

# THE CAMDEN VALLEY VOICE

Volume 23: Issue 4

May 2017

The Camden Area Family History Society Inc.

P.O. Box 679. Camden. NSW. 2570

Web: [www.cafhs.org.au](http://www.cafhs.org.au)

Editor. Warren Sims

E-mail: [cafhs2570@gmail.com](mailto:cafhs2570@gmail.com)

## ***From the Editor***

Next month I need to publish the June 2017 edition of Camden Calling Journal and while I have received some contributions, any further contributions will be gratefully received. This month's speaker Anne Matthews certainly sounds like she will be very interesting, speaking on her experience working on a list of some 800 women who went through the Parramatta Female Factory, which is currently very much in the news with the proposed changes to be made in the Parramatta Heritage Precinct.

Any and all contributions for both the Camden Calling due in June or our own monthly newsletter, The Valley Voice, but I would continue to ask for any items you may have to contribute or ideas that you may think appropriate for either you can contact me directly at any time on my mobile **0438 012 013** or email:

[w.sims53@gmail.com](mailto:w.sims53@gmail.com).

## **Camden Area Family History Society Inc.**

**Research Room, Library/Museum Complex, John St. Camden**

The research room is currently open

**Thursday 10:00am to 3:00pm**

**Friday 10:00am to 3:00pm**

**Saturday 9:30am to 12:00 noon**

**There is a charge of \$10.00 per session for non-members to use our resources,**

There is a volunteer on duty whenever the research room is open. They are only too happy to assist with any inquires.

**If you would like to volunteer to assist in the research room please contact the Library Co-ordinator Tony Jackson on 4655 1098 letting him know when you are available.**



*Happy Birthday  
To the following members  
for May 2017*

**Naomi Davies      Leone Flay  
Michael McEwan    Cathey Shepherd  
Warren Sims      Brian Stratton**



## MEETINGS

Our meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month (except January) at 7:30pm in the Meeting Room of the Library/Museum Complex, John St. Camden.

To help cover the cost of supper we ask for a gold coin donation.

*Visitors most welcome.*

## MEMBERSHIP

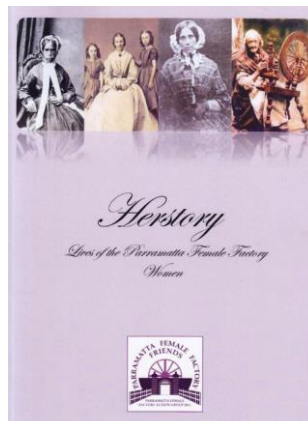
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

Normal	Pensioners/Concession
Single \$30	Single \$25
Couple \$35	Couple \$30

## CAMDEN AREA FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY General Meeting

**The Speaker at This month's meeting will be Anne Matthews**

We will be having Anne Matthews at our May meeting, as part of the National Trust Heritage Festival. Anne has been a volunteer at the Parramatta Heritage Centre and involved with working on a list of 800 women who went through the Parramatta Female Factory. Find out about the work of the Parramatta Female Factory Friends who have fought to have the buildings heritage listed and about the women who went through the institution since its opening in 1804.





Supper will be provided at the meeting this month by Diana Rofe and Kay Ryan again. Remember the \$2 donation for supper goes to assist in providing this supper each month.

*"Generations pass like leaves fall from our family tree. Each season new life blossoms and grows benefiting from the strength and experience of those who went before." - Heidi Swapp*

**As I was growing up in Western Sydney one of the most memorable nights of the year took place this month each year:**

## Night of Nights

After my initial near-disaster, I came to wonderful terms with Crackernight. It was cold and



beautiful. For once my father was letting me play with fire. From cracker to cracker, you never quite knew what you'd get. I revelled in the golden glow of the Roman candles, the showers of sparks and the 'Awwwhhhs', willing it to go on for ever. I think the most magical recurring moment of the whole experience was when, the fuse having been lit, it started to hiss. That tantalising moment just before the boom. I felt the exquisite thrill of cracker after cracker, despite every display bringing the box one closer to empty, to the commencement of the 364-day

wait until next time. Till the end, there seemed always another cracker left, another brilliant, fiery bonus.

But then it was over to Steve's house where Crackernight was a great big street party! All the families up and down his street had gathered in someone's front yard and took it in turn to let their crackers off, everybody sharing the thrill of everybody else's fireworks. Needless to say, with many bags of them in one place, the display took blissful hours. Hard to pick a favourite – I had many – perhaps the coloured ball-shooters. These were thin cardboard tubes about twenty inches long which shot out multicoloured fiery balls one after the other. Red! Green! Blue! Purple! Red! Green! Blue! Purple! I saw more of those splendid things go off on that one night than in all my future Crackernights put together. For sheer beauty, though, it was the Roman candles, and their shimmering gold.



so

so

That spellbinding brightness! Those colours out of the loveliest dream.



May 24 was the traditional night to celebrate the British Empire with a bonfire and fireworks.

Australian children enthusiastically prepared for the big night for weeks before hand by dragging branches from near and far to build the mound. On the night before one particular 'cracker night' the children were awakened to the sound of burning timber. Someone had lit the mound and the children were very disappointed. A local man offered his truck to take the children into bushland and load up with dry branches. Eagerly the children rebuilt the mound so the celebration could be held that night and on time.



Popular fireworks were Catherine wheels, sparklers, Mount Vesuvius, double bungers, Tom Thumbs, Roman candles, throw downs, and sky rockets. The Catherine wheels had to be nailed onto a vertical post and when ignited spun rapidly, sending out a brilliant shower of fiery sparks. Sparklers were considered the more gentle fireworks, giving off star-like sparks when lit. Mount Vesuvius was cone shaped and released a variety of coloured balls through the top once the touch paper was ignited. Loud explosions heralded the lighting of double bungers and throw downs hitting the ground. Spectacular displays in the sky were guaranteed when fuses were set on fire on the sky rockets - a brief glow at the base then a swift whoosh as the solid fuel burnt inside, lifting the rocket a hundred feet into the air to burst in a ball of coloured flame.

The mothers supported their children's efforts by providing cakes and hot chocolate drinks whilst the huge bonfire burnt sending flames and sparks high into the sky in celebration of Empire.

## Mrs Edith Fitzpatrick recalls Cracker Night in the early twentieth century near Bringelly, interviewed in 1986

Mrs Edith Fitzpatrick was born in 1899. She was interviewed in 1986 for the 'Looking Back at Liverpool: An Oral History of the Liverpool Region 1900 to 1960' project. Here she recalls Cracker Night (now outlawed) in the very early twentieth century at her family's remote home near Bringelly.

EDITH: We always had a bonfire and the bigger boys used to sometimes play up, they'd light our fire before it was time. But we used to have good fun. Different families around used to come, bring their crackers and we'd have a real good Cracker Night. There was nothing rough about it in those days, the boys, there was no throwing crackers at children like they do today. No. It was just good fun. There was none of that vandalism that there is today.

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember some of the names of the people who came?

EDITH: Oh yes, the Brown family, Anderson and the Gillows. They were all our neighbours. But of course they're all gone now. There's none of them, I don't think there is any of them out there now. Because that's a long time ago, 1900 - 1920

Contributed by [Liverpool City Library](#) [BRN: 56872] (Excerpt from interview with Mrs Edith Fitzpatrick from 'Looking back at Liverpool : an oral history of the Liverpool region 1900-1960' conducted in 1986 by Liverpool City Council, editor and project co-ordinator Catherine Johnson ; researchers Angela Imbrosciano, Verica Miosavijevic, Kathle





## Empire Day

By [Ben Johnson](#) | [Comments](#)



The very idea of a day that would ...*“remind children that they formed part of the British Empire, and that they might think with others in lands across the sea, what it meant to be sons and daughters of such a glorious Empire.”*, and that *“The strength of the Empire depended upon them, and they must never forget it.”*, had been considered as early as 1897. The image of a motherly [Queen Victoria](#), Empress of India, as its paramount ruler would be shared by an Empire spanning almost a quarter of the entire globe.

However it was not until after the death of Queen Victoria, who died on 22 January 1901, that Empire Day was first celebrated. The first 'Empire Day' took place on 24th May 1902, the Queen's birthday. Although not officially recognised as an annual event until 1916, many schools across the British Empire were celebrating it before then. One New Zealand school journal from 1910 records: *“This is the ‘Union Jack’; and now that Empire Day has come round once more, you will hear its history. It is really a coloured picture from a history-book, telling of things that happened, long before you were born”*.





Each Empire Day, millions of school children from all walks of life across the length and breadth of the British Empire would typically salute the [union flag](#) and sing patriotic songs like *Jerusalem* and *God Save the Queen*. They would hear inspirational speeches and listen to tales of 'daring do' from across the Empire, stories that included such heroes as Clive of India, Wolfe of Québec and 'Chinese Gordon' of Khartoum. But of course the real highlight of the day for the children was that they were let of school early in order to take part in the thousands of marches, maypole dances, concerts and parties that celebrated the event.

In Britain an Empire Movement was formed, with its goal in the words of its Irish founder Lord Meath, "to promote the systematic training of children in all virtues which conduce to the creation of good citizens." Those virtues were also clearly spelled out by the watchwords of the Empire Movement "Responsibility, Sympathy, Duty, and Self-sacrifice."

Empire Day remained an essential part of the calendar for more than 50 years, celebrated by countless millions of children and adults alike, an opportunity to demonstrate pride in being part of the British Empire. By the [1950's](#) however, the Empire had started to decline, and Britain's relationship with the other countries that formed the Empire had also changed, as they began to celebrate their own identity. Political parties of the far-left and pacifist dissenters had also begun to use Empire Day itself as an opportunity to attack British imperialism.

Political correctness appears to have 'won the day' when in 1958 Empire Day was re-badged as British Commonwealth Day, and still later in 1966 when it became known as Commonwealth Day. The date of Commonwealth Day was also changed to 10th June, the official birthday of the present [Queen Elizabeth II](#). The date was again changed in 1977 to the second Monday in March, when each year The Queen still sends a special message to the youth of the Empire via a radio broadcast to all the various countries of the Commonwealth.

A now largely forgotten anniversary, perhaps only your grandparents will recall the chant **Remember, Remember Empire Day, the 24th of May**. Only your grandparents and several million loyal Canadians that is, who still celebrate Victoria Day each year on the last Monday before 24th May.



## Footnotes

The above article was originally compiled by Historic UK researchers in 2006. We have however, recently been contacted by Jane Allen, whose memories show how Empire Day was celebrated in Cardiff, Wales:



"I must have been amongst the last children to celebrate this at school. Not sure which year, as I was very young, but it would have been between 1955-57. At infant school in Wales, we were taken out into the playground, and the Union Jack was hoisted, then lowered after we had sung our song:-

Brightly, brightly, sun of spring upon this happy day  
Shine upon us as we sing this 24th of May  
Shine upon our brothers too,  
Far across the ocean blue,  
As we raise our song of praise  
On this our glorious Empire Day"

And from the other side of the Empire, from Steve Porch in Australia:

"Australian & mid 1950's. Empire Day (24th of May) was cracker night! Sort of Guy Fawkes Night. So nice that someone else remembers what was such a fun part of life in those years gone by. We had big bonfires, skyrockets, & all the things that are now considered unsafe, but I never got hurt? Empire Day was always something to look forward to as an Australian child."

“ You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you. ” -**Frederick Buechner**

## Norfolk Island History Lovers Tour – March 2018 Foundation Week

Step back in time and celebrate the 230th anniversary of the island's first settlement. Immerse yourself in Norfolk Island heritage for a history Lovers holiday in March 2018.

Ex Sydney 2 March for 7 days: Package includes return air flights with motel/resort accommodation for seven nights, enjoy eight wonderful days on Norfolk Island and all the history lovers' holiday inclusions:

The Norfolk Island History Lovers tour includes research workshop, special tours of Kingston. [Check out all inclusions](#)

Contact us for more details: including information flyer and booking form. Cathy Dunn 02 4455 4780 [office@australianhistoryresearch.info](mailto:office@australianhistoryresearch.info)

To subscribe to our monthly newsletters email [office@australianhistoryresearch.info](mailto:office@australianhistoryresearch.info)

Cathy Dunn  
Australian History Research





[www.australianhistoryresearch.info](http://www.australianhistoryresearch.info)

Ph: 02 44554780

Norfolk Island History Lovers Holiday: March 2018

<http://www.australianhistoryresearch.info/history-lovers-visit-to-norfolk-island/>

Heritage Tourism

[www.heritagetourism.com.au](http://www.heritagetourism.com.au)

## **Hello Groups interested in family history and historical information.**

Congress 2018 is drawing closer and closer and the excitement is building!

**Bridging the Past & Future**  
**SYDNEY 2018**

**Hosted by the Society of Australian Genealogists**

**9-12 March 2018**  
**International Convention Centre,**  
**Darling Harbour, Sydney**

**Early bird registrations open 31 May 2017**

Follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/Congress2018](http://www.facebook.com/Congress2018) )  
and Twitter [@Congress\\_2018](https://twitter.com/Congress_2018) #Congress\_2018

[www.congress2018.org.au](http://www.congress2018.org.au)

Congress 2018 is being held at the new International Convention Centre in Darling Harbour, Sydney from Friday 9 to Monday 12 March 2018. Congress is the largest family history event in Australasia and is held every three years under the auspices of the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations (AFFHO). Early Bird registrations open on 31 May 2017 and the full speakers' program will be released at that time. Follow the announcements at [www.congress2018.org.au](http://www.congress2018.org.au) and [www.facebook.com/Congress2018](http://www.facebook.com/Congress2018), and on Twitter [@Congress\\_2018](https://twitter.com/Congress_2018) #Congress\_2018