



# OUR HISTORY

ISSUE 3, 2022



GATHERING WATTLE for CHRISTMAS

## Welcome

This issue is dedicated to all things Christmas. The idea of Christmas, and the many traditions we associate with it, is surprisingly modern. And there was certainly a lot of grumbling by the new arrivals from England who had to contend with the unfathomable – a Christmas Day filled with flies, heat and scorching winds! But whilst Australia has adapted, Christmas Day for many is still a day for baked meats, heavy puddings and pretend reindeer footprints made from 'snow' to surprise children!

Thank you to those members that attended our Christmas get together in December. It was lovely to chat to everyone over sweets and cakes.

On behalf of the Committee, we would like to wish all of our members a Merry Christmas and New Year. We look forward to seeing everyone when our meetings and talks resume in 2023. And we will keep you posted on when Lydham Hall will finally be reopening.

Laurice and Tina  
Magazine Co-ordinators



## What's on

### Sunday 18 December

Christmas Movie Night: **ELF**

*Bayside Councils Movie Night starts at 5pm with food stalls, face painting, live music, and a visit by Santa, before the movie starts at approximately 7.10pm.*

Cahill Park, Wolli Creek. Free

### Sundays 1-5pm

Exhibition: **THE IMMIGRATION MUSEUM**

*Kogarah Historical Society has recently opened their new exhibition curated by Beverley Earnshaw.*

Carss Park Cottage, \$5 entry fee (adults)

### Friday 30 December 2022 9.30-12.30

Walking Tour: **ROOKWOOD HISTORY TOURS**

*Learn about Rookwood's fascinating history, the story behind its development and evolution, and its significant link to our nation's heritage – by attending one of our history tours. The tour by Rookwood Cemetery's own Mark Bundy, is held on the last Friday of every month.*

Book via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/monthly-rookwood-history-tours-with-bundy-tickets-345161606657>

Meet at All Souls Chapel, Hawthorne Avenue Rookwood. Free.

### Until Sunday 15 January 2023

Exhibition: **VYARA MALCHEVA EXHIBITION - 'LOCKDOWN 2021'**

*The exhibition, titled 'Lockdown 2021', documents Malcheva's experiences living in Penshurst while the suburb was classified as an 'area of concern' during the 2021 lockdowns.*

Clive James Library, Kogarah Town Square Belgrave Street, Kogarah. Free.

### Tuesday 17 January 2023 10.30-12.30

Workshop: **WEAVING CONNECTIONS**

*Murrawarri artist, Virginia Keft, invites you to spend the morning with her for a free drop-in weaving and yarning workshop in the gallery. Weaving materials will be provided.*

Hurstville Museum & Gallery, 14 MacMahon Street, Hurstville  
Free but bookings essential. Call 02 9250 8425.

### Until 22 January 2023

Exhibition: **KILL OR CURE? A TASTE OF MEDICINE.**

*From the influence of the stars and the phases of the moon, to healing chants and prayers, to the knife-wielding barber-surgeon and game-changing scientific experiments, Kill or Cure? takes you behind the curtain of western medicine's macabre history.*

State Library of NSW, 1 Shakespeare Place Sydney. Free.

### Until 5 March 2023

Exhibition: **SYDNEY SNAPSHOTS**

*This exhibition highlights the treasure trove of photographs taken by the NSW Government Printing Office Photographic Branch.*

Museum of Sydney, Cnr of Phillips and Bridge Street Sydney. Free.

# Lydham Hall update

By Tina Workman

Negotiations for the Licence Agreement between Bayside Council and the St George Historical Society for the management of Lydham Hall are still in progress. On Thursday 1st of December, the Society and the Lydham Hall Advisory Committee met with Council staff to review the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee and the draft Licence Agreement. Discussion about the Licence Fee resulted in a further reduced fee. However, this amount is still potentially beyond the capacity of the Society to pay. We have been assured that the Advisory Committee will be able to propose future fee waivers for councillors if required. At this stage, both documents will be finalised for council review at the next Council meeting to be held in February. We will have a further update at the February meeting.

## Have your say

Council is currently seeking community feedback on a project in Rockdale on the site of the old church and hall opposite the Rockdale Town Hall on Bryant Street. The plan is to demolish the church, refurbish the hall and develop the land for a park and to transform the site into a multi-purpose Community & Cultural Centre.

The concept plans can be viewed on the Bayside Council website and your feedback can be made here: <https://haveyoursay.bayside.nsw.gov.au/rockdale-community-cultural-centre>



Top image: Existing buildings. (Google Maps)  
Bottom image: Concept image (Bayside Council website)

# Christmas Pudding Recipe

This traditional Christmas pudding recipe has been adapted from *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* published in 1861.

## Ingredients

750g good-quality mixed dried fruit  
1/2 cup fragrant black tea (optional)  
250g fresh breadcrumbs, made from a 2-day-old white unsliced loaf, crusts removed  
200g butter (or suet), put in freezer for 1–2 hours  
1 tablespoon mixed spice  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
6 eggs (well beaten)  
1/2 cup brandy  
boiling water

## Directions

If the fruit looks dry and shrivelled rather than plump, soak it in the tea for at least a few hours, or overnight.

Grease a 1.5-litre (6-cup) capacity pudding basin, or equivalent smaller bowls, with butter. Cut a round of baking paper the same size as the rim of the bowl.

Prepare a double layer of foil to form a 2-cm pinch pleat along the centre, allowing for pressure as the pudding cooks. Put a trivet in the base of a saucepan that is deep enough to hold the pudding basin while still able to be covered with the saucepan lid.

Put the breadcrumbs in a large bowl and, using a grater that has been chilled in the fridge for 30 minutes, grate the frozen butter into the breadcrumbs. Mix through lightly with a knife. Add the spices and fruit (or soaked fruit, drained of excess liquid).

Add the eggs and brandy, and spoon the mixture into the pudding basin, just short of the rim as the mixture may swell during cooking. Cover the surface of the pudding with the baking paper and cover the basin with the foil, tying securely with string.

Put the basin on the trivet in the pan and add enough boiling water to reach halfway up the side of the basin to create a water bath.

Cover the pan and simmer for 6 hours, topping up with boiling water as needed. Cool to room temperature then refrigerate until required.

Source:

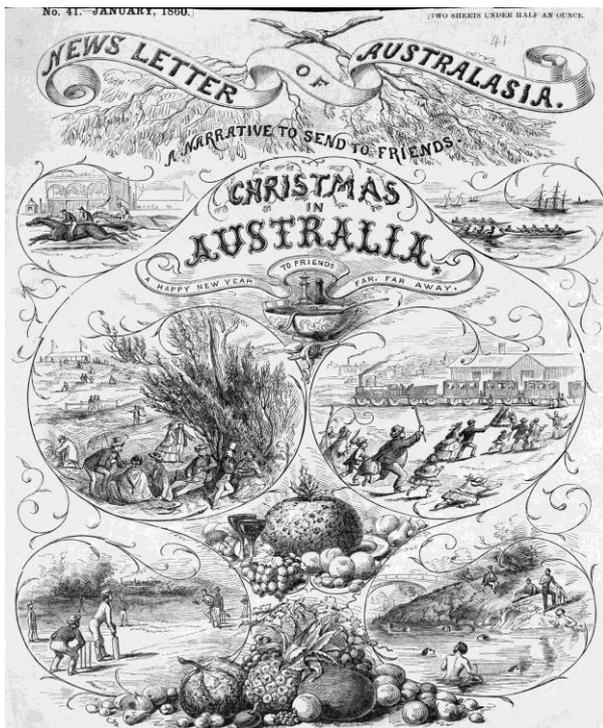
<https://blogs.sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/cook/recipe/christmas-plum-pudding/>

# Christmas in June?

Article by Laurice Bondfield

If the writer of this article had been successful in his appeal, Australians today would have been celebrating Christmas in June. On the 26th of December 1836, **The Sydney Monitor** published an article describing the preceding Christmas Day:

*“In church we could scarcely sit from the heat although clothed in slight cottons”. At lunch “...torrid heat made still more oppressive by the steam of extra dishes rising in our faces ... causing the sickly appetite with which we sit down to Christmas fare”. Thnings didn’t improve in the evening, for they were “gasping for breath while the musquitoes (sic) and sand-flies worry us at all points - face and wrists, the fine dust from the garden striking our warm faces and suffusing the room at the same time so that at length we throw ourselves on the matrass (sic) and try to forget the “merry” Christmas of New South Wales by getting beneath the musquito(sic) curtains. Such is Christmas day in this Colony. Are we to be for ever troubled with the heat on the anniversary of an event which transpired in winter?”*



In 1860, missives back 'home' were showing delightful Christmas scenes: horse racing, rowing, a picnic, a cricket match, a group of men swimming in a creek and tropical fruit in abundance.  
Source: State Library Victoria

The writer contrasts this with the festival customs in England - walking through the snow, skating and shooting outside, big heater stove warming the church, gathering evergreens and feasting on hot fare in the

cold climate. Somewhat despairingly he cries: “Are we to be slaves to precedent?”. Then, taking a dig at Governor Bourke who was regarded as rather too liberal and open to change in his ideas by the Exclusivists, he asks:

*“Let our present liberal minded governor, when next the Council meets, propose a law constituting 25TH JUNE NEXT, and the same in every year in Australia thenceforth for ever, Christmas Day; and abrogate the present anomalous and unscriptural custom of celebrating the birth of our Saviour, which took place in the depth of winter, in the middle of summer. Then we shall be Englishmen, in this respect, once again; and merry, gladening, heartsome, hospitable, recreable, delightful CHRISTMAS, will return to console us for our long exile from the land of our fathers.”*

Our writer then observes “If this law is deferred until the Australian born are grown up and their children – a hot Christmas will be to them the natural Christmas”.

Obviously the governor did not follow his advice because now we, the many times great grandchildren of the ‘Australian born’ of 1836, do expect a hot Christmas and are sometimes disappointed when it doesn't eventuate. What we eat and what we enjoy on Christmas Day has changed to suit our climate. We have, however, for those who long for a chilly Christmas, instituted ‘Christmas in July’ especially in the Blue Mountains and the Central West of the state where you can sometimes have snow, or at least sleet, in which to eat your Christmas fare!



The reality: a sweltering Father Christmas being fanned.  
Source: State Library Victoria

# Christmas in the Colonies

Article by Tina Workman

The *Sydney Gazette* was the first newspaper printed in Australia. It ran from the 5th March 1803 until the 20 October 1842 and was subject to government censorship in its early years. But by 1824 it ceased to be censored and, today, gives us an interesting insight into life in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Sydney. In particular, the type of raucousness that accompanied the arrival of Christmas in the earliest of days in Sydney.

The Police Reports were particularly insightful, and in the years 1831 to 1837, wickedly humorous:

Thursday 29 December 1831, page 3

Esther Flynn charged Mary Anne Mar with hitting her two such pokes in the face as considerably damaged the nasal promontory of her, the aforesaid Esther, and otherwise detracted from the beauty of her frontis-piece. Each lady's countenance displayed the effects of her adversary's talons. One of the male sex was called as an evidence, but he was completely puzzled to know which was the better pugilist. This man, who was nothing less than a knight of the thimble from the Emerald Isle, delivered a rich harangue, which might have vied with one from Dan himself, declaring that the defendant was "mortally bruised." Complaint dismissed.



Thursday 29 December 1831, page 3

Jane Douglass was charged with being found "non compos mentis," and wallowing, like another pig, in the mire. Jane said she was subject to fits, but there appeared too much reason to believe that they were only fits of drunkenness, and the Bench, in the exercise of their medical abilities, prescribed a month's factory fare, as the best recipe extant for her malady.

Saturday 7 January 1837, page 3

Jane Tindall, a remarkably foolish woman, who rejoiced in the doctrine of the Duke of Newcastle, that every one may do what they like with their own, was charged with smashing the windows of her house because the weather was excessively hot, and it appearing that she was excessively heated herself with the copious libations which had been taken to keep the steam up, a constable who saw the frolic took her into custody. Jane looked anything but pleased at her situation, and walked to the stocks growling at the fastidiousness of the Police which would not allow her to follow her own amusements.

Thursday 29 December 1831, page 3

Mister Jonas Smirk, tailor, with his head brimfull of rum, and his heart brimfull of love, made his appearance to shew cause why he broke the King's peace and Moroney Callaghan's nose. "Why, I'll tell your honour," said Jonas, "'ts all for love of Kitty Doyle, and a cruel, killing girl she is, your honour for she loves that 're chap better than she does me, your honour—so says I to myself, your honour, I'll break your head for you, Mister Paddy - and so, your honour, I axes him to fight, your honour, for the girl, your honour, and he knowed I was made of better stuff, your honour, than he was, your honour, and so he wouldn't fight—and so I jist gives him a poke or two, to let him see as how I'm a man of courage, and then he said as how he'd pelisse me, your honour—so that's ail about it, your honour, and I hope your honour 'll take my part." This specimen of grandiloquence, however, failed of producing the desired effect on the Bench, who ordered him to provide sureties to keep the peace.



Saturday 7 January 1837, page 3

Mary Ledduck, resembling a ram rod in figure, and a salt cod garnished with a necklace of oyster sauce in appearance, was called upon to show cause why she had taken up her lodgings in the middle of Essex lane, with her head enveloped in a sugar bag to keep off the musquitos. Having none of the possibles, she marched off to the stocks for an hour, laughing and chuckling at the idea.

# Mr Spark's Christmas Trip

Article by Laurice Bondfield

By 1836 Tempe House was complete. You would expect its owner, Alexander Brodie Spark, to spend his first Christmas there, entertaining friends, but no – on the 22nd December he set off with his nephew Robert, to inspect his stock and properties in the Hunter Valley.

Taking a horse and cab with him, he embarked on the steamship 'Tamar'. An unpleasant trip and "*Smoke and smell, dirt, heat, noise and motion*" were his lot.

The next morning the ship arrived at Newcastle, waited some time, and then sailed upriver to Morpeth where he, his horse, cab and nephew disembarked and set out for Maitland.

At Maitland he inspected a cottage he had built on the roadside, then up the hill to East Maitland to see some allotments he had bought. Here they put up at Cohen's Inn.

On the 24th of December he went to visit "*beautiful Lochinvar*" to inspect some stud horses. '**Lochinvar House**' still exists today as a B&B. At that time '**Lochinvar**' was owned by his friend and neighbour at Cook's River, Leslie Duguid. Duguid was employed by the Australia Bank, of which Brodie Spark was a shareholder. After inspecting the horses he continued on to Patrick's Plains and '**Castle Forbes**' owned by Major Mudie, who was on his way to England. The horse and cab were left there and they walked to '**Rosemount**' an adjacent property owned by John Larnach, Mudie's son-in-law. This house still exists today as '**Baroona**'.

Spark, Duguid, Mudie and Larnach were all free Scots settlers, though arriving in Australia at different times in the 1820s. Their common heritage meant they became friends, as well as business associates, and often helped each other. Mudie and Larnach became notorious for their poor treatment of their assigned convicts. (In 1833 there was a convict rebellion on the property - five rebels were later hanged). Spark almost lost his position as a magistrate for enabling (with three others) Mudie to bring charges against the editor of the Gazette who had criticised his management of the convicts assigned to him.

Christmas Day saw Spark at Rosemount still, and grumbling "*This day of hope and quiet rejoicing is usually converted into a day of dissipation, nor was such customary abuse wanting among the servants at*

*Rosemount*". The dissipation cannot have been entirely confined to servants as the Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser displayed one advertisement (among similar others) on 23rd December for "*rum, brandy, porter, ale and pink champagne*".

In the days following he admired "*seven splendid Aloes in flower at Castle Forbes .... several thousand sheep in prime condition*"; visited '**Ravensworth**', another fine property in the area, where wool was being sorted and packed, inspected a reservoir that was cut into rock for the preservation of grain "*and finally the garden where we had some fruit*".

On the 29th of December, it was too hot to venture out – the thermometer reading 104F (40C) in the shade. The company "*passed the evening with conversation and singing*". Next day, they stayed at '**Lochinvar**' till 4pm "*to avoid the suffocating air which was blowing as if from an oven*".

On 31st they started early to avoid the heat and catch the 'Tamar'. The passage back was unpleasant with the wind against them, turning cold in the evening. Spark remaining on deck till the ship reached Sydney "*when the day, the voyage and the year expired together*".

Alas, on his return to Tempe, Spark discovered that three of his servants, including Willie the Boatman, "*had been very outrageous on Xmas Day, forcing their way into the house in their drunkenness and attacking Mary and Margaret*", two of the house servants. Mary later resigned from his service because of the incident.

Willie and the others were arrested. Douglas discharged for lack of evidence and Willie and Jackson sentenced to five days in the cells on bread and water. Spark thought this "*inadequate punishment*".

The entries in Spark's diary for 1836 give the most comprehensive account of his activities over the Christmas season. In later years, even when he married and had children, entries are more succinct. Still, this gives us insights into the development of the Hunter Valley, the bonds between the free emigrant Scots, the attitudes of Spark and the Exclusivist Set to their assigned convicts and servants and their attitude to Christmas - confined mostly to the day itself with church services and a feast. From this we can see how so much of traditional Christmas celebrations arose in the later nineteenth century.

## Membership

The St George Historical Society relies on annual membership subscriptions to survive. Memberships are our principal form of income and we value the contribution our members make. It costs only \$15 for a single membership or \$20 for a family.

Membership helps us:

- Lobby to preserve historic sites and buildings in our local area
- Maintain our museum – Lydham Hall Historic House
- Undertake research for members and the local community
- Publish histories of the St. George area
- Host talks and walks for members and locals
- Facilitate society meetings and gatherings
- Support our volunteers

To become a member, please download the membership form on our website <http://stgeorgehistsoc.org.au/>

## Visit Lydham Hall Historic House & Museum

Lydham Hall is open to the public once a month and to members at other times. See our website for opening hours and entry fees. Address: 18 Lydham Avenue Rockdale.

With it's beautiful historic charm and lovely, manicured gardens, Lydham Hall is ideal for special events such as wedding photographs, childrens parties, community group functions, commercial photography and film shoots.

As it is an historic house, functions are limited to the exterior of the building and the verandah. Photography and film shoots inside the house are by special arrangement.

The house is also open to school groups and large groups by appointment only. Please contact the Society for more details.

NOTE:

**LYDHAM HALL IS CURRENTLY CLOSED. IT IS DUE TO RE-OPEN IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023.**

## Publications

The St George Historical Society publishes a range of books and pamphlets that document the history of suburbs, people and events in the St George District.

The books can be posted or collected directly from Lydham Hall. To see a full list of our publications or to order a book, please visit our website <http://stgeorgehistsoc.org.au>

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