

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

Patron: The Mayor of Hunters Hill

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

May 2025

Volume 27 Issue 2



www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

“Bunk”

“History is more or less bunk”

HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY DiaryDates:

A general meeting of members will be held in the Hunters Hill Council Chamber on Wednesday 28 May, 2025.

Morning tea is at 10am followed by the meeting at 10.30am.

GUEST SPEAKER

JUDITH DUNN OAM FPDHS

Hoofbeats in History

The beginnings of horse breeding and racing in early Australia.

FOR THE DIARY:

The MID-WINTER LUNCH will be held on Wednesday 23 July at The Woolwich Pier Hotel. A 15-minute history of Hunters Hill prepared by the St Peters and Cooks River History Association will be shown after lunch. 12 noon start.

Members pay for own lunch.

Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc

Office bearers and committee

2024/2025

President: Rod Stewart

Vice president \Treasurer:

Felicity McCaffrey

Secretary: Tony Saunders

Committee: Dorothy Cubban, Jan

Griffiths, Jean Pritchard

Newsletter editor: Kate Armati

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:

contact@huntershillmuseum.org.au

Editor: Kate Armati

First Australian-born famous landscape artist from Hunters Hill

After Mary Reibey (she's on our \$20 note), William Charles Piguenit (pictured) is arguably Hunters Hill's most celebrated resident.

He was a famous artist who lived, painted and died in our suburb. William

was the first Australian born famous landscape artist. His paintings are in state art collections, the National Gallery of Australia, private collections and also in London and Paris galleries.

The Hunters Hill Historical Society has one of his paintings which is currently being refurbished. William C Piguenit was born in Hobart, Tasmania, on 27 August 1836. His father Frederick Piguenit was transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1830, and in a case of true love, his future wife Mary Igglesden followed him out as a free settler. Frederick and Mary had seven children and William was the second born.

In the 1840s William studied drawing and geometry at the Cambridge Academy in Hobart, and at the age of 14 joined the Tasmanian government surveyor team as a draftsman. He later resigned to become a full-time artist accepting commissions.

The Piguenit family, including William and the parents, progressively moved to NSW from 1879 to 1880. The family built two houses in Avenue Road, Hunters Hill: “Kaoota” and “Saintonge” which included an artist studio for William. (It's still there today). Here he remained painting for the rest of his life until he died in his home “Kaoota” in 1914. We have an historic plaque on the footpath by the residence. Williams Piguenit's artworks include many major landscapes, not only of Tasmania, but of NSW. The Lane Cove, Hawksbury and Nepean Rivers were some of his favourite subjects and were painted in his studio in Hunters Hill. He went on lengthy painting expeditions overseas to Europe, but mainly England and Wales, on two separate occasions in 1898 and later 1900. His paintings were also exhibited at The Salon Champs Elysees, Paris (1893), Columbian exhibition - Chicago USA (1893), and Manchester Art Gallery,



(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

England (1894). Then later at the Grafton Gallery, London (1898). This exhibition included works by Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts where Piguénit's paintings outsold them!

In 1875, his striking landscape of Mt Olympus, Tasmania, was the first oil painting by an Australian born artist acquired through public subscription for the Art Gallery of NSW. In 1901, William won the prestigious Art Society of NSW Wynne prize for a landscape painting. Further, it is worth noting that one of his paintings was included in a tour of China by the Art Gallery of NSW in 1975. Piguénit lived, painted and died in Hunters Hill and is buried in the Field of Mars Cemetery. Along with Nora Heysen who also lived here, he was one of our most famous artists.

Tony Saunders

Student assists in education project

The Historical Society has been successful in obtaining the services of an archaeology student from Macquarie University to assist with an educational project. Zoe Pipe is putting together *A Student Guide to Historic Hunters Hill*. The booklet will give a summary of a selection of eminent people, places and pieces (artefacts) that make up the heritage of the municipality. It will be accompanied with photographs and illustrations and when completed the booklet will be published on the Society's website: huntershillmuseum.org.au.

Zoe is also preparing a PowerPoint presentation on the same subject which can be used by schools or Society members when giving talks. Her involvement is part of the university's external experience program for students as part of their degree. This is the second occasion that the Society has benefited from the assistance of a Macquarie University student.

Chris Schofield

Newspaper stories from 1895

A narrow escape

An elderly man named John Wall, a resident of Gladesville, had a narrow escape from a watery grave during last week. It appears that he was standing on the Gladesville wharf holding a large sized dog by its chain, when the canine made a rush and getting the chain wound round Wall's legs he overbalanced into the river. A young man named Ellard, who fortunately was nearby at the time, pluckily dived in and succeeded in rescuing the drowning man in a prostrate condition. Wall has since that event been confined to his bed.

Social club

A young men's social club has been organised in Gladesville. A meeting for that purpose was held last Friday night at Cashman's Hotel and was well attended. It was resolved to hold weekly dances in the Temperance Hall. Many members were enrolled, and it is expected that a great number from Ryde and Hunters Hill will also unite to make the club a success.

Cycling tour

The four Hunters Hill cyclists, who left on a run to Braidwood, returned on Sunday the 21st after a most enjoyable ride.

On their journey to Braidwood, they encountered a very severe head wind, which made the ride a great deal more fatiguing than it otherwise would have been. On the return journey, one of the party, WJ Collis, met with an accident which might have ended far more seriously for him. It appears he was coming down a rather long steep incline with his feet up, when suddenly the road gave a very sharp turn which he had not perceived until nearing it.

Having no brake on he swerved round the bend at a terrific rate and ran over a sheep that happened to be lying on the road, thereby causing a scene that is better imagined than described. One of the pedals of the machine was snapped off and the cyclist had to ride five miles in that sad predicament until he arrived at a town where the local blacksmith fixed it up. Despite the mishap, the party thoroughly enjoyed the tour.

Cumberland Argus, 4 May 1895

Desperate gang in 1893

The burgling epidemic, which has been rife in Sydney and suburbs for some months past, has reached the riverside suburb of Hunters Hill in a virulent form.

On Sunday morning, in the small hours, a party of desperadoes, numbering possibly three, paid a visit to the residence of Mr TM Micheltore, and appear to have effected an entry by the windows without much difficulty. Once inside they proceeded to rifle the place. With extraordinary audacity they entered the bedroom where Mr Micheltore was sleeping, and from the pockets of his clothes abstracted the keys of his cupboards and drawers and annexed his loose cash. With the keys, a thorough ransacking of the place was made, and the loot secured consisted of a quantity of plate, wearing apparel, etc.

The retreat from here was made without disturbing the inmates of the house, and the burglars then made a call at Mr E Gommerson's residence. Some refreshments, consisting of whisky and solids, were partaken of here, the inmates of the house being all unconscious of the gentry they were entertaining. A quantity of plate was annexed here and added to the swag, together with several small and valuable articles.

The residence of Mr Stanley Jeanneret next engaged the wanderers' attention, and a move was made towards it, one of Mr

Gommerson's chairs being "borrowed," to stand on to reach the windows. As the chair was placed in position and one of the ruffians mounted it, it gave way.

The noise aroused Mrs Jeanneret, who called her husband. He at once arose, and arming himself with a tomahawk, sailed in pursuit of his unwelcome visitors.

It was at this time between 4 and 5am and quite dark. A little distance from the house Mr Jeanneret saw a man with a lantern, who made off at once. Looking around Mr Jeanneret caught sight of another man, whom he hailed, at the same time calling to his brother. As he did so, he heard the crack of a pistol, and a bullet whizzed past his head. He ran after the would-be assassin, who turned after going a little distance, and fired another shot, the ball taking effect in the inner part of Mr Jeanneret's right thigh.

Pursuit was now hopeless, and the villains escaped in the darkness. Mr Jeanneret is now under medical treatment, but it is believed that his wound, which is a severe one, will not result seriously. The police in the district are on the qui vivre, but, so far, no trace has been gained of the murderous rascals. The way in which their work of plunder was effected proclaims them old and well-practised hands in their nefarious vocation.

Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, 14 July, 1893