

TOPICS

topics@newcastleherald.com.au



DAMON CRONSHAW

@JubilantJourno 4979 5999



ANGELIC: A postcard of an angel statue at the Newcastle Asylum site, possibly from the 1880s. The statue ended up at Stockton.

Better angels of our nature in a statue

ANGELS descending, bring from above, echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Those words were written by an American missionary and poet in the 1800s.

Perhaps this was the sentiment felt by good souls when they erected a statue of an angel at the Newcastle Asylum - now known as James Fletcher Hospital - more than 120 years ago.

The statue has, for many decades, been at the Stockton Centre. *Newcastle Herald* journalist Ian Kirkwood reported the closure of the centre on Monday, following a policy to move people with disability from institutions to group homes.

It's unclear when the statue made the trip from Newcastle to Stockton.

Dr Ann Hardy, a historian at University of Newcastle library, beautifully imagined that the angel was "flown across the harbour to protect those who were transferred there in 1910, many of them women and children from the Newcastle mental hospital".

Dr Hardy has written a blog about the angel on the Hunter Living Histories website.

She told Topics that the angel "represents Newcastle so well".

She sees the angel as a reflection of a community that cares about its people. She

also considers it a link between the two mental health sites and a symbol of the government care provided to the intellectually disabled since "the first institution established at Newcastle in 1871".

Dr Hardy came across a postcard of the statue when it was at the Newcastle Asylum site.

"That postcard was interesting. It was almost like a souvenir, promoting the site," she said.

"It shows the asylum was quite a pleasant public place."

On the postcard, the asylum was named The Fountain Hospital, which appears to be a reference to the fountain in the picture.

Dr Hardy said she hadn't seen any other references to this name.

"It was never called The Fountain Hospital," she said.

But she said the postcard reflected the fact that asylums back then were tourist attractions and community-friendly places with picturesque settings.

She wonders whether the community or a church donated the statue to "look over the patients".

It could have been a place of reflection for families having to leave intellectually

disabled children or relatives at the asylum.

"Lots of children were admitted there in the 1800s," she said.

"It would have been quite heartbreaking to admit them and leave and go home."

A lot of the asylum's patients were buried at the nearby Christ Church Cathedral, so the angel may have come from that church.

"Most people were Christian back then. Maybe there was a fundraiser."

Now that the Stockton Centre has closed, what will become of the angel?

Dr Hardy believes its heritage qualities should be considered.

"A statue could easily be relocated back to the James Fletcher site, which commemorates 150 years next year.

"Maybe the angel can fly back across the harbour."

Non-Viral Jokes

What did the angel say when it went to heaven? Halo there.

Where do angels get their milk? Holy cows. What do angels serve at parties? Angel cake.

Why was the angel annoying? She harped on a bit too much.

|| topics@newcastleherald.com.au

TODAY IN HISTORY

- 1664** The Dutch surrender New Amsterdam to the British, who rename it New York.
- 1926** Germany is admitted to the League of Nations.
- 1945** Hideki Tojo, Japanese Prime Minister during most of World War II, attempts suicide rather than face a war crimes tribunal. The attempt fails and he is later convicted and hanged.
- 1996** Okinawan residents vote more than 10-to-1 in favour of a referendum to reduce US military bases on the Japanese island.
- 2003** Leni Riefenstahl, Adolf Hitler's filmmaker and one of the last of Germany's famous Nazi-era figures, dies aged 101.

BIRTHDAYS

Richard I of England (1157–1199); **Antonin Dvorák**, Czech composer (1841–1904); **Tilly Devine**, Australian crime figure (1900–1970); **Harry Secombe**, Welsh comedian (1921–2001); **Sid Caesar**, US comedian (1922–2014); **Peter Sellers**, English comedian-actor (1925–1980); **Patsy Cline**, US country singer (1932–1963); **Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan**, US musician (1945–1973); **James Packer**, Australian businessman (1967–); **Brooke Burke**, US model (1971–); **Troy Sanders**, US musician (1973–); **Pink**, US singer (1979–).

TRIVIA

- 1 Which US comedic actor starred in the third season of Swedish sitcom *Hjälp!* (Help!) as a US journalist stranded in Sweden in 2009?
- 2 What is the world's smallest island country?
- 3 In which Australian city is the Big Merino located?
- 4 Dili is the capital of which country?
- 5 Which two US rap artists released the collaborative album *Watch the Throne* in 2011?
- 6 In what year did Chinese leader Mao Zedong declare that the Cultural Revolution had officially ended?
- 7 In which country was Freddie Mercury born?
- 8 Who was the only actor to appear in every episode of the TV series *M*A*S*H*?
- 9 True or false: in chess, a king can put another king in checkmate?
- 10 Which Australian politician used the phrase "Go you big red fire engine" during a 2002 speech in parliament?

ANSWERS: 1. Chevy Chase 2. Nauru 3. Goulburn, NSW 4. East Timor 5. Kanye West and Jay-Z 6. Zanzibar 8. Alan Alda 9. False 10. Natasha Stott Despoja

TODAY'S TEXT

My eyes are fixed on You, Sovereign Lord; in You I take refuge.
Psalm 141:8

<http://www.torchtrust.org>

STAR SNAP

PAMELA Anderson has a new love in her life - her security guard. The couple have been together during the pandemic. He's been helping her fix up her home on Vancouver Island. The 53-year-old former *Baywatch* star posted this photo of herself on Instagram, saying "a good man makes you feel like a good girl".



Pamela Anderson.

WHAT'S ON

FURTHER Back in Time for Dinner is on ABC at 8.32pm on Tuesday, focusing on the 1910s. The decade kicks off with a cooking fad from Britain that reportedly caused divorce. By 1914, life is an emotionally charged test of resilience for the Ferrones, as they experience the Australian spirit confronted by war.

ODD SPOT

A MAN in his 80s blew up part of his house in France while trying to swat a fly. The man used an electric racket, made to kill bugs, to swat the fly. A gas leak in his home caused a reaction with the racket, triggering the explosion. The blast destroyed his kitchen, partly damaged the roof and burnt his hand.