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**BEECROFT - CHELTENHAM  
CIVIC TRUST**  
INCORPORATED  
P.O. BOX 31, BEECROFT, N.S.W. 2119



**BULLETIN 2**

**September 2004**

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*The Trust is 40 Years Old*

To celebrate this important event, an Anniversary Dinner will be held on the evening of Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004 at 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm commencement, in the Function Rooms at Pennant Hills Golf Club in Copeland Road.

A prominent Guest Speaker will be engaged to give the keynote address and all residents of Beecroft and Cheltenham are cordially invited to attend. The cost of the dinner is \$65 a head and an expression of interest form is on page 4 of this Newsletter.

*Vale*

We were saddened to hear of the recent tragic death of long time Beecroft resident and Trust member Robert Henderson, his daughter Jackie, her husband and their friends. On behalf of all Trust members, we extend our deepest sympathy to Janet and her family.

*Back to Nature - Reports on  
the Trust's Annual Autumn  
and Spring Walks*

*The Autumn Walk -*

About 85 people attended the annual autumn walk of the Beecroft & Cheltenham Civic Trust on Sunday 1 May. The walk followed this year was along what is being called the 'Pioneers' Walk', which follows a branch of Devlins Creek running adjacent to Plympton Rd towards Midson Rd. It is one of the walks in the forthcoming book 'Heritage Walks in

Beecroft and Cheltenham', soon to be published by the Beecroft Cheltenham History Group in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Beecroft.

A remarkably fine job has been done along the route of the walk by members of a number of bush regeneration groups, many of whom were present, and showed off the results of their labours with obvious and justified pride. Interesting comments on the localities visited were provided by Ross Walker of the Civic Trust, Lesley Goldberg of the History Group and Bill Woods, who spoke with obvious authority on the Pennant Hills Wireless Station, which was situated in what is now parkland near the intersection of Pennant Hills Rd and North Rocks Rd between 1912 and the early 1950s. It was the sole means of wireless communication between Australia and the outside world. Robert Browne, former Mayor of Hornsby, spoke with conviction on the work of the bush regeneration groups and the importance of Council support for the volunteers' efforts.

## **The Spring Walk –**

The annual Spring Walk was held on 22 August 2004. About 35 people were rewarded with a very entertaining afternoon in lovely spring weather. The walk was at an easy pace, starting at Cheltenham Railway Station. Leslie Goldberg from the Beecroft Cheltenham History Group briefly commented on the early history of the land around the station. Mr Chorley, a prominent Sydney tailor at the turn of last century, purchased and later subdivided the land



*Cheltenham Railway Station*

around where the station is today. In fact Mr Chorley was instrumental in convincing the government at the time to construct the station.

The walk continued along Sutherland Rd, down Kethel to the intersection with Malton Rd where the local bush regenerators explained their work they have been undertaking along the Byles Creek downstream of Malton Rd.

The group traversed through the natural bushland to Day Rd where we were invited to have afternoon tea at Ahimsa, the National Trust property that was donated by Marie Byles in 1972. Marie Byles was a well known "conservationist" who was ahead of her time. Marie was a founding member of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust.

**Next year there will two more interesting walks around the Beecroft Cheltenham**

**area, one in Autumn and another in Spring.**

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## *The first train was late The Origin of Beecroft*

*No. 1 in a series of articles on the history of  
Beecroft and Cheltenham*

The first railway line in New South Wales ran between Redfern and Parramatta and was opened with enormous excitement in 1855. With its opening, Australia entered the steam era, and that other great advance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the electric telegraph, soon followed. Within 30 years, two large railway systems covered most of the settled districts of the colony, based on Sydney and Newcastle. Between them, the Hawkesbury River was an impassable barrier, until in 1881 the government of Sir Henry Parkes announced a bold policy that would double the mileage of railway lines. Included in this plan was the enormously expensive Northern Junction Line, joining the two systems over rugged country and a wide river at a cost of £2,755,000.

Construction of the Strathfield to Hawkesbury River section commenced in 1883, with an anticipated completion date of March 1886. From Parramatta River, the line climbed steeply to the Field of Mars (now Eastwood), then dropped to Devlins Creek where the M2 now runs beneath the railway line, and then climbed even more steeply to what is now Pennant Hills. Settlement in this high country in what had been the Field of Mars Common was sparse, and the surveyors appointed by the government recommended that "from Devlin's Creek Culvert that northwards to a point outside the common there is a uniform ascending grade of one in 50 or less, making a stopping place impossible without great inconvenience and expense in alteration of levels of the line."

However, the Minister for Lands, Henry Copeland, had quite a different view. The

absence of railway platforms would make suburban subdivision impossible, and the government would therefore be unable to recoup part of the cost of the railway. On 18<sup>th</sup> June 1886, he noted on the surveyors' report, "I have arranged for two Platforms. H.C." A week later, the Metropolitan District Surveyor, John Deering, added another note, confirming the Minister's directive. " "Field of Mars" Platform at 14 miles 55 chains. "Beecroft" Platform 16 miles 38 chains." These were the distances in miles and chains (a measurement of distance based on the length of a surveyor's chain: 22 yards or just over 20 metres) from the Redfern terminus. Thus what is now Epping was 23.6 kilometres and Beecroft 26.5 kilometres from Redfern.

Henry Copeland made sure that the platform he had insisted on would become the centre of a developed suburban area. No land sales were planned immediately, but the surveyors were instructed to mark out ¼ and ½ acre blocks and to lay out streets. Copeland named several of them. He had married Hannah Beecroft in 1863 and after she died in 1879, he married her sister Mary in 1880. Both were born in the Yorkshire village of Malton, near a huge mansion, Castle Howard, where nearly a century later the television epic 'Brideshead Revisited' would be filmed. Henry hailed from Hull in the same county. All these names were now given to streets in the Beecroft district. The road closest to the platform was named Copeland Road, but Henry never bought land in the district. However, the surveyors and the bureaucrats of the Lands Dept got the message and the first land sale followed within the year.

Three months after Copeland named the new platform after his wives, the railway was completed and the first passenger train ran on Friday 17 September 1886, six months behind the original schedule. It stopped at each of the seven stations or platforms along the line to Hornsby, and local people lined the platform to gape at both the train and the dignitaries on board. The opening ceremony took place at Hornsby, where the Minister for Works, William Lyne, presciently foresaw the time

when "a very large suburban population" would come to the outer districts. However that lay far into the future. In 1886, Beecroft platform, then sited south of the Copeland Road crossing, and lacking even a shelter shed, was in the middle of nowhere. Between Beecroft and Epping there was bushland; there would be no Cheltenham for another 12 years.

(From *Beecroft and Cheltenham, the shaping of a Sydney community to 1914*, published by the Beecroft Cheltenham History Group in 1995. the book is now out of print, and is expected to be reprinted in a few years' time when a second volume is to be published, taking the story until the end of the twentieth century.)



(Beecroft Station as it is now - north of the Copeland Road crossing)

## *News Flash*

Your Trust is in the process of developing a website with the domain name

[www.2119.org.au](http://www.2119.org.au)

A visit to the site will give you an indication of what the Trust hopes to achieve with the site, however please remember that the site is still very much under development.

Constructive comments are welcome