

# “Landau to Lexus”

## A history of Hunters Hill transport

Before the First Fleet 1788, Hunters Hill transport was by walking or bark canoe. Governor Phillip sent an exploring party rowing west and it found a small rocky peninsula only four kilometres away. It was named Hunters Hill after Phillip’s deputy, Capt John Hunter.

All the first settlers rowed or sailed to Hunters Hill and around the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers. Steep sandstone ridges and deep harbor inlets meant road transport to and from Hunters Hill was almost 100 years away.

### FERRIES

The first ‘ferry’ service Sydney-Parramatta was the ‘Rosehill Packet’ [aka ‘The Lump’] a 20 foot sailing/rowing boat in 1789 but a round trip could take up to a week! Informal small craft were sailed or rowed taking passengers and goods as needed from point to point in the harbor. Steam-powered paddlewheelers began in the 1830s. Probably the first was “Surprise’ then the ‘Experiment’ in 1832 but that boat began with literal horsepower as horses were used onboard to drive a paddlewheel.

Up until 1856 the Hunters Hill settlers had no direct ferry service and the Parramatta service refused to stop here despite loud protest by the French entrepreneurs building houses. There was strong demand from commuters and the farmers growing fruit and raising stock on the flat areas. The Joubert brothers started a daily service City-Ferry Street-Tarban-Ferry St-City which was successful. Then Jules Joubert and Jeanneret started ‘Parramatta and Hunters Hilly Ferry Co ‘ running ferries from Figtree and Tarban Creek to Sydney using steam ferries “Ysebel’, ‘Platypus’ and ‘Adelaide’. This competed with the Parramatta service and soon the two combined with Jeanneret running the show. The Jouberts continued with their Lane Cove Steam River Ferry Co based on Figtree serving the growing Hunters Hill area and competing with Jeanneret but there was business for everyone. The Council built a dozen wharves and there were at least another dozen used along the peninsula plus nine above Figtree for freight , residents and trips to the ‘pleasure grounds ‘ as far as Killara!

### BRIDGES

The invention of the Bessemer Converter for steel mass production made large bridges possible. Pyrmont Bridge in 1857 was the first bridge over the harbour between the Heads and Parramatta followed by Glebe Island 1862. But it was the first Gladesville Bridge 1881 that seriously impacted Parramatta River ferries. Iron Cove 1882 , Figtree Bridge at the Lane Cove River 1885 and the Ryde railway bridge added to the ease of land transport although the particular geography of Hunters Hill meant that ferries remained a quick, comfortable and scenic commute and it remains popular today. When Transdev threatened to reduce the service in 2020 an overflow town hall meeting fiercely rejected it.

Indeed, much of the rhythm of Hunters Hill life has been dictated by the ferry – the mad scramble in the morning, hurried departure from parties to get the last ferry and since 1923 the Anzac Day service has been the night before because there were no ferries for the Dawn Service

Steam gave way to diesel, paddlewheel to propeller and then attempts at hovercraft, hydrofoil, catamaran and now jet propulsion under water . The Rivercat on the Parramatta route and the catamaran to Woolwich are the latest

## **INDUSTRIAL**

From the 24 wharves along Hunters Hill down to two today tells the story although commercial/ industrial transport until the 1960's was largely by water. As well as shipbuilding and repair at Clarke's Point and Cockatoo Island, the Atlas Steel Co, Kelly's Sydney Smelting Co, the radium works below Nelson Parade – all were on the waters edge because it was cheaper and easier to bring the coal, minerals and also the workers by water. Sydney Harbour today has lost the power stations, gasworks, oil refineries, cement plants and heavy industrial factories that stood where there are now huge housing estates – Pulpit Point, Breakfast Point, Balmain and Berry's Bay.

## **TRAMWAYS**

Horse-drawn trams and then steam trams from Sydney to Drummoyne began in 1902 and extended over the Bridge to Ryde in 1910 – electric-power followed. Fierce agitation for a tramway to Woolwich continued until 1960 but "The Tramway to Nowhere" was never commercial sense. Buses began to service Hunters Hill with connections to Gladesville, Ryde, Chatswood and the city continuing.

## **BUSLINES**

In 1910 Walter Bruce took over a bus route to the Woolwich wharf and later formed the Hunters Hill Bus Co serving the peninsula and surrounds. It grew modestly but In 1965 Ken Butt began as manager with residence/office in a small cottage where Gladesville Aldi stands. In 1978 Ken bought the business and his wife Judith and all of the children worked in the company and pursued a vision of a larger network covering the Northern and Western suburbs. They had Reno then Leyland and Hino buses until 2000 when they sold to the STA [ now Sydney Buses with its depot next to one of the HHBC sites]. Today's electric ,aircon ,radio-controlled fleet dominates transport for Hunters Hill commuters

## **PRIVATE VEHICLES**

The wealthy drove a Landau, the not-so a sulky, gig or buggy or horseback or walked to the ferry. Cars made their uncertain way into life from about 1920 onwards but very rapidly after 1945 even though British Austin A30, Morris Minor and Vanguard were unexciting. Holden, the Falcon , the 'yank tanks' came later then swept aside by Japanese cars and the Mini in the 60's finally succumbing to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – less than 100 years from their invention. Now the landau has become a Lexus and on we go through Tesla to drones, driverless cars and .....airtaxi?

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