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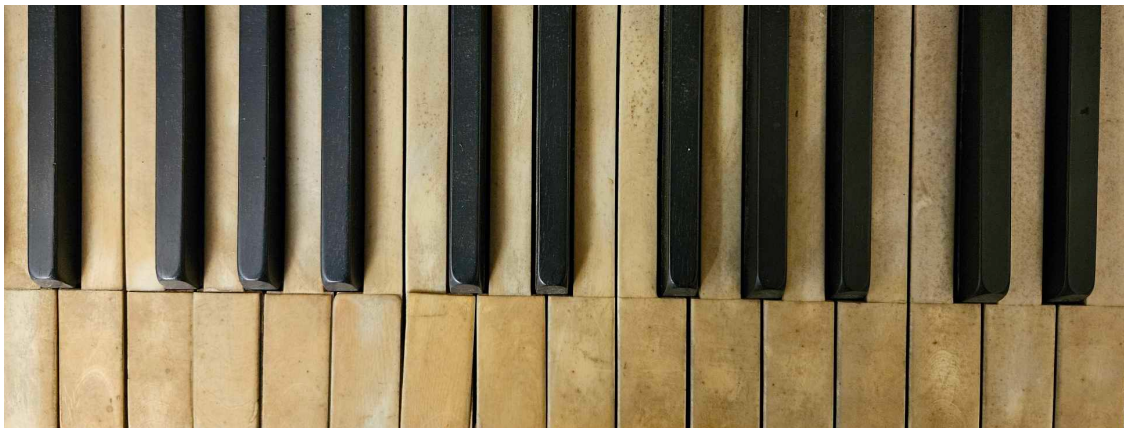
PUBLICATIONS

LYDHAM HALL



ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | JUNE 2024

WELCOME



Brrrr! It's been cold this last month and the executive team is looking forward to some warmth. Particularly at Lydham Hall, where the wind chill factor means the temperature drops by a few more degrees when we have the windows and doors open. We are counting down the days until spring!

We would like to warmly welcome our new members - Vanessa Connolly (Bardwell Valley), Rose Ellis (Bardwell Valley), Mercedes Esteban-Lyons (Bardwell Valley), Brendan Giles (Banksia), Ardyce Harris (Pennant Hills), Claire Lally (Bexley North), Annie Mather (Petersham), Dr Judith L Reynolds (Earlwood), Tara Robertson-Hall (Kogarah), and Kate Wade (Bexley)

We encourage all our new members join us at our monthly meeting and talks. These talks are free and you are welcome to bring friends and family along. As a member you also receive unlimited free entry to Lydham Hall and we encourage you to become involved as a volunteer. If you haven't made it to a talk or the museum as yet, please come along. For those new members who have volunteered to help at Lydham Hall, a special thank you.

Membership is the key to keeping organisations such as ours alive and we are very grateful to all our members for their support.

Your Editorial Team

WHAT'S ON

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)



LOCAL HISTORY TALK

Saturday 15 June 2024 | 2pm until 4pm |
3rd Floor Rockdale Library | 444 Princes
Highway Rockdale

"Reluctant Pioneers"

Our guest speaker this month is local legend, Beverley Earnshaw who will be giving a talk about early settlers in the St George District, as told through the eyes of those that were actually there.

Entry is free but gold coin donations gratefully accepted. Refreshments (tea, coffee, snacks) provided. Bring a friend!



LYDHAM HALL OPEN DAY

Sunday 7 July 2024 | 10am to 4pm | 18
Lydham Avenue Rockdale

"Winter Warmers"

Our next opening of the magnificent Lydham Hall will be on Sunday 7th July. We will have tours through the house, and our volunteers will be serving our delicious, freshly baked scones. But there is more! Thanks to the generous support of the Australian Culinary Federation, we will also be serving delicious soup on the verandah - perfect for a winters lunch. Entry is free for members and we encourage all members to bring along friends and family.



INAUGURAL SOCIETY FUNDRAISER

Tuesday 23 July 2024 | 6.30pm | Bexley
RSL 24 Stoney Creek Rd, Bexley

Save the date! Our Inaugural Society Fundraiser is having a ***Christmas in July*** fundraiser at Bexley RSL. Join Society members for a fun filled night with good food, good company, good fun and good raffle prizes! Partners, family and friends welcome. All proceeds raised from the night will help the Society reach our target restoration funds for key objects in the collection and for ongoing maintenance at Lydham Hall. \$45 per person.

[BECOME A MEMBER](#)

[MORE WHAT'S ON HERE](#)

PITCH PERFECT: THE PIANO AT LYDHAM HALL

Without modern entertainment like television and computers, the piano was a necessary and fashionable fixture in all Victorian Drawing Rooms. Accordingly, the Drawing Room at Lydham Hall Historic House has a lovely upright piano in burled walnut with ivory keys and carved detailing.

The piano would have been used for the entertainment of the whole family, and the type of music popular at the time included piano solos, light opera, and traditional songs from England whilst waltzes, polkas and masurkas would have been played for parties. For quiet evenings at home, the piano would have been background music to all of the other activities taking place in the Drawing Room, as can be seen in the delicate watercolour by Maria Browning below which shows the Browning children on a typical evening at home.



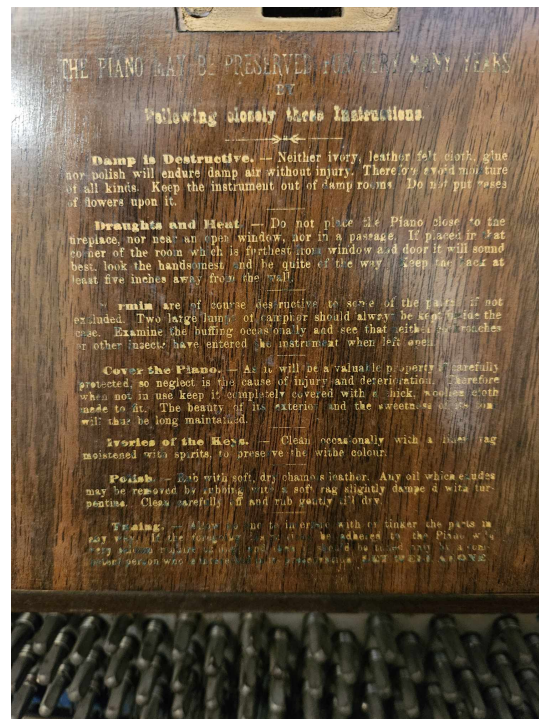
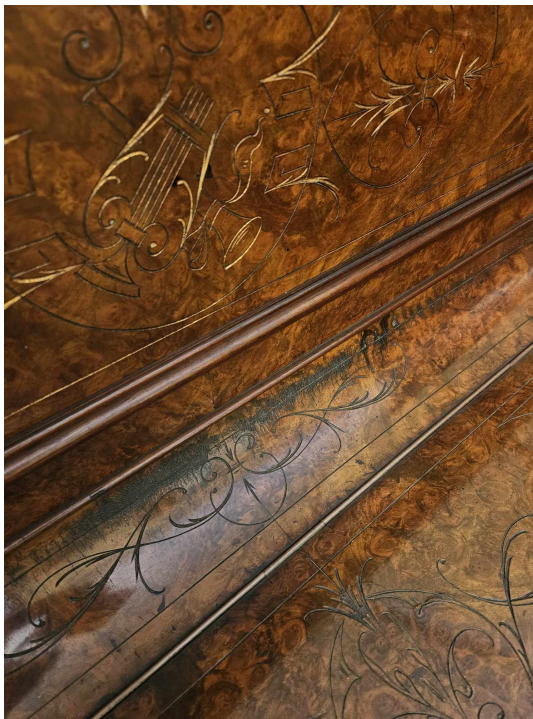
Whilst we don't know what type of instrument was at Lydham Hall at the time the Davis family lived there, the piano that now sits in the Drawing Room is a good indication of the type that would have been chosen at the time.

This piano is an upright '**Hapsburg**' by Beale and Company, the largest producer of pianos in Australia at the time. The company, founded by Octavius Charles Beale in 1879, began by importing sewing machines from Germany and, from 1883, pianos. Prior to setting up his own factory manufacturing pianos in 1893, he imported German upright pianos, known as 'Hapsburg Beales'. Very few of these survive today and Lydham Hall is fortunate to have one of these first, and now rare, German imports.



Beale established a large factory at Trafalgar Street Annandale in 1901 and the factory grew from strength to strength. There was a brief hiatus during WW2 when the company suspended piano making and focused on making wooden parts for *De Havilland 'Mosquito'* airplanes.

After the war ended, piano-making resumed and manufacture continued at Annandale even after Beales death in car crash in 1930. In 1961, the company was sold to another big name in music - WH Paling and Co.

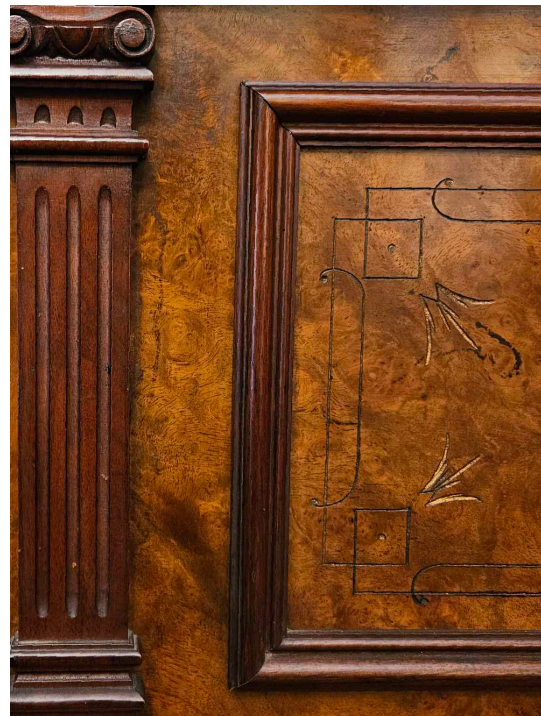
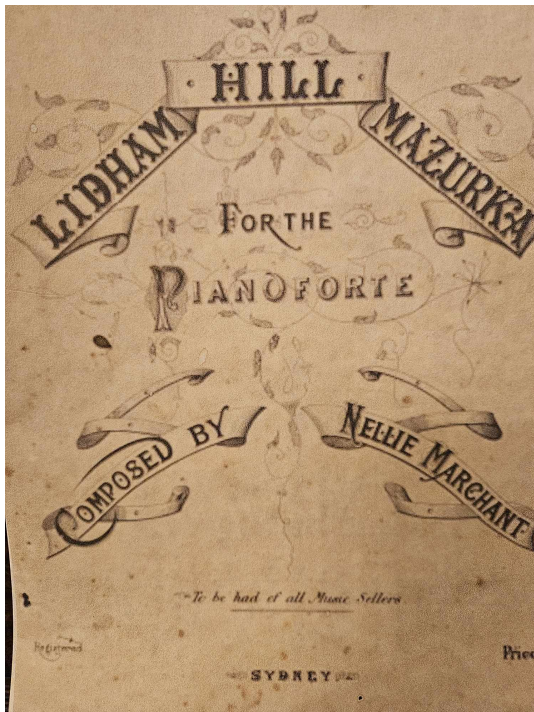


What is most interesting about the Lydham Hall piano is the pitch. After various attempts at playing the piano, we assumed that it was out of tune until a lovely young visitor set us straight on the history of tuning! To modern musicians, the piano has an 'odd' sound and many have sat at its keys and announced "*This piano is out of tune!*" However, at a recent Open Day, a visitor with a more superior musical knowledge than all of us, explained that the piano was not only in tune, but also that it was tuned to A-435kh.

Needless to say, those of us without any musical training or talent, had no idea what this meant.

It was only in 1939 that the piano pitch was made a standard A-440hz internationally. This standard was reaffirmed in 1955 and 1979. Prior to this, different pianos, different countries and different continents had a range of pitches. The tuning fork was only invented in 1711, and a variety of different tuning forks were in circulation to deal with the varying sounds. More information about the history of different pitches is explained in an article linked below.

In 1859, the French government dealt with the problem of different pitches and tunes by enacting a law that declared that A-435Hz was to be the standard for musical performances. A-435hz became known as the 'French Pitch', a pitch unused by most modern musicians today but one regularly heard in Europe at the time.



The type of music played at Lydham Hall in the mid to late 1800s would have varied. But we can speculate confidently that a mazurka is one that was definitely played at the house. Sitting on the music rack of the Hapsburg piano at Lydham Hall is a copy of the **'Lidham Hill Mazurka'**. This piece of music was written by sixteen year old Ellen Bellomi Marchant.

Whilst it has been said that the piece was performed for the house warming at Lydham Hall, there is little evidence of this event occurring. In 1970, the Society published an article by Mrs Valmai Long (former owner of Lydham Hall) which speculated that *"The coach entrance at the junction of Forest Road and Clarence Road, was the scene of one of Bexley's biggest social nights, when Joseph Davis gave his house warming. Carriages swept down the circular driveway to the front entrance (now the rear of the home) and were greeted by an orchestra engaged for the occasion. The "Lidham Hill" mazurka was especially composed for the opening and the music is still kept at "Lydham Hall".*"

Unfortunately the source of this delightful story is yet to be verified but we are hoping more information may yet come to light.

The first mention of the '**Lidham Hill Mazurka**' appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald the 2nd March 1882. It gives an account of a St Davids Day celebration which occurred in the city. The article continues *"A copy of the "Lidham Hill Mazurka," composed by Miss Nellie Merchant, has been forwarded to this office. The composition is more in the concert than dancing style, and displays much talent in a musician, who is but 16 years old. Complete originality is scarcely to be expected, but different movements are well carried out & successfully harmonized. The octave and arpeggio are the leading characteristics of the mazurka"*. The significance of this report is the comment, *"the composition is more in the concert than dancing style."*

Miss Marchant appears to have played her mazurka numerous times in public because the following year on 8th October the newspapers reported *"The band of the H.M.S. Nelson, under the conductorship of Mr. G. Daly, will play the following selection of music today from 3 to 5 p.m. (weather permitting) - March, "Wild Monarch," Newton: overture, "Schubert," mazurka concertante, "Lidham Hill," Nellie Merchant."*

Nellie was the daughter of Thomas Marchant, a saddler and harness maker who lived at 11 Bridge St, Sydney. In 1888 she married William Stokes. She passed a College of Music examination in 1902. Her death in 1942 was a year before that of her husband. How she came to write a mazurka for Lydham Hall or what her connection was to the Davis family is a mystery yet to be solved.

The Lydham Hall piano is not in pristine condition and needs some minor restoration. But visitors to the museum are welcome to sit at the piano stool and play - just as they would have in the late 19th century.

Written by Tina Workman with additional information and research provided Bob Horton.

[HISTORY OF PIANO TUNING](#)

[VISIT LYDHAM HALL](#)

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MOTHERS DAY RAFFLE WINNERS!

Fundraising for Lydham Hall happens in all sorts of ways and we are grateful for all donations as they help us keep the museum open and in good order. Thank you to everyone who purchased a Mothers Day raffle ticket for the two wonderful prizes at the start of May. The winner of the delicious fruit cake made by Garry Stokes was Judy from Padstow. The winner of our vintage tea pack was Janin from Rockdale. Congratulations to both ladies.



DONATIONS TO MUSEUMS - A WORTHWHILE GIFT

Do you have anything at home (or in the garage!) that belongs in a museum? If you have something with a history that you would like to donate, please get in touch.

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St George Historical Society Incorporated

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www.stgeorgehistsoc.org.au

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