



Bunk

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Patron: Zac Miles, The Mayor of Hunters Hill

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



PATCHING COLLECTION: The Great North Road Gladesville

Welcome to a very special issue.

As we present the 122nd issue of our Society's newsletter, it's an opportune moment to reflect on both its history and its continued evolution. Since the first issue was published in June 2002, this publication has become an important link connecting members with the rich history of Hunters Hill.

Over two decades, the newsletter has been shaped by a succession of dedicated volunteer editors, whose efforts have brought engaging stories and insights to our readers.

One year in particular stands out in this journey. During the 2020 pandemic when the Museum doors were closed and our usual program of talks, gatherings, and Society lunches was suspended, the newsletter became more important than ever. In what can only be described as an extraordinary effort, ten issues were produced during that challenging year—

keeping members informed, connected, and, we hope, comforted during a time of isolation. It remains a remarkable testament to the commitment of those involved.

And now, with Issue 122, we turn an exciting new page — quite literally. After more than twenty years, the newsletter is embarking on a fresh new look. We hope you enjoy this updated format as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you, and we thank you, as always, for your continued support of the Society and its work in preserving and sharing the history of Hunters Hill.

Rod Stewart

PRESIDENT

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Mademoiselle Rose of Snails Bay



Members of the Society should avail themselves of Dr Ray Stevens' book, *Miss Rose Adcock and Her Portable Iron Houses of Snails Bay* (Balmain Association, 2024).

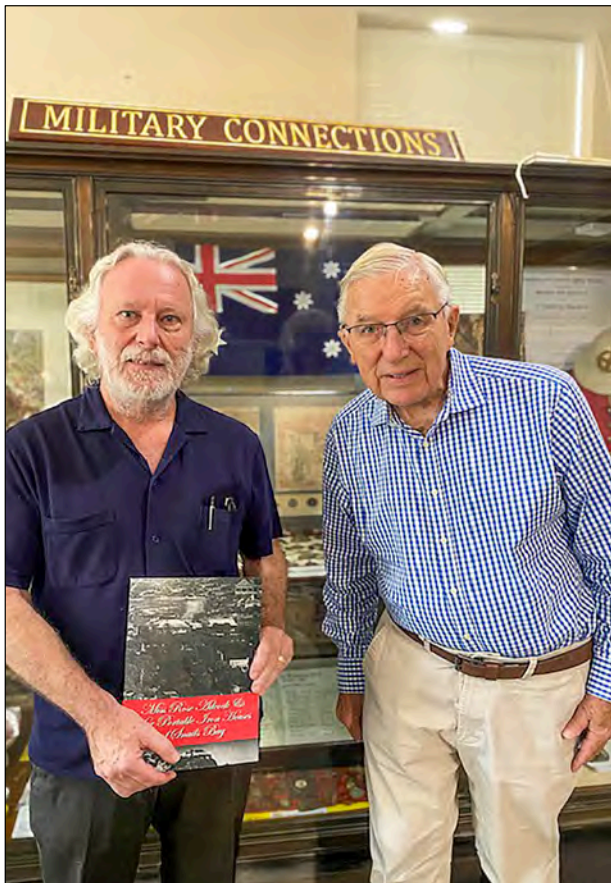
Ray recently spoke to the Society and gave a copy for their library. It is a magnum opus with a wealth of information about the early settlement of Balmain and Hunters Hill. Rose Adcock was a sister-in-law of Count Gabriel de Milhau, an exiled French nobleman who came to Hunters Hill in 1854 and financed marine villas. There were three Adcock sisters – Rose, Sarah, and Marian, who was married to De Milhau. They were great friends of Lise and Didier Joubert who lived at Figtree Farm.

The diary of Lise Joubert reveals their interconnection and Ray Stevens explores this further. The diary was for the year 1853, written in French, and is one of the Society's valuable assets. Translated in 2023 by the New Zealand scholar Associate Professor Karin Speedy, with a Foreword by Dr Beverley Sherry, it is now on the Society's website, free for all to read. Lise was a woman of few words, but every day she notes the number of eggs collected, which she sold, and the weather, which was absolutely crucial for the farm. (On 22 April, she writes, "There was not much water in the well. We cleaned it and there was 10 feet of mud.")

Lise frequently mentions the visitors to the farm, including the Adcock sisters Rose, Sarah, and Marian (Madame De Milhau). What adds to the interest of the diary is Karin Speedy's eye-opening Introduction and detailed Annotations.

Ray Stevens makes good use of the diary. His own book, lavishly illustrated, includes an early painting of Ermington, an estate at Melrose Park on the Parramatta River rented by De Milhau in 1853 and much visited by Lise Joubert, as noted in her diary.

Rose, "Mademoiselle Rose" as Lise Joubert calls her, was the most amazing of the Adcock sisters. In her early twenties, she came to Australia from Birmingham, after schooling in Paris, and engaged in high-stakes real estate. Most entrepreneurially, she had prefabricated iron houses erected. Read her story in Ray Stevens' book.



Top photo: Front Cover of the book: *"Miss Rose Adcock and Her Portable Iron Houses of Snails Bay"*. Bottom Photo: The author, Ray Stevens with Hunters Hill Society President, Rod Stewart, at the Hunters Hill Museum.

1815 to Showcase 10: A Remarkable Journey



Society Archivist, Committee Member and well known local writer, **Jan Griffiths**, has selected a piece in the museum which we are *highlighting* this edition.

In display in showcase number 10 is a framed draughtboard made from the navy blue trousers and the scarlet tunic worn by Private Malcolm Biffin who served with the British Army in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

The Battle of Waterloo was fought on Sunday June 18 near Waterloo in present-day Belgium, then part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

An imperial French army debut under the command of Emperor Napoleon was defeated by the combined armies of the Seventh Coalition, an Anglo-Allied army under the command of the Duke of Wellington combined with a Prussian army under the command of Gebhard von Blucher. It was the culminating

battle of the Waterloo campaign and Napoleon's last. This defeat put an end to Napoleon's rule as Emperor of the French and marked the end of his Hundred Days' return from exile.

The draught board was brought to Australia in 1906 and was presented to the museum by Mrs G Howard. The Howard family dates back to the Joubert era when Joseph Howard married Emma Lowick and had 12 children.

Joseph was a shipwright to the Jouberts and built many ferries, including *The Rose* and *The Shamrock*. He was caretaker to the Avenue Pleasure Grounds (formerly on the Lane Cove River site of the Hunters Hill High School), and constructed the seawall. Two of their sons Heck and Horace started a hire car business and later started the first commercial garage in Hunters Hill at Figtree Rd. Heck's son George and daughter Betty worked at the garage.

Piguenit's Flood, Recast in Words



To continue the celebration and honouring the first professional landscape artist born in Australia, William Piquenit, a poem has been written by Ron Vernon, a retired geologist and Emeritus Professor at Macquarie University.

The poem has been named after Piquenit's painting, *The Flood in the Darling 1890* which dates from 1895 when the Art Gallery of NSW purchased it.

In his retirement, Professor Vernon is writing poetry and already has had some published. "The Flood in the Darling 1890" will be published in the cultural magazine *Quadrant* later in 2026. *Bunk* has been given permission by Professor Vernon and Literary Editor of *Quadrant*, Professor Barry Spurr, to publish the poem in this edition.

Many thanks to our poetry co-ordinator Beverley Sherry for providing this opportunity to readers of *Bunk*. A bust of William Piquenit sits outside the museum and was unveiled late last year whilst one of his paintings *On the Lane Cove River* hangs inside.

" The Flood in the Darling 1890 "

The year eighteen ninety saw abnormal rains,
Compelling the Darling to spill on the plains,
William Piquenit saw it and captured the scene,
With sunshine on water's bedazzling sheen.

The sky o'er the water's a glistening glow,
The storm clouds abating, still louring and low,
With patches of blue letting sunbeams blast through,
Outlining the clouds with a brilliant hue.

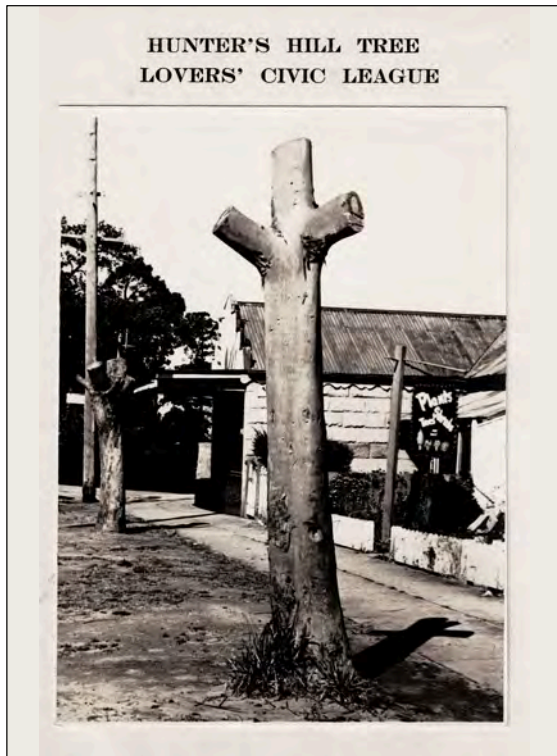
Copses marooned in the flood are reflecting;
Water birds wading around are inspecting,
Dabbling in shallows and raucously screaming;
A vista resplendently glowing and gleaming.

The painting displayed on the gallery wall,
Has strength to arrest us and hold us in thrall,
A tribute to Piquenit's innate dexterity;
A brilliant image preserved for posterity.

Ron Vernon

Image: *The Flood in the Darling* by William Piquenit, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

A 1900 Compromise: Taller Poles & Taller Trees



Attitudes to trees must have changed by the 1950's. The Hunters Hill Tree Lovers' Civic League had its first meeting in 1955 in response to what was considered to be severe pruning of local trees by Council

The ornamental trees which form such a distinctive and pleasing feature of the borough of Hunters Hill have in some instances grown so high that they interfere with the telegraph wires, a circumstance which was brought under the notice of the Council by the Postal and Electric Telegraph Department.

One day this week, the Mayor and Council's officers, accompanied by the acting inspector of telegraph lines, made a tour of the borough with a view of inducing the Department to provide higher poles for the wires so that the trees might be preserved as much as possible.

As a result, it is anticipated that arrangements will be made by the Department to give at least from 25ft. to 30ft. space for the trees to grow in.

*Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate
Saturday 11 August 1900*

Sourced by Chris Schofield

Preserving The Past, Digitising the Future

Digitization of hundreds of photographs held by the Hunters Hill Museum began last month. The first batch of 600 historical photographs and large-format items were sent to Pascoe Digital for professional digitisation.

Carefully prepared and verified by HHHS volunteers and HHC staff, the items have been scanned to national archiving standards to ensure long-term preservation.

According to the council's Manager Digital and Customer Information, Jade Reed: "We have also welcomed a group of new volunteers who have joined specifically to support this project. They are meeting every Thursday, and on Saturdays, and are working solely on cataloguing, labelling, and preparing the remaining collection for future scanning batches."

She said that the plan was for 6,000 photos to be digitised and the priorities to selection were that they were of "significant value to the community" so that they could be accessed by many.

This is all happening as a result of a successful application by HHC under the 2025-27 NSW Heritage Grants Program for funding of up to \$25,000 (ex GST) for the purposes of the Hunters Hill Heritage Digital Photography Project to scan images held by the society and museum.

In consultation with the council's Heritage Adviser Chery Kemp, a professional architectural photographer has also been engaged by Council to photograph community sites, significant buildings and homes to update the Hunters Hill State Heritage Inventory.



Hunters Hill Historical Society

Garden Gathering & Workshop

A Henley Happy Hens Community garden visit will be held on April 24 at 10am where a mini potting workshop will be held and a garden visit.

The Workshop will be conducted by landscaper and Committee Vice President, Felicity McCaffrey, who will instruct how to make a potting “wrap”.

The cost of the workshop is \$10 and coffee will be provided “on the garden”. If you are interested in attending the event please contact Felicity on her mobile: 0407 117868 by **April 17**.



Mid-Winter Lunch

Save the Date!

The Hunters Hill Historical Society mid-winter lunch will be held at Lozzi Restaurant at the Hunters Hill Club.

The cost will be \$72 per head for a 2-course lunch. Beverages at own cost.

Date: 23 July 2026

Start: 12 for 12.30pm

RSVP: by 2 July 2026

To: Felicity McCaffrey

Email:
contact@huntershillmuseum.org.au

Hunters Hill Historical Society Inc

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The Society needs your support to continue its work. Become a member for just \$30 a year. Scan here or email us.

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