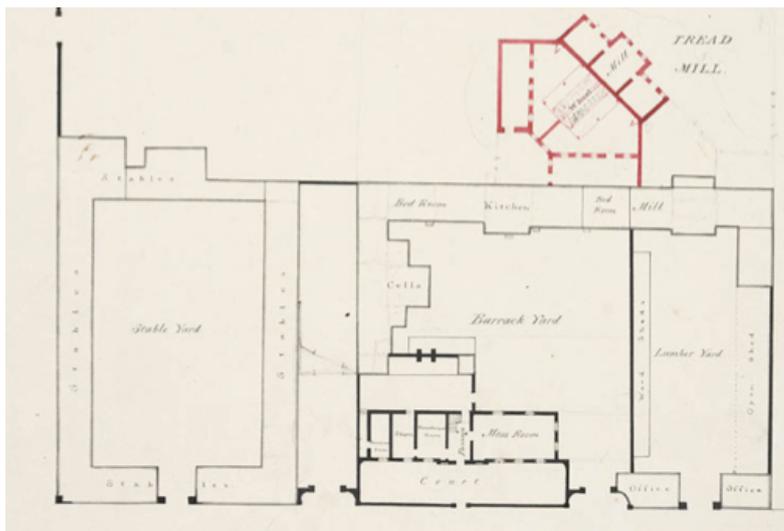
The Brixton Convict treadmill, illustration in 'The Gentleman's Magazine', 1822, Vol 92, Part 2 [pp 8 - 9]. Mitchell Library

The treadmill won for itself nicknames that belie the torment it inflicted; it was called 'the everlasting staircase' and the 'cockchafer' after the manner it left the genitals raw when rough prison cloth abraded the groin with each upward step taken.

The 1829 report praised the treadmill - not because it was more efficient than wind or watermills, but because it served a double purpose; it ground the corn that fed the convicts and acted as a peerless punishment and a deterrent to crime.

Repurposing and Demolition

The Carters' Barracks evolved with changing Sydney. Between 1835 and 1843 it served as a debtor's prison and, after the closure of the Brickhill brickworks and the end of convict transportation to NSW in the 1840s, part of the site was used as a training facility for women and later as a women's refuge run by the sisters of the Good Shepherd. Its final use was the (Belmore Mounted) Police Barracks before being demolished to make way for Central Railway Station at the start of the 20th century.



The Carters' Barracks and the dreadful Sydney treadmill have vanished. But listen carefully; in the cries and footfalls of a bustling Central Station, and in the rattle and creaks of approaching trains, you may still hear the thud, clank and grind of the treadmill's wheels and moans echoing from a past that lingers yet beneath the platforms.

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Floor plan of the Carter's Barracks - treadmill in red - State Library of New South Wales (C225,p22)

HISTORY FOR COOL KIDS

The Emu War

Australia cannot lay claim to any great empires or epic conquests, but we do have one distinction that no other nation on Earth can boast: we are the only country in history to lose a War to birds.

In 1932, the farmers of Western Australia, fed up with the 20,000 Emus that kept dropping in to their farms to eat all their crops, went to Defence Minister Sir George Pearce to demand he take action to safeguard the precious wheat of the Western Australian Campion region.

Pearce, a man who knew the value of a show of strength, decided that what the Emus needed was a hefty dose of good old-fashioned military might.

And so Major Meredith of the Royal Australian Artillery was sent, along with two soldiers, two Lewis guns, and 10,000 bullets, into the scrubland to show the Emus just who was the more highly-evolved species.

Almost immediately the expedition ran into trouble. The soldiers attempted to herd the Emus into a suitable place in which to mow them down on mass, but the birds, well-trained in guerrilla tactics, continually split into small groups and ran off in different directions, making it damnably difficult for the guns to draw a bead on them. Also, the guns jammed.

Also, when the guns worked, and when an Emu stood still long enough to shoot at, they proved resistant to bullets to an unsettling degree. Meredith wrote:

"If we had a military division with the bullet-carrying capacity of these birds it would face any army in the world. They can face machine guns with the invulnerability of tanks."

The soldiers retreated, weary and sick of the sight of feathers. Meredith's official report noted, optimistically, that his men had suffered no casualties. The Emus' report noted that humans were slow-moving and stupid.

The House of Representatives debated the matter and questions were asked of the Minister regarding whether medals were to be awarded for survivors of the campaign.

The question of why, blessed as we are with a native animal that is essentially a cross between an armoured car and a velociraptor, our military has not taken advantage by training Emus for combat duty in the ADF, remains unanswered to this day.

Reference: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-07/the-5-funniest-moments-in-australian-history/7532020?nw=0>

Reference: *Error Australis* by Ben Pobjie

April meeting guest speaker

Dr Stephen Gapps gave the members an interesting account of conflict between the newly established settlers and the Aborigines around the areas of Windsor, Penrith, the Blue Mountains and Picton.

He told us that military expeditions were sent to protect the settlers on their farms from invading Aborigines.

This invasion by the Aborigines was meant to either scare the settlers off what they considered their land and to eventually leave or steal their crops.

It was a very enlightening afternoon as Dr Gapps gave us an understanding of why the conflicts between the settlers and the Aborigines arose.

Make our historical society part of your legacy in your Will

In doing so, you can make our local heritage part of your Legacy to your community and family.

You will be supporting the nurturing and development of the society for future generations of people who share your respect for our members and their work.

You may simply leave an untied bequest to the society to maintain its diverse activities, or you may specify a purpose, such as 'for the development and preservation of the collection in all its forms'.

You may also indicate how you would like your name and contribution to be remembered.

There is no obligation to notify the society that you are leaving a gift in your Will.

The "in" thing is the inn thing!

Reproduced from the Society's August 1973 Newsletter

This was fully in evidence by the strong support given by members of the Society who attended the working bee held at the Inn on August 5.

The work force that day included Mr Ray Piper, Mrs Jennie Matthews, Mrs J. Steege, Mrs J. Stephens, Mrs K. Cameron, Mrs B. Niccol, Mrs I. Walsh, Mr Stuart Williams and Miss J. Jones. Mrs Ridgeway, Mrs Tenant and Miss M. Pike attended the Committee meeting held during the afternoon.

It was a day of hard back-breaking work as always associated with "digs" where one lifts and sifts through tons of soil, but the sore muscles and broken backs were nearly forgotten in the thrill of a find, whether it was an unidentifiable object, a human tooth or a clearly defined early coin.

The sandstone room on the north-western corner was the scene of a thorough search and the remaining floor timbers were removed on finding a few colonies of white ants harbouring beneath the sandstone supporting the bearers. A fireplace was unearthed on the inner wall.

On the western wall area, down to a depth of about eight inches, we obtained numerous pins (slightly longer than those generally used today but equally as sharp), many buttons of white glass and hand-cut pearl shell with 2, 3 and 4 holes, and decorative buttons of jet, glass and inlay material; clay, glazed and glass marbles, coins pottery shards, clay pipes, bones and slate pencils.

Some metal buttons are interesting, being stamped "Our Own Make", (Three Stars) Fast Shank, Best Solid Eyelet, A. Hordern & Sons, Sydney, New South Wales Railways, and VR insignia with crown.

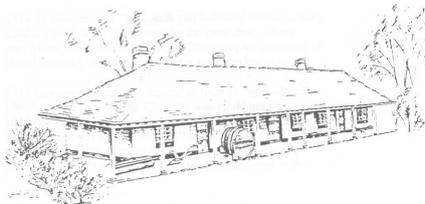
Every find creates a lot of interest but among some of the special finds at this working bee can be listed a crochet hook hand-carved from bone, George III coins, a William IV sixpence and a finely glazed china doll's head measuring two inches in height.

Mr Stuart Williams, making the most of the last half hour of daylight, unearthed an 1806 coin in good condition.

This was a fitting end to a successful day's work.

*The Nepean District Historical Society
invites you to their*

Annual Lunch



*Saturday 19th June 2021 at 11.30
for 12noon*

*O'Donoghue's Irish Pub
Cmn. Old Bathurst Road and
Great Western Highway
Emu Plains*

*Guest speaker is Christine Yeats
a Past President of the RAHS
Her presentation will be
'Tales from the First Fleet'*

*To book call the inn on 4735 4394 on opening days
or email info@armsofaustraliainn.org.au
Cost \$45.00 per person
RSVP: by June 7th 2021*

Bank details for a direct deposit are: Account Name - NDHS BSB - 032 271 Account Number - 683 727
By cheque: NDHS Po box 441 Penrith NSW 2751 Cash On any Wednesday between 10am to 12pm at the Museum

Melodies From The Past

Join **The Friends of Penrith Regional Gallery**, Home of the Lewers Bequest, for a piano recital featuring Lily Cowen followed by light refreshments.

When Sunday 27th June, 2021

Where Ancher House, Penrith Regional Gallery
86 River Road Emu Plains 2750

Time 2.00 pm

Cost \$15.00 per person

Bookings are essential

Limited seats are available so early booking is recommended.

Payment on the day by **cash only**.

Parking is limited so please allow adequate time to find parking.

Bookings to
Jennifer Hotop 47351654 or
prgalleryfriends@gmail.com



Community Groups



If you have not been down to the museum when the Society has hosted a community group for a morning tea and tour the tables that are laid out for our Guests are truly glorious.

These tables are set by Volunteers under the watchful eye of our Business Manager, Jenny Hotop

Jenny has sourced and also handmade the tablecloths and they certainly look stunning under the Awning in the brilliant sunshine.

Thank you Jenny for your hard work as it certainly adds to the ambiance to the morning tea provided.

'History walks' programme 2021

All on Saturdays. Walks led by Doug Knowles and Greg Nowland.

EASY gradients. Firm underfoot. 1 1/2 hours average.

MEDIUM. Short steep sections, some rough sections. 2 hours average.

HARD. Steep, rough, 4 to 5 kilometres. 3 hours plus average.

June 5 1.30 pm "Lapstone Construction Railway 1910-1913":

EASY and East Portal of Lapstone Hill Tunnel (1892).

June 26 9.00 am "Bull's Creek Dam":

HARD Railway water supply. Stone dam, pump site and pipeline relics.

Adults: \$10.00 Accompanied Children under 16yrs: free. Bookings are essential: Phone Doug on 4751 3275

(Please allow the phone to ring longer than usual) for details re: meeting place, time and grade of walk.

Good walking shoes are essential. Please bring a hat and drinking water. (No dogs please.)

Bad weather on the day: Excessive wind or rain could cause cancellation due to hazardous conditions.

For a copy of the full program please see Trish Montgomery.

June General Monthly Meeting Saturday 26 June at 1.pm

Register Your Contact Details

Masks are discretionary

Please Bring a Plate - Afternoon Tea is **BACK!**

Be Cautious

Social Distance

Stay Safe

U3A Movies at the School of the Arts

7.30pm

Saturday 12th June 7:30pm

Just Mercy

Saturday 26th June 7:30pm

The Dry

What's on at the Inn

Monday 14th June

Queens Birthday

(Arms of Australia Inn Closed)

Wednesday 16th June

355 Committee Meeting

Saturday 19th June

Annual Lunch @ O'Donoghues

Sunday 20th June

PLANT SALE

Saturday 26th June

NDHS Meeting

On a lighter note

The Optimist and the Pessimist

A family had twin boys whose only resemblance to each other was their looks.

Opposite in every way, one was an eternal optimist, the other a doom and gloom pessimist. Just to see what would happen, on Christmas Day their father loaded the pessimist's room with every imaginable toy and game.

The optimist's room he loaded with horse manure.

That night the father passed by the pessimist's room and found him sitting amid his new gifts crying bitterly.

"Why are you crying?" the father asked.

"Because my friends will be jealous, I'll have to read all these instructions before I can do anything with this stuff, I'll constantly need batteries, and my toys will eventually get broken" answered the pessimist twin.

Passing the optimist twin's room, the father found him dancing for joy in the pile of manure. "What are

you so happy about?" he asked.

To which his optimist twin replied, "There's got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

Quote

Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

Oliver Goldsmith (poet)

Riddle

What has a neck but no head?

Answer to Last Month's Riddle
Anteater

Contacts

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Vice President	Ken Wright	0407 473 530
Secretary/Editor	Trish Montgomery	0402 086 088
Treasurer/Public Officer	Harry May	02 4732 1520
Museum Manager	Ted Nowak	0451 035 185
Business Manager	Jenny Hotop	02 4735 1654
Site Manager	Anthony Grainge	02 4731 2303
Ordinary Committee Member	Richard Nutt	0407 014 157
Lantern Tours	Craig Werner	0417 271 328
	or email:	craigj10@bigpond.com
Heritage Advisory Rep.	Beth Moore	02 4735 1734
Speakers	Richard Nutt	0407 014 157
Books, Photography	Anthony Grainge	02 4731 2303

Please note that the inn alarm is now on.

If you can't make your duty day, please change with somebody who can.

Please remember to sign in the diary in the meeting room, and write any information in the diary. pertinent to your time on duty.

Birthday Wishes to the following members

Elsa, Joyce, Paul Ryan, Marie

Raffle Prizes

The society always needs raffle prizes, so if you can help in providing some, please take them to the inn.

Meetings

The NDHS meets on the 4th Saturday of each month with a guest speaker at 1pm on the premises, Cnr. of Great Western Highway & Gardenia St, Emu Plains.

Museum Opening Hours

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 9am to 2pm
Sunday by Appointment.

Disclaimer: Views and opinions expressed in articles in this Bulletin are those of the contributor and not the views of the Nepean District Historical Society.

Contributions for the next Bulletin to - trishmontgomery1970@gmail.com
