



“Bunk”

“History is more or less bunk”-
HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916

Diary Dates 2016

Museum Open
10am to noon
Monday to Friday

Meetings at Museum

22 Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill

Thursday 25 February
10am for 10:30

GENERAL MEETING
and afterwards

Speaker: Lynn Trainor
History of
The Hunters Hill Theatre

Monday 7 March
Tour of Mitchell Library
and History House
SEE PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS
There is no cost for tours

The Hunters Hill Theatre has been part of the social fabric of Hunters Hill for over 85 years. It is the second oldest theatre group in Australia - pipped by Hobart. Over the years, many productions have been enjoyed by both residents and visitors. Come along and listen to **Lynn Trainor** tell us about its history and development. Lynn is the former President of Hunters Hill Theatre, has “trodden the boards” and is currently involved in the production/direction of an upcoming play.

Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Hunters Hill Connection

If you’ve ever wondered where the blocks of granite scattered across Clarkes Point Reserve at Woolwich came from, then the answer might be staring you in the face.

By that, I mean the solution to the mystery may be found in the Sydney Harbour Bridge which is clearly visible from the riverside park-land.

There are about one dozen of the granite blocks at Clarkes Point. Each measures several cubic metres. All display distinctive quarry markings. This type of granite is not naturally found in the Sydney Harbour area where

Hawkesbury Sandstone is the predominant indigenous rock.

According to Hunters Hill Council’s Group Manager Works and Services, David Innes, the blocks were discovered in a pile when the council remodeled the car park next to Hunters Hill Sailing Club about six years ago.

An admirer of the world-class structure of the “coathanger”, David believes that the granite may have been left over from the Bridge’s construction. To preserve the blocks, David organised for them to be strategically placed in the Reserve to complement the natural environment.

In all, 18,000 cubic metres of cut granite in 173,000 blocks were produced for the Harbour Bridge from a quarry at Moruya on the New South Wales South Coast. Over 250 stonemasons from Australia, Scotland and Italy were involved in the cutting and dressing operation from 1924 up to the Harbour Bridge’s official opening in 1932.

Incidentally, it was a Scottish emigrant, the Pilot Station Controller at Moruya, Captain Ross, who noticed that granite found locally was similar in quality to granite back in Aberdeen, Scotland. He sent samples to the Colonial Architect in Sydney, James Barnet (1807-1904). Soon after, Moruya granite became well

known for its quality and colour. As a result, it was later selected for the Harbour Bridge.

Distinguished civil engineer, Dr John Bradfield (1867-1943), of the New South Wales Public Works Department, oversaw the design and building of the Harbour Bridge by Dorman, Long and Company of Middlesborough, Eng-

land. He decided that the Harbour Bridge’s four large pylons should be faced with granite. They were for decorative use only and hold no structural purpose. The blocks, weighing up to six tonnes each, were trans-



ported in specially built ships in a 300-kilometre journey from the quarry at Moruya to Sydney. Several theories abound as to why a few of them ended up at Woolwich.

Possibly the most authoritative explanation comes from the former New South Wales Department of Main Roads’ resident engineer during the installation of the Gladesville Bridge, Sandy McKenzie (1923-2012). During his public service career, he worked alongside engineers who had been involved in the building of the Harbour Bridge.

In an interview, Sandy asserted that the Horse Paddock, adjacent to Clarkes Point, was “the area on which the granite blocks for the pylons of the Harbour Bridge were dressed to shape before being taken to the site and placed in the pylons.”

Whether the blocks were dressed there, as Sandy stated, or whether they were simply stored there and some were discarded or surplus to requirements remains a fascinating piece of history.

That’s the story to date. If you can shed any more light on the matter, then Hunters Hill Historical Society would like to hear from you. In any case, go and view the blocks yourself at Clarkes Point for this is one of the very special places of Hunters Hill. **Chris Schofield**

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL
SOCIETY INC

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Halcyon Days

I live in a rut and proud of the fact...by trial and error I have worked out just what suits me, and having the courage to carry on regardless of comments and advice, I feel that I have achieved my life's ambition.

My day starts early. After breakfast, before I read the Herald, I do the washing. I have a horror of developing into a spotty old lady, so every morning, regardless of weather, my ancient washing machine is switched on.

On fine days whilst the clothes are whirling and swirling I stand under the hoist and look at the river. My thoughts are attracted by the boats, the shadows or past memories. Then there are the birds. I dally longer than is necessary watching them as they hover, fly, twitter and preen.

Eventually the washing is on the line, me on the top house step admiring the things as they wave gently in the morning breeze. Then make a fresh pot of tea, pick up the paper, and try to find some-



Above: The tree, corner of Alexandra and Ferry Streets.

thing that doesn't pertain to sex, murder or political intrigue.

I have lost count of just how long this satisfactory state of affairs has continued – I certainly expected it to last forever, but lately, when I go into the kitchen I have the disturbing feeling that someone else has been there.

For a whole week, this situation has persisted, and I find myself doing the silliest things to snare the interloper, but with no result.

But hush...what is that? Stealthily I creep into the kitchen and find myself face to face with my tormentor. He turns his head and fixes me with a calculating eye.

My thoughts race. What will I do now? How am I to rid myself of this uninvited visitor? Even as I hesitate, he takes the situation out of my hands. Quickly and effortlessly, he gains the window sill, pauses for a second, then with an almost mocking call of 'currawong, currawong' flies into the sunlight of a spring morning.

From Mostly Hunters Hill, by Margaret Oliver.

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TOUR OF MITCHELL LIBRARY AND HISTORY HOUSE

MONDAY 7 MARCH

**The tour of the Mitchell Library starts at
10:30am and lasts for one hour.**

We then walk down to History House in Macquarie Street, arriving at 11:40am for a look at the library and a talk on the historic building.

Morning tea will be provided at no charge. The tour and talk will take about an hour.

Suggest we catch the ferry from Valentia Street at 9:24am arriving Circular Quay at 9:47.

**PLEASE REGISTER AT THE MUSEUM 9879 9443
OR WITH TONY SAUNDERS 9817 1432**

FUNNY THINGS HAPPEN WITH PLAQUES AND MONUMENTS

STRANGE STORY OF A MISSING PLAQUE

At the corner of Alexandra and Ferry Streets, you'll see a tall tree and a bronze plaque. They were dedicated by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Walter Davidson, KCMG, on 13 September 1919, *'In commemoration of the patriotism of the youth of Hunters Hill during the Great War.'*

The Weekly Times of 28 February 1990 reported that the plaque and a supporting stone had disappeared ten years earlier. According to the article, the plaque and stone had recently been found atop a chimney in Gympie Bay. Ken Pilcher, a former president of Hunters Hill RSL, and others who were present at the original planting ceremony, arranged with the Mayor, Ross Williams for the plaque to be re-laid. It is still there today.

VIRET HEADSTONE RESCUED

Francis Charles Viret died in 1878 and was buried in St Anne's Churchyard, Ryde. He was a signatory to a successful petition to Governor Denison in 1860 to declare the village of Hunters Hill a municipality. When Victoria Road was widened in 1960, part of the churchyard was reclaimed, and headstones in that section were removed. Some, including part of Viret's, were placed as stepping stones in Buffalo Creek Park. Mrs Mary O'Brien noticed the headstone, and with the assistance of Mr R. Charlesworth and Hunters Hill Council, the stone was removed, cleaned and placed in the small reserve at the bottom of Viret Street, with a brass plaque telling the story. **From the archives of Hunters Hill Historical Society**

HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS AT IL BOLOGNESE

Members and guests of Hunters Hill Historical Society celebrated Christmas at Il Bolognese Italian Restaurant, Boro-nia Park, on Monday 7 December. Our host, Celso, welcomed us with champagne and put on a fine two course meal. The guest speaker was Ken Bock, who gave recitations of prose and poetry on a Yuletide theme. The evening was also made more exciting by our traditional raffle, with generous gifts from members and friends of the Society.