



FOUNDED 1961

# “Bunk”

**“History is more or less bunk” - Henry Ford, Chicago Tribune, 1916**

## **Gil Wahlquist - a man Hunters Hill won't forget in a hurry**

### **DIARY DATES 2013**

**Museum open**  
10 a.m. to noon  
Monday to Friday

**Meetings at Museum**  
22 Alexandra Street  
Hunters Hill

**Thursday, 28 February**  
**10 am for 10.30 a.m.**  
General Meeting  
Guest speaker

Bill Allen  
The Rivers Now And Then  
A History of the ferry  
services on the Lane Cove  
and Parramatta Rivers

**Thursday 21 March**  
Visit to Carisbrook House  
**SEE THIS PAGE**

**Wednesday 24 April**  
**10 am for 10.30am**  
David Payne  
Australian Register of  
Historic Vessels

**DON'T MISS  
OUR  
HERITAGE WEEK  
Community Milestones  
Exhibition**  
**Important events in  
Hunters Hill's history**  
in the areas of  
Military  
Schools  
Churches  
Sport  
The Arts  
Conservation  
Industry & Commerce

**E**ric Gilbert Wahlquist was born in Moon-  
ee Ponds, Victoria, on April 11, 1927, the  
son of Eric Wahlquist and his wife, Ellen  
(nee Limbrick). His father was a theatre manager  
and his job meant frequent moves but, in  
Wahlquist's high-school years, they settled in Ade-  
laide.

Wahlquist developed a lifelong love of movies, but  
he did not care for his parents' glamorous lifestyle.  
Instead he admired the fathers of his friends, Dep-  
ression-era handymen who could cobble together  
just about anything in their sheds.

His career in journalism started in high school  
when he edited the school magazine. Right to the  
end of his life, he read The Sydney Morning Her-  
ald every day, maintained a keen interest in politics  
and considered himself a journalist.

As soon as he was old enough, in 1944, he enlisted  
in the navy.

In retirement, he wrote a book about the corvette  
he served on during the war, HMAS Rockhampton  
*HMAS Rockhampton: Australian Corvette in World  
War II*, (2005).

He attended the University of Adelaide under the  
Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme,  
and edited the university paper, *On Dit*. While at  
university, Wahlquist decided he was ready to settle  
down. He looked around the refectory and chose  
three likely candidates. One was Vincie Porter.  
They married on May 13, 1950.

After graduating, Wahlquist joined The Adelaide  
News. In 1956, he moved to Sydney to take up a  
job with the Herald. Wahlquist had always loved  
music, with a particular interest in jazz. He wrote a  
record column for The Sun-Herald for nearly two  
decades until 1974.

In the late '60s, he had a stint in public relations,

which he found stimulating but high pressured. He  
wanted a change. Vincie, a country girl, was happy  
to move back to the land.

In 1970, they bought land at Mudgee, which they  
named Botobolar Vineyard after the region. It was  
the early days of the wine-grape boom and their  
plan was to plant wine grapes and semi retire. It  
takes several years for grapevines to become pro-  
ductive, so Wahlquist signed on as editor of The  
Mudgee Guardian. He said it was the best job he  
ever had because he could interact with the people  
he was writing about.

In 1974, when the first crop was ready for picking,  
Wahlquist was offered such a poor price he decid-  
ed to make his own wine.

Wahlquist quickly rejected the practice of clean  
cultivation, where all the weeds were cleared and  
the vines stood in bare soil. He thought that with  
only vines to eat, that's where all the pests would  
go, whereas if there was a choice of weeds about,  
chances were the vines would be left to flourish.  
With his love of photography and of birdwatching,  
he assembled a mass of evidence to support his  
theory.

The Department of Agriculture was not impressed:  
a senior officer visited the property and saw it was  
covered in weeds and proclaimed it “a bloody dis-  
aster”.

Then the vines were attacked by cut worms. The  
Department of Agriculture advice was to spray  
DDT. This was not what Wahlquist had left the  
city for, and he decided not to spray.

When the organic growers formed a certification  
system, Botobolar became the first certified organ-  
ic vineyard in Australia. The English company Vin-  
tage Roots persuaded him to send over some wine.  
It was such a success the Wahlquists were invited  
to Britain in 1988. When they came back, the  
words “organic growing” went on the label. In

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### **BILL ALLEN TO SPEAK ON FERRIES ON THE PARRAMATTA AND LANE COVE RIVERS**

Australia's leading authority on ferries, **Bill Allen**,  
will give a talk on the history of ferries on the Par-  
ramatta and Lane Cove Rivers at Hunters Hill  
Museum at 11am on **Thursday 28 February**.

During his time as Commercial Manager of Syd-  
ney Ferries he instigated and ran the “Great Ferry  
Boat Race” on Sydney Harbour, which has be-  
come a feature of Australia Day celebrations.  
Bill has an extensive collection of models and  
some 20,000 photographs of Sydney ferries.

### **VISIT TO CARISBROOK HOUSE**

**334 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove**  
**Thursday 21 March PARKING AVAILABLE**  
Tour begins at 10:30am and lasts for 1 hour,  
followed by morning tea, finishing at 12:30pm.  
**The cost is \$10 per person, all inclusive.**  
Carisbrook House was built in the early 1880's, and  
contains antiques from the late Victorian period.

**If you require transport, please phone Museum  
(98799443) 10am to noon Monday to Friday**

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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**Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc.**

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The following article appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald of November 20, 1936:

**CHINESE KILLED**  
**Supposed Murder**  
**IN RYDE MARKET GARDEN**  
**Lee Wah, 45, a Chinese market**  
**gardener, was found dead in Chi-**  
**nese gardens off Buffalo Road,**  
**Ryde, late last night.**

It is believed that Wah was killed during a quarrel.

Detective Inspector Matthews, who is in charge of the area, questioned a Chinese early this morning in connection with the tragedy. Police received many conflicting statements, but it is believed that Wah fired a number of shots before he was killed. It appeared from his injuries that death was caused by repeated blows with a rifle butt.

Reports were made to the police by nearby residents, who heard a man screaming for help.

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1984, he began producing preservative-free wine. Over the years, many people turned to Wahlquist for advice on organic farming.

Wahlquist loved to recycle and adapt. He loved the handcrafted and the locally sourced. He had, by this stage, become one of those men he so admired, with a workshop crammed full of things of varying degrees of usefulness, and he was able to turn his hand to many skills.

**Chinese market gardens in Ryde**

**A**ngela Phippen, Local Studies and Family History Librarian of Ryde Library was the guest speaker at our General Meeting on Thursday 25 October. Angela is the acknowledged expert on Chinese market gardens and gardeners in the Ryde-Eastwood area.

The number of Chinese coming to Australia was limited by the draconian restrictions of the White Australia Policy. The first reference to men of Chinese origin in the Ryde Local Government Area was in the Sands Directory in the late 1880s. The 1891 census records 20 Chinese. The numbers gradually increased from 1907, with a significant increase in the 1920s. The first Chinese market gardens in the Eastwood Municipality were recorded in 1921, and by the end of the 1920s there were 14, with a total of over 60 gardens operated by Chinese in the two municipalities. Each acre of land required about one worker, with a 5 acre plot employing 4 or 5 men.

Almost all of the Chinese in the Ryde area were market gardeners, although there is reference to a pig farmer, a florist and a herbalist. In other areas of Sydney Chinese were involved in furniture making or as shopkeepers and merchants.

Usually, the Chinese leased the land they worked, but some leased part of the land owned by local Europeans. Living conditions were harsh, housing was basic and often described as a "humpy" on land records.

Areas where market gardens were concentrated included:

- Winbourne Street, Brush Road, Darvall Road and Tramway Street in Eastwood.
  - Darwin Street, Meadowbank
  - Parkes Street, Top Ryde.
  - On the northern side of Victoria Road near Holy Cross College.
  - Areas between Bridge and Quarry Roads west of Lane Cove Road in Ryde.
- There were also many gardens in the Marsfield/ North Ryde area.

Generally, the men lived a single life, although some would have had wives in China.

The locals usually knew them by names such as "Johnny" and "Charlie" and everyone seemed to get on fairly well.

Due to population and other land use pressures, the gardens have been transformed into parks, housing developments etc. Examples include Ryde Bus Depot, Macquarie Psychiatric Hospital and the area around Hunter Holden in West Ryde.

**Gil Wahlquist left his mark**

It was a happy life at Botobolar with many rewards, but it was no retirement. In 1994, Wahlquist tired of the long days and constant demands of farming, and they sold the winery and bought a house in Hunters Hill.

He was active in a score of local groups including recognition of seniors, Probus, the Hunters Hill Trust, the Hunters Hill Historical Society and the local museum. He received a centenary medal in 2000, and in 2002 was Hunters Hill Citizen of the Year.

Throughout the Mudgee and Hunters Hill years, he continued to write.

In retirement he became an author. He wrote a history of wine in Mudgee, *Some of My Best Friends Are Winemakers* (2008). He collaborated with his relatives Ray Specht and Mark Wahlquist on a history of the German side of the family in Australia, published as *The Flight of the Woodpecker* (2009). And he wrote a book about his naval service.

None of this could have been accomplished without Vincie's love and unwavering support.

In November, when it became clear he was terminally ill, all he wanted was to go home and be with Vincie. He died as he wished, at home with Vincie holding his hand.

Gil is survived by Vincie, children Asa (known as Karin), Janet, Roland and Nancy, and grandchildren Mali, Piper, Calla, Grace and Mad. *Asa Wahlquist -from an obituary in The Sydney Morning Herald 4/1/2013*



**HHHS President Ian Adair with guest speaker Dr Beverley Sherry and members of the Windeyer family from Canberra**

**RECORD ATTENDANCE AT XMAS BANQUET**

Over 60 members and guests attended the 2012 Hunters Hill Historical Society Christmas Banquet at the Grandview Restaurant on Monday 3 December.

Guest speaker **Dr Beverley Sherry** spoke on the life and work of Hunters Hill poet Robert D. FitzGerald.

The new management of the restaurant maintained the high standard of service and cuisine we have come to expect.