

## THE NAMING OF CONCORD

Unlike its neighbouring suburbs, Concord cannot trace its name to an English town, district or estate. Nor was the suburb named in honour of an illustrious pioneer. Indeed, the origin of Concord's name remains a mystery, for it seems that no one bothered to record just why it was bestowed.

Thomas Bishop's land grant (the first in Concord, on 1st June, 1793) was recorded as being "On the south side of the harbour, on the western side of the point of land, within the Rock known by the name of the "Hen and Chickens"". Significantly, however, the grants made in December 1793 are recorded as being in "Concord". David Collins, in reporting these grants, noted that they were in the district 'to be distinguished in future by the name of Concord, and went on to explain exactly where they were located. This suggests that the name of 'Concord' had not been used before and that it had, in fact, been devised when the land was granted there. We may surmise, therefore, that it was Major Francis Grose, acting governor of the colony following Phillip's departure in December 1792, who selected the district's name.

Why 'Concord'? Evidence may be lacking, but theories about the origin of the name abound. The word itself implies harmony, understanding, peace and friendship. Did Major Grose bestow the name to mark the initial peaceful meeting and friendly intercourse between the Aborigines and the area's first white explorers in February 1788? This explanation is unlikely: Grose did not arrive in the colony until February 1792 and John Hunter, who led the first expedition along the river, returned to England the same year. It is doubtful therefore that Grose even knew of the details of Hunter's journey and, even if he was aware of it, a chance meeting of Aborigines and a small party of explorers in 1788 was hardly significant enough to provide the foundation for a place name over five years later.

The second possible origin of the name is, superficially at least, more plausible. To the north of Concord, at the Field of Mars, land had been granted to soldiers of the New South Wales Corps. To the south, the Liberty Plains was allotted to free settlers. But at Concord grants were made both to soldiers - the six non-commissioned officers of the Corps - and to free settlers - Bishop, Broughton, Brewer and Shaw. Is it possible, then, that Grose named the district 'Concord' in the hope that the two groups of pioneers would live in harmony and peace?

A third explanation links the name of Concord, not with peace and understanding, but with the beginning of a bloody conflict between an imperial power and a rebellious colony. Francis Grose had a long involvement with the British army before receiving a commission in 1789 to raise, and later command, the New South Wales Corps. He began his career as an ensign in 1775 and was promoted the same year to lieutenant. He was sent to North America where trouble was brewing between representatives of the British government and American colonists who were demanding greater representation in the affairs of their country.

During 1774 provincial congresses in the American colonies had been collecting and stockpiling weapons in preparation for possible conflict with the British authorities. On 19th April 1775 about 700 British Redcoats marched from Boston towards the village of Concord (Massachusetts). Their orders were to destroy the arms known to be stored there. Much of the material stockpiled was destroyed. Hundreds of colonists gathered in protest near the Old North Bridge, where a fierce though brief exchange of fire marked the first battle of the American War of Independence.

Francis Grose was serving with the British army in North America in 1775. If he did not take part in the action at Concord, Massachusetts, on 29th April he would certainly have been aware of it. Perhaps, eighteen years after, there was something in the landform or appearance of the district midway between Sydney and Parramatta that stirred his memory of the village in North America where

“. . . once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world.”

(Prepared by Lois Michel for 1995 Westfield Display)