



FOUNDED 1961

“Bunk”

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

John Tawell craved redemption but ended on the gallows

DIARY DATES

2013

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

Meetings at Museum

22 Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill

Thursday 22 August

10am for 10:30

AGM

Speaker: John Vaughan

The History of Flags

Thursday

12 September

Tour of

St Joseph's College

with the Mayor

SEE BACK PAGE

FOR DETAILS

**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

Open until

the end of August

John Tawell, born in 1784, was transported to New South Wales for fourteen years in 1814. He had been found in possession of an engraved bank note plate in Uxbridge, Middlesex, a crime for which he undoubtedly would have been hanged.

However, the officials of the bank involved were Quakers, as was Tawell, and were loath to have such an extreme penalty inflicted, so he was convicted of the lesser charge of being in possession of a forged bank note.

The penalty for this crime would have been seven years on the hulks, but Tawell said he would rather do fourteen years transportation than endure the degradation of being a galley slave.

Before being transported, he had studied pharmacy, and secured a position as assistant at the Rum Hospital. He eventually obtained a ticket-of-leave, and then his freedom. By 1820 he was practicing as a chemist near the corner of Hunter and Macquarie Streets, where he lived, and the business subsequently moved to larger premises at 18 Pitt Street. In 1822 Tawell brought his wife and two sons out, and by then he was a wealthy man, having branched out into shipping and whaling. One son became a surgeon, the other a chemist. He gave generously to charity, and always went about in the long brown coat and big brown hat of the Quaker. He also built a chapel in Macquarie Street for the

EXECUTION OF JOHN TAWELL, AND FULL CONFESSION, TO HIS WIFE, IN A LETTER Of the Murder of Sarah Hart.

Aylesbury, This morning, 8 o'clock.
At an early hour this morning, the sheriffs, with their usual attendants, arrived at the prison, and after partaking of some refreshment, proceeded to the condemned cell, where they found the reserved ordinary engaged in prayer with the wretched culprit.
After the usual formalities had been observed of demanding the delivery of the body of the prisoner into their custody, Tawell was conducted to the press-room, where his irons were struck off. The executioner, with his assistants, then commenced pinning his arms, which operation they skilfully and quickly despatched. During these awful preparations he sighed deeply, but uttered not a word. At a quarter before 8, all the arrangements having been completed, the bell of the prison commenced tolling, and the melancholy procession was formed:— the reserved ordinary, preceding the culprit on his way to the fatal drop, began reading in a distinct tone, the burial service for the dead. No sound, if we except the deep sighs of the unhappy man, interrupted the clergyman, as the procession moved along the subterranean passage. On arriving at the steps leading to the scaffold, he turned round, and strenuously



acted. After living 15 years in Sydney, he returned home, where he has been endeavouring to gain admittance as a member of the Society of Friends, to which body he belonged before his transportation, but they would not admit him. During his first wife's illness, the deceased nursed her, whence arose their illicit correspondence.

COPY OF VERSES.

GOOD people all of each degree
Attend to what I shall unfold.
It is a dreadful tragedy
Will make your very blood run cold.
Your heart's aches with grief will bleed,
When you this cruel tale shall hear;
There's not been done so vile a deed
Since the days of Courvoisier.
John Tawell is my name 'tis true,
In wealth and splendor once I've dwelt,
A hypocrite I've always been,
Not much of it more never felt.
My first crime was Forgery,
A convict was to Sidney sent,
I riches gained oh! misery,
My stubborn heart did not relent.
To lustful passions I gave way,
At virtue I had always omitted:
Poor Sarah Hart I did betray,
She by me had proved with child,
My house she left, yet still the same,
In adulterous love we pass'd our time,
In my dark deeds of guilt and shame:
My wife unconscious of our crime:

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY 22 AUGUST

10:30am AT THE MUSEUM
22 Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill

Agenda, Reports and Election of Officers

Tony Saunders, Honorary Secretary

AUGUST SPEAKER

John C. Vaughan

John Vaughan is a vexillographer and is considered to be Australia's leading authority on the design, etiquette, protocol and history of flags. His talk will be on *Australian Maritime and Heritage Flags*, and will cover the public competition in 1900 to create our national flag, the 'Stars and Crosses'. He will describe the design of flags past and present, and the rationale behind them. He will also talk on the significance and purpose of the Australian national flag. He will show some twenty historically important flags during his talk. John's flag collection was featured on the ABC TV series *Collectors*.

Society of Friends. In 1824 he sold his business to Ambrose Foss and Michael Mahoney for fourteen thousand pounds, and took his family back to England. He returned to Australia alone, but missing his family,
(Continued on page 2)

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Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc.

Officers for 2012-2013

President Ian Adair

Vice-president Pat Cox

Treasurer & Public Officer

Graham Percival

Secretary Tony Saunders

Committee

June Beck,

Jan Griffiths

Bob Mostyn

Dorothy Cubban

John Rogers

Chris Schofield

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returned again to England, and brought them back. On his return to England he had regained membership of the Quakers.

Back in Australia, he bought just over two acres of Crown Land at Hunters Hill on 18 June 1835, covering present day Croissy Avenue and Ferry Street. On 29 April 1837 he purchased a further 40 acres, comprising the whole of the Pulpit Point area, covering present day Francis Street, Wybalena Road, and Fern Road. But by the end of 1837, both Tawell's sons had died, and his wife was too sick to remain in Australia. They returned to England for the last time in February 1838, and Mrs Tawell died in 1840. He sold his land in Hunters Hill to Ambrose Foss, who had earlier bought his business in Sydney. Foss built Carey Cottage and became a major absentee landlord in Hunters Hill.

Back in England, John Tawell married Mrs Eliza Cutforth, a Quaker widow, in 1841. She gave him another son, and he had a daughter from his first marriage. However, during his first wife's long illness, she had been attended by Sarah Hart, "a young woman

Hunters Hill welcomes Lane Cove

Tuesday 9 July saw Hunters Hill Historical Society welcome members of the Lane Cove Historical Society to morning tea, a talk by historian and member of the Hunters Hill Historical Society, Gregory Blaxell entitled *Community Milestones – A History of Hunters Hill*, and a walk around the area led by our Treasurer and well known walks leader, Graham Percival. The event was in return for the hospitality shown to members of Hunters Hill Historical Society when they were treated to a visit to Carisbrook House, Lane Cove. Gregory's talk ranged over the early land

of some attractions," and it appears she became Tawell's mistress. The relationship continued when he married Mrs Cutforth. By this time he had once again been refused full membership of the Society of Friends.

In 1845, fearing the exposure of his clandestine affair, or possibly not wanting to continue supporting Sarah Hart, Tawell determined to murder her. According to his own confession, he first tried morphia, but as this was unsuccessful, resorted to putting prussic acid in Sarah's stout, her favourite drink.

Later that evening neighbours heard Sarah's moans and arrived to see Tawell as he pushed past them without a word. By the time the doctor arrived, Sarah Hart was dead. The hunt for John Tawell was on.

Tawell was pursued to Slough railway station where he took a train for London. But modern technology was about to catch up with him. In 1844, a telegraphic signal box had been put up at Slough. When it was found that the train had left, the following telegram was sent:

"A murder has just been committed at Salt Hill, and the suspected murderer was seen to take a first class ticket for London by the train which left Slough at 7:42pm. He is in the garb of a Quaker, with a brown great-coat which reaches to his feet. He is in the last compartment of the second class carriage."

On disembarking at Paddington, Tawell was spotted and tapped on the shoulder by a policeman as he entered a lodging house.

He was subsequently tried and hanged.

References: Original Land Grantees of Hunters Hill - J. Bruce Dalley, Hunters Hill Historical Society

Journal of the RAHS, Vol 7, pp 79,83,84 by Mrs A.G. Foster

Journal of the RAHS, Vol 13, pp 201-202 by W.S. Campbell

Early Australian History – First Series, under the auspices of the Aust. Historical Society by C.H. Bertie – "Peeps At The Past"

Thank you to those members who came to the museum on Thursday 27 June to help identify unknown people and places. **Eunice Farram and Dorothy Cubban** advise 25 photographs were fully or partially identified. A good result.

grants and those who arrived on the peninsula and were influential in its development – people such as Didier and Jules Joubert, Charles Jeanneret, Baron Gabriel de Milhau and others of French heritage, as well as settlers from Ireland and Germany. He spoke about the industry that grew at Woolwich at the eastern end of the peninsula, which took advantage of water transport and proximity to Sydney Harbour.

It was interesting to hear how the character of Hunters Hill and Woolwich has changed over the years, from small farms and dairies and houses with extensive grounds, to a pleasant near-city residential area dotted with a selection of fine old stone homes with stone walls, some with water frontages, dubbed *Australia's First Garden Suburb* by noted historian Beverley Sherry, a resident of Hunters Hill.

Gregory spoke of the battles to maintain Hunters Hill's character over the years, particularly the Battlers of Kellys Bush, and resistance to State Government attempts to bring about council amalgamation. His talk was very much appreciated by members and visitors alike.

Following Gregory's talk, a large group of our visitors was led by Graham Percival on a walk around some of the more historic streets in the area, to see the fine old houses and buildings dating from the early days.

Our visitors then adjourned to the Hunters Hill Club for lunch.

A WALKING TOUR OF ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

LED BY THE MAYOR OF HUNTERS HILL,

COUNCILLOR RICHARD QUINN

Thursday 12 September at 10:30am.

You are invited to take part in a tour of St Joseph's College, one of Australia's Great Public Schools.

The Mayor of Hunters Hill, Councillor Richard Quinn, who is also the Director of Development at St Joseph's, will tell the story of this great school from its beginning as a timber building opened in July 1881 for 44 boarders, to the nationally known educational institution which today graces the suburb of Hunters Hill. You will be shown the Historic Precinct, containing paintings of famous Joeys old boys, including Sir William Deane and the Hon. Murray Gleeson; the Statue of Winged Victory, whose history includes the Czar of Russia, Queen Victoria and the Art Gallery of NSW before coming to St Joseph's; the original and current chapels; upper vestibule; community bell, staircase and tower, and the reception area containing artefacts important to the culture of the school.

The tour takes 1 hour and you will be given a guide book.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Phone the museum 98799443 10am to noon Monday to Friday or Tony Saunders 98171432.