

*We acknowledge the traditional custodians of Hunters Hill
and show respect to Elders past and present.*



www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

“Bunk”

“History is more or less bunk”

HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916

Anyone for Tennis?

Museum is open 10am to noon Monday to Friday

The Historical Society has published three booklets entitled *Hunters Hill Remembers*. The booklets – *Supreme Sacrifices*, *Lest We Forget* and *People and Places* – are the first time that a comprehensive record of Hunters Hill’s connections with the military have been recorded. They cover from colonial times, through the Boer War, the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and up to modern times. The emphasis is on those who came from Hunters Hill and who served their country in the various conflicts. The booklets have been written by our President, Chris Schofield, in partnership with Rod Stewart of Hunters Hill RSL sub-Branch. They are available to members and can be collected from the Museum at the Town Hall.

Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc Office Bearers and Committee 2020-2022

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Chris Schofield

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This year Hunters Hill Tennis Club celebrates 100 years at its current location on the corner of Woolwich Road and Jeanneret Avenue.

In addition to this historic milestone, the club is also the oldest continuously operating sports club in Hunters Hill, 134 years; one of the oldest tennis clubs in Sydney; and one of the few remaining clubs with all lawn courts. Amazing achievements considering the club has only ever been managed by volunteers.

The club can reliably trace its existence back to 1888. However, it does possess a short poem from 1882, written by long term Hunters Hill resident and member RD Fitzgerald, referring to a tennis match between Hunters Hill and Ryde.

At this time, games were played on the courts of local residents and the club was known as the Hunters Hill Lawn Tennis Club. With the flavour of a bygone era, a set of handicap tournament rules note that the “result draw will be posted on gum tree at north end of Tennis

Court on Friday morning” and includes AB Paterson in a list of members. Further, club rules from 1894 state that “No one shall be allowed to play on the courts unless wearing

boots or shoes without heels and with india-rubber soles”.

In 1907, the members commenced playing on the grounds of the present day Hunters Hill Club. However, in 1921 members were given notice of the intention to resume the



tennis courts, and the club was asked to vacate.

The following year, in May 1922, with a membership of 62, land was purchased at the current site. In July, construction of four courts commenced. Fortunately, Harry M Shelley, a member and benefactor, not



only assisted in the purchase of this land but also personally purchased additional

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land for his own court for exclusive use by the lady members. This fifth court was subsequently acquired by the club. Each year the club continues to hold the Shelley Memorial Doubles event. The Married versus Singles event is yet to be reinstated.

The courts were officially opened for play on June 23, 1923, by the mayor, Alderman WA Windeyer. Over the years there have been numerous ups and downs. Some of the most poignant reading is in the minutes during the war years. Month after month they record the names of members who resigned to enlist as well as honouring those who did not return, all the while trying to keep the club afloat.

In 1960 the Hunters Hill Tennis Club Limited was formed. Membership was expanding and players were coming from surrounding areas, unlike the very early days when membership had been restricted to Hunters Hill residents. This company was formed to enable the club to borrow money for the construction of its present day clubhouse and to resolve problems associated with the shareholdings of the previous company.

As the club reaches another milestone, it continues to offer its members wonderful social tennis as well as participation in internal and metropolitan Sydney team competitions, while exemplifying its motto: **GOOD FELLOWSHIP, GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP, FINE ACHIEVEMENTS.** Thanks to Judy Smith, Hunters Hill Tennis Club, for contributing this article.

Pictures: Players at the old site of the Hunters Hill Lawn Tennis Club, which is the present day Hunters Hill Bowls Club; Members of the Woolwich Tennis Club at the Usher home, 1908.

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INC

ABN 72012103152

Address Mail To The Secretary
Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc
PO Box 98 Hunters Hill NSW 2110

Phone 9879 9443

www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

Email: con-

tact@huntershillmuseum.org.au

Editor: Ian Adair

"Stately homes of Hunters Hill"

Hunters Hill is a very pleasant district. Lying between the mouth of the Parramatta River and the Lane Cove River, it has great natural beauty. In many ways it retains an English character with its lanes and hedges and magnificent old trees. Most of the stone homes are in an excellent state of preservation and a feature of the area is the wonderful old stone walls. The grounds of some of these places gently slope down to the water's edge.

Much of the fine architecture is due to the creativity of the Joubert brothers who settled there in 1840. Many skilled Italian artisans worked on these homes and the materials for some of them were specially imported from France and



Italy.

All these houses have in common the quality of craftsmanship. They were built in an age when nuclear energy and utility housing were unknown. Time could wait graciously while these early builders finish the house in all its traditional form and detail. To visit Hunters Hill now and be reminded of this is a refreshing experience

There is *St Malo*. Set in very beautiful grounds overlooking Lane Cove, this lovely old house was built by M. Didier Numa Joubert in 1847. Except for a short break from 1892 to 1897, the property has remained within this family; its present owner being Mrs Bruce Walker. Leased from the owner by the National Trust of Australia (NSW), it has been restored and refurnished in period style by a Sydney catering company which makes it available to the public for various functions. The Trust opens the house to visitors on Sundays.

The elegant, fluted pillars, which now form part of *St Malo's* original verandah, are relics of the historic old Macquarie Street residence *Burdekin*

House, now no longer standing. A feature of *St Malo* is the large cellars in which the original owner stored the wines which he brought out from Bordeaux.

The property on which *St Malo* is built originally belonged to Mrs Mary Reibey, and the two original buildings which were on the land are now called *Figtree House* and *Reibey Cottage*. From its position in the grounds, *Reibey Cottage*, seen through a pattern of trees and native shrubs, still commands a delightful view. Some restoration work is now being done to this old building.

A second house, *Passy*, in lovely Passy Avenue, was built about the year 1854 by M. François Sentis, Sydney's first French consul. The grounds, in those days, adjoined *Mooooloola*, the last house built by M. Joubert. The historic and romantic literary record of early Australia, "The Letters of Rachel Henning", is associated with *Passy*. The Henning family occupied the house for several years, and towards the end of her long and vigorous life, Rachel Henning went to live there with her sister and brother. Hunters Hill was also the background for part of "A House is Built", the prize-winning Australian novel by M. Barnard Eldershore.

Residents of the "Hill" have always been extremely proud of their district, and in 1938, during Australia's 150th anniversary celebrations, the municipal council presented a pageant, The Cavalcade of Hunters Hill, which



fully portrayed the historic and colourful story of this old and beautiful suburb of Sydney.

Australian Geographical Walkabout Magazine, 1 October 1958. Pictures: *St Malo*; *Passy*, during renovations, 1971.

MID-WINTER LUNCH

Members of the Historical Society are advised that our informal Mid-Winter Lunch will be held at the Woolwich Pier Hotel on Thursday 7 July at 12 noon. An upstairs area has been reserved. Please order and pay for your meals at the downstairs counter.

SEE YOU THERE