

Leuralla is a historic house and home to the Leuralla Toy & Railway Museum.[3] The museum is home to a controversial collection of Nazi-era toys and Nazi memorabilia.[4][5] The property is located in Leura, a suburb in the Blue Mountains, in New South Wales, Australia, and its owner and director is Elizabeth Evatt.[4]

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Background[edit]

Leuralla was built for the independently wealthy yachtsman and big-game fisherman[6] Harry Andreas[7] (1879 – 1955),[8] his wife Alice and their young family. Harry and Alice Andreas lived at Leuralla until after World War II. In 1928, Clive Evatt QC (1900 – 1984) married Marjorie Andreas, a daughter, of Harry and Alice, and the Evatt family connection to the property began. Clive Evatt Jnr, an Andreas grandson, managed the property. Clive Evatt and his wife, Elizabeth Evatt, are the founders of the present museum. They are responsible for the exhibition of H.V. Evatt QC KStJ (1894 – 1965) memorabilia and for the toy and railway collection displayed in various buildings. Herbert Vere Evatt was Clive Evatt Snr's brother but had no particular connection with Leuralla and had a home of his own in Leura.[9]

As the home of the Katoomba Music Society in the 1930s, Leuralla hosted numerous interesting musical guests including: the internationally renowned pianist Solomon Cutner CBE, known as The Great Solomon; the composer and conductor Sir Eugene Goossens; and music critic and cricket commentator Sir Neville Cardus CBE. During the 1954 Royal Visit the house welcomed Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh.[10] During the 1927 Royal Tour of Australasia, Harry Andreas had acted as a fishing guide for The Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth) in the Bay of Islands,[11] whilst the young Princess "Lillibet" was at home in London.

The property[edit]

In 1903 a house, known as Leuralla, was built on the current site but was destroyed by bushfire in 1909. Between 1910 and 1914 the present house was built and the design was influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The house is an example of an early 20th Century permanent residence for a wealthy family. It is an imposing two-storey house set in extensive grounds in the Federation Free Classical style and is notable for its entry portico and stair, symmetry, and bracketed cornice. The walls and chimneys are rendered and the building is on a rockfaced sandstone base. Leuralla has a hipped roof with short projecting hipped wings on the southern and northern sides. The wide external sandstone staircase which has twin flights from the ground under a single storey portico. The portico is topped by a first floor balcony with balustrading. Doric columns complement the entry and the front door is multi-paned and has sidelights. There are symmetrically placed hipped roof bay windows on the northern and southern sides of the portico. The roof is covered in slate and ridged in terracotta. The garage has Federation Anglo-Dutch style influences and its

walls are shingled with a weatherboard spandrel. There is a single-storeyed sandstone outbuilding with a gabled roof on the Olympian Parade side of the grounds.[9]

Andreas established an exotic garden from his earliest ownership of Leuralla and much of it was saved from the 1909 bushfire. It was redeveloped around the 1914 house and is still 5 hectares (12 acres) in size. A formal garden lay out was used originally by Andreas and later Paul Sorensen improved the garden overall. There is a sculpture garden on the south side of Olympian Parade. The amphitheatre[12] on the edge of the escarpment takes advantages of its spectacular setting overlooking the Jamieson Valley.[9]

Nazi toy collection[edit]

The museum is home to an extensive collection of Nazi-themed toys from wartime Germany that is displayed in several exhibits at the museum. According to Elizabeth Evatt, the museum's owner and director, the Nazi toy collection has been exhibited on display at the museum for over thirty years.[4] The toys are noted for expressing symbols that are associated with the Nazi ideologies and beliefs (those unequivocally rejected today) that were present in Germany at the time the toys were created, sold and used.[13]

In 2014, the issue of the appropriateness of displaying Nazi toys and Nazi memorabilia was raised by local residents, however the museum maintained they would not remove the displays.[4] The issue was subsequently raised by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the representative body of the Jewish community in Australia. According to the ECAJ's report on Antisemitism in Australia, while the display of Nazi memorabilia is not illegal, it is often offensive and distressing to Holocaust survivors, their families, and to others who impacted by the savagery of the Nazi regime. An additional concern raised by the ECAJ is that Nazi toys can be used to promote and glorify hatred and violence, including racism, bigotry, and antisemitism.[14]

According to the state government agency that oversees standards for museums and galleries in New South Wales, the Leuralla displays may not be suitable for all audiences.[15]

Nazi-themed displays at Leuralla

Nazi-themed display at Leuralla

Nazi-themed toys at Leuralla with disclaimer

See also[edit]

National Transport and Toy Museum in Wanaka, New Zealand

Nuremberg Toy Museum