

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.*

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www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

“Bunk”

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

Landscape artist honoured with bust unveiling



A bust of the first professional landscape artist born in Australia and a resident of Hunters Hill, William Piguénit, was recently unveiled in front of the museum by Mayor of Hunters Hill, Zac Miles.

Sculpted by Sydney artist Gerry Colley the bust was commissioned by the Hunters Hill Historical Society from funds generously donated by local resident Frank Pirreca. Hunters Hill Council provided funds from the Council’s 2024 Community Grants Program for the sandstone plinth on which it sits.

The Mayor Mr Miles said William Piguénit’s contribution to the art world and locally in Hunters Hill were very significant and deserved the honour in the community.

President of the HHHS Rod Stewart expressed his appreciation for the support of council.

The bust sits alongside Nora Heysen’s bust another important artist from Hunters Hill. The unveiling was attended by councillors and local residents and members of the HHHS.

Past president Chris Schofield spoke of the artist’s legacy.

See edited extract from Chris’s address on Page 3

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Diary Dates:

Our Christmas lunch December 3 at The Hunters Hill Club.

Start: 12 for 12.30pm. Cost: \$70 per head for 2-course lunch

RSVP: November 24 : Rod Stewart

Contact@huntershillmuseum.org.au



Photos: Top left: From left: Councillor Tatyana Virgara, Tony Saunders, Rod Stewart President HHHS, Mayor Zac Miles, Frank Pirreca, sculptor Gerry Colley and councillor Carla Kassab. Top right: Representing Anthony Roberts emeritus deputy mayor of Hunters Hill Simon Frame. Left, Frank Pirreca.

Members of the HHHS had a tour recently of the historic home of Carisbrook located on Burns Bay Road, overlooking the Lane Cove River. This beautiful sandstone house was built in 1880 by the Brooks family on land it owned since 1850. It is the oldest surviving house in the area and with its asymmetrical façade, large bay window, low-pitched slate roof it is representative of the Italianate style, fashionable in the Victorian era. Carisbrook remained in the Brooks family until 1904 when the family left to live in South Africa. After being owned by several owners, the house was then purchased in 1969 by the Lane Cove Council (LCC) as a gift to the Lane Cove community. A permanent conservation order was placed on the house by the Heritage Council of NSW in 1981 and it is maintained by LCC and curated by the Lane Cove Historical Society Inc.

The visit to the house was attended by 18 members who were able to enjoy the audio visual history of the home and see the only house museum in Sydney to capture and show the Victorian middle-class lifestyle.

Visit to Carisbrook house with tea



The Bush

GIVE us from dawn to dark
Blue of Australian skies,
Let there be none to mark
Whither our pathway lies.

Give us when noontide comes
Rest in the woodland free—
Fragrant breath of the gums,
Cold, sweat scent of the sea.

Give us the wattle's gold
And the dew-laden air,
And the loveliness bold
Loneliest landscapes wear.

These are the haunts we love,
Glad with the enchanted hours,
Bright as the heavens above,
Fresh as the wild bush flowers.

James Cuthbertson (1851-1910)

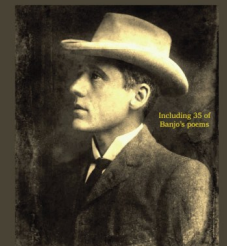
"James Lister Cuthbertson was originally from Glasgow. He emigrated to Australia and taught at Geelong Grammar School. He wrote many poems for school anthologies, which was where I first came across 'The Bush' a beautiful simple poem, it's easy rhythm and rhyme and the images have a calming effect. I often just say it aloud (or silently in my head) - good for the soul."

Beverley Sherrey

The Life and Rhymes of Banjo Paterson recitation

Three times Australian champion bush poet Gregory North recited *The Life and Rhymes of Banjo Paterson* at a presentation hosted by Hunters Hill Council on September 24. Dressed in Period attire, Gregory took us through Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson's life from his birth near Orange, education as a lawyer, becoming a journalist and serving in France and Egypt in WW1. He recited some of Paterson's best-known poems, including *The Man from Snowy River*, *Clancy of the Overflow*, *The Man From Iron Bark* and *A Bush Christening*. Paterson also wrote *Waltzing Matilda*. **Ian Adair**

The Life and Rhymes of
Banjo Paterson
Australia's Most Famous Poet



Gregory North

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

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Edited extract from Historical Society member, Chris Schofield's address at the unveiling of the Piguénit bust:

William Charles Piguénit is widely regarded as the first Australian-born professional landscape painter. Born in Hobart Town back in 1836, his artistic influences came from his mother who had set up a school for young ladies, where she taught French, music and drawing. His father, from a French Huguenot background, was a convict who had been transported to Van Dieman's Land from England for defrauding the government.

Piguénit initially worked as a draftsman with the Tasmanian Lands and Survey Department, where he developed his skills in lithography and mapmaking. However, in 1872, he left the public service to fully dedicate himself to painting.

His works are known for their grandeur and romanticism, often depicting the sublime majesty of nature. They are characterised by their atmospheric conditions, such as mist and clouds, which enhance the drama of his subjects. His paintings were special, primarily because he knew the land not just with his eyes, but with his feet. He did not just paint from imagination or photographs - he walked the valleys, climbed the mountains and crossed the rivers. In short, he lived the terrain that he so dramatically captured in his works.

Piguénit relocated to NSW in 1880 which marked a new phase in his career. A lifelong bachelor, he moved north, and to Hunters Hill, to live with his sister and husband, a government surveyor, Alfred Randall, who built in 1885 the house *Saintonge* in Avenue Road, behind the Hunters Hill Hotel. Randall later built *Kaoota*, a single storey villa next door, together with a studio attached, in which Piguénit lived.

Piguénit became one of the founders of the Art Society of NSW and continued to explore and paint the landscapes of the region. His notable works include "The Flood in the Darling", which was purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1895. In 1901, he won the Wynne Prize for his painting "Thunderstorm on the Darling". In 1903, he was commissioned by NSW Art Gallery, as a post Federation project, to paint the commanding scene of the continent's highest peak, Mount Kosciusko.

Throughout his career, Piguénit exhibited his works extensively in Aus-

tralia and Europe. They were acquired by major galleries here and abroad. Tasmania's state art gallery especially has a large collection of his landscapes and sketches. The Historical Society is fortunate in having received into its ownership one of Piguénit's paintings, variously entitled "On the Lane Cove River". The painting was donated by Mrs Marjorie Fitzgerald, wife of the eminent poet, Robert D Fitzgerald, who also called Hunters Hill home. Mrs Fitzgerald's uncle on her mother's side was Piguénit. As a girl, Mrs Fitzgerald lived at the Randall-Piguénit family house.

As an aside, Piguénit regularly used to go for walks with his dog in the Hunters Hill neighbourhood. A naturally retiring man, he made the Sydney newspapers on one occasion when strolling near the old Figtree Bridge he came across in the bushes the body of a woman who had been murdered.

Piguénit died in Hunters Hill in 1914. He was aged 77. He was interred at the Field of Mars Cemetery, Ryde. But his legacy lives on. He was among the first Australian painters to raise awareness about the environment through artistic achievement. It is said his love of untamed nature, his detailed observations of remote regions, and his respect for the land hinted at the conservationist values that would become important in later decades. In today's world - where the environment faces constant threats, and where art is often used to reflect on our relationship with nature - Piguénit's work feels more relevant than ever. We are reminded remind that the land has power, that it holds stories, and that it deserves both our admiration and protection.

So, Piguénit is remembered not just as a painter of rivers and mountains, but as someone who helped Australians see their own country - perhaps for the first time - as something worth celebrating through art. We can share in that by glimpsing the upper reaches of Lane Cove River, on our doorstep, which Piguénit often painted. Its seeming remoteness belies its position in the heart of a crowded city. Thus, we too can still experience some of the magic of what William Charles Piguénit so eloquently caught on canvas.

Grandson shares Clifton memories

A third-generation resident of 'Clifton', Adrian Howie, visited the historic home at the invitation of current owners the McCaffrey family. Mr Howie addressed 15 members of the community and shared some of his memories. He recalled the time a magnificent chandelier above the staircase dropped onto a shaggy-pile carpet when he was a child and that luckily no-one was hurt. Today a small repair remains on the railing as a reminder of the event. Also swimming in the Parramatta River and across to Drummoyne and in the estate's sea-pool were fond and exciting memories of life at 'Clifton'.

'Clifton', 7 Woolwich Rd, was built in 1890 for John Ryder-Jones, Chairman of the Sydney Stock Exchange on which was part of the Wybalena subdivision (earlier part of the Passy Estate). His family lived there until 1894 with seven children. Sir Archibald Howie (Adrian's grandfather) lived at 'Clifton' from 1919 until 1943 where he died. He was a Scottish-born Australian politician at local and state levels. He migrated to Australia in 1881 and was a building contractor, later taking on his father's business. In 1912 he married Emily Clara Manuelle and they had a son Archibald born on August 16, 1913, but sadly Clarrie (Emily) passed away on August 25 from complications after the birth.

From 1934 to 1941 he was a member of Sydney City Council and from 1934 to 1943 he was a United Australia Party member in the NSW Legis-

lative Council. He was knighted in 1938 and in 1939 Sir Archibald was appointed a fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney and president of the Royal Agricultural Society from 1941. Archibald Jnr grew up at Clifton and later married Virginia and they had two sons Adrian and Andrew.

Adrian and his brother grew up in 'Clifton' until teenage years in 1970. His parents sold the home to family friends Michael and Carol Grace in 1974.

