



THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST JOURNAL

PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB

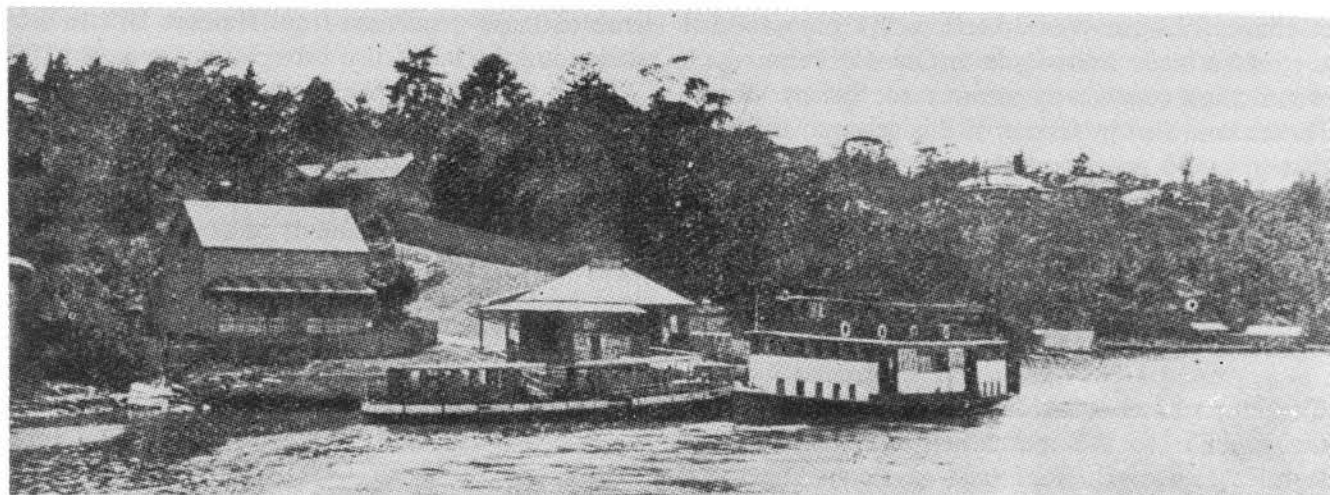
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THE FERRY WHARVES OF HUNTER'S HILL

by MEGAN MARTIN



The Hunter's Hill Wharf at Ferry Street ◇ 1902

reproduced from The Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate 18 December 1902

From the mid 1860s to the late 1920s ferries provided the principal means of transportation between Hunters Hill and the centre of Sydney. The foreshores of the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers were studded with public wharves and private jetties. Today only two wharves remain in operation, one at Valentia Street and one at Alexandra Street, but the *Hunters Hill Heritage Study* identifies 18 other wharf remains or wharf sites as items of environmental heritage.

A *Plan of the Municipality of Hunters Hill* drawn in 1861 shows clearly that some of these wharves were already in existence by that time, the inaugural year of local government in Hunters Hill. This plan shows the *Gladesville wharf* and *Punt wharf* on the

Parramatta River at Wharf Road and Punt Road respectively, a *Steamer's wharf* at Henley (then called the village of Blandville), the *Hunters Hill Wharf* at Ferry Street, and *Onions wharf* on the site of today's Valentia Street wharf. The 1861 plan also shows a reserve for a wharf on Pulpit Point.

Unnamed, but indicated on the map, is a jetty in Tarban Creek at De Milhau Road and a wharf at Herberton Avenue. The face of the map has been annotated some time after 1861 with references to leases granted to the Hunter's Hill Council to erect wharves on the Lane Cove River at Joubert and Gale Streets. On both the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers there are shown a number of private jetties, boat sheds and bathing houses.

The *Punt wharf* at Gladesville serviced the Bedlam Punt crossing the Parramatta River from Gladesville to Abbotsford but passengers could opt to join, midstream, the city-bound packets of the Parramatta Steamship Company. This Company had long been the monopoly of Edye Manning and was by 1856 the subject of much criticism. A public meeting of residents and landholders from Pennant Hills, Ryde, Bedlam and Hunters Hill was held in the Ryde school house in July 1856 to air these grievances.

The meeting agreed to the idea of a new company. Speakers, including Didier Joubert, stressed the importance of having boats which could carry drays. This would mean that farmers could "start to market with their produce at five in the morning, and return home by seven in the evening, instead of as now starting at 12 o'clock at night, and returning at five the next evening, and being during that time at the expense of keeping themselves and cattle in Sydney." (*Sydney Morning Herald* 5.7.1856)

Architect William Weaver endorsed a proposal that a road be made from Ryde to Onions' Point which would then connect by steamer to Sydney. Henry Parkes was also in favour of this scheme, believing that it would encourage the suburban development of Onions' Point. This would, said Parkes, provide the inhabitants of Ryde with a produce market close at hand "and give them all the advantages to be derived from the humanising influence of social communication with society"!

The proposed company took some time to get off the ground. In the meantime, following Leonard Bordier's subdivision of land in Ferry Street and erection of houses there in 1855, the Hunter's Hill wharf had been built at the end of Ferry Street. Manning's steamers began to call at this wharf and at Gabriel de Milhau's jetty in Tarban Creek.

In June 1858 Hunters Hill's first post office was opened adjacent to the wharf with James Stanner as postmaster. When Stanner was declared insolvent in 1865 he sought approval for his son to take over the position and the postal authorities agreed, noting that "the site being close to the wharf is probably the only one that would answer the purpose." It must have been convenient for Stanner junior too since he was the wharfinger.

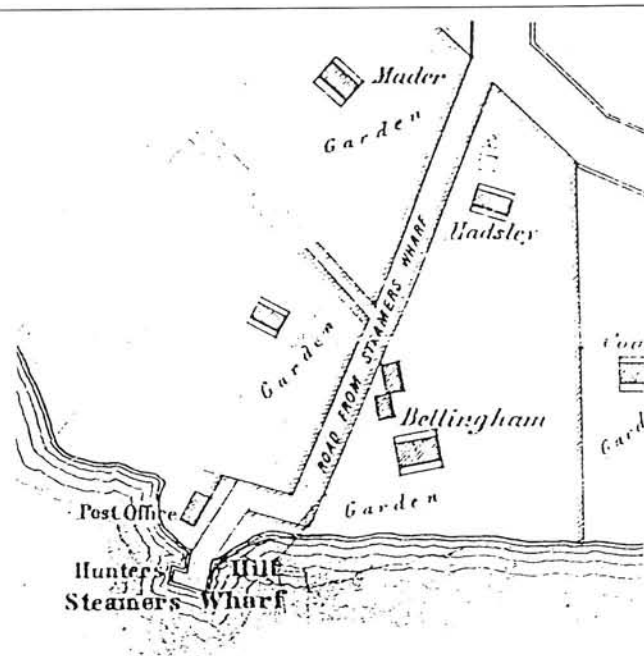
In 1863 Council built a parapet wall and steps at the wharf and a shed to house goods and accommodate passengers. And Jules Joubert began a rival operation against Manning using a steamer called the *Ysabel* to carry passengers from Hunters Hill to Sydney. Advertisements in the *Sydney Morning*

Herald drew attention to the fact that his service to Tarban Creek brought people "to within ten minutes walk of the Lunatic Asylum". Years later Joubert claimed that his boat was nicknamed the *Jezebel* and ridiculed as a "Puffing Billy" but that it succeeded in breaking the neck of Manning's monopoly. (Jules Joubert *Shavings & scrapes from many parts* 1890)

Fruit boats V commuters

Joubert told those gathered for a meeting at Ryde's *Steamboat Inn* in September 1865 that the *Ysabel* had been so successful in its operations that it had not only paid the expenses of her charter but also the cost of a jetty in Tarban Creek. He urged those at the meeting to adopt the prospectus of the long-awaited Parramatta River Steam Company. Hunters Hill representatives on the Company's provisional committee included both Jules and Didier Joubert, Charles Jeanneret, Gabriel de Milhau and William Branch Campbell.

It was the support of the district's fruitgrowers that enabled these gentlemen from Hunters Hill to float their company but it also brought problems. In 1898 William Branch Campbell recalled the difficulties in trying to service the needs of both businessmen and fruitgrowers. Since the *Ysabel* was not able to carry much fruit she was joined by the *Platypus*, a broad-beamed boat more suited to cargo. Then the business travellers complained of being delayed by fruit loading at the various wharves, so a third and faster steamer, the *Adelaide*, was brought into the service to suit this commuter traffic. (*Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate* 1.10.1898)



section of a subdivision plan drawn in September 1862 showing the Post Office next to the Ferry Street wharf

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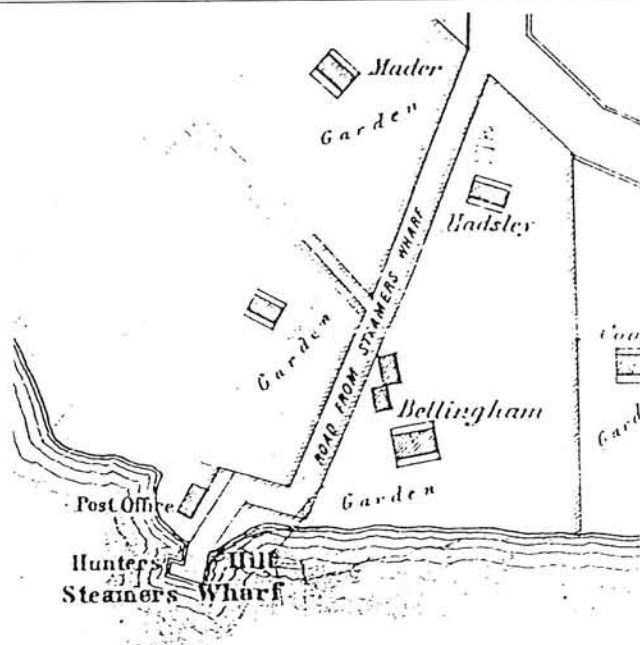
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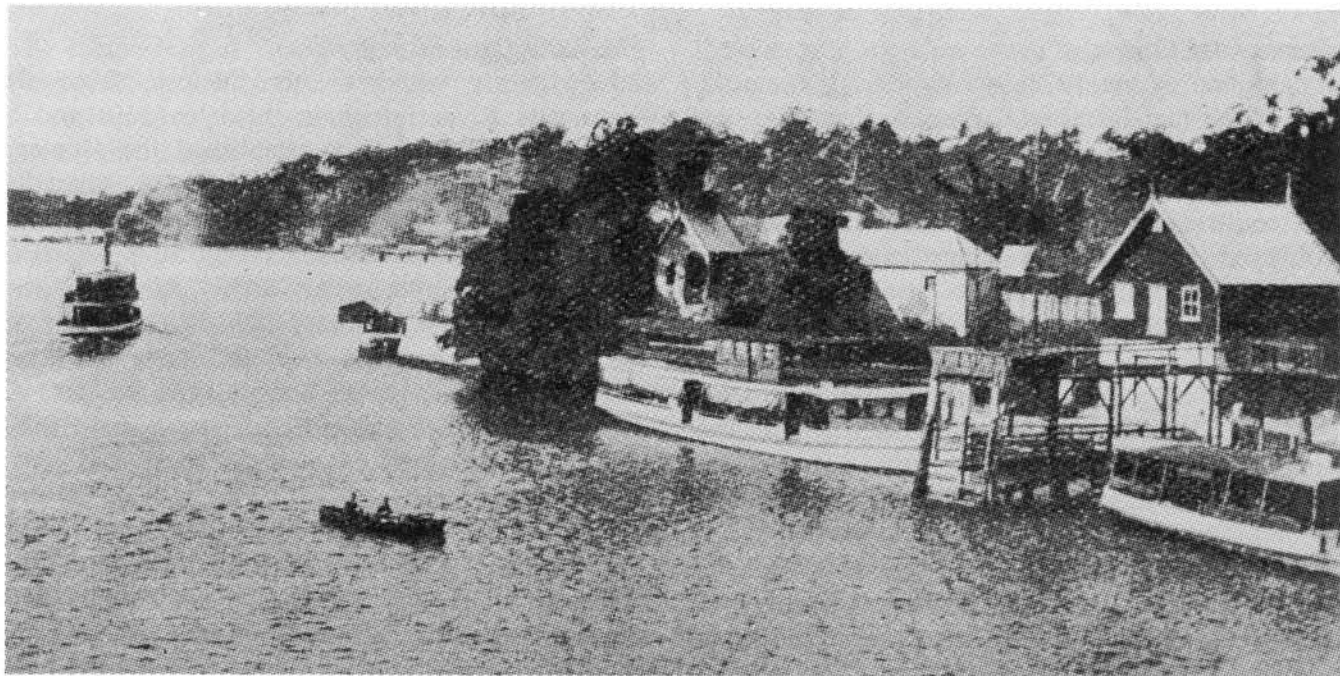
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Figtree Wharf ◇ 1903

The tower of Figtree House is obscured by the eponymous fig tree but beyond the house can be seen the jetty landing for the Avenue Picnic Grounds reproduced from The Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate 19 December 1903

Figtree wharf was the terminus for Lane Cove River ferries from the city. It was also, for a time, the starting point for the Upper Lane Cove Ferry which ran to Killara, and a base for various charter companies operating on the river.

The Figtree wharf and related buildings, including the boatsheds and Tea Rooms, were demolished in 1961 for roadworks, along with the Joubert house *St.Malo*. Their sites are items 496 and 497 in the inventory of the *Hunters Hill Heritage Study*.

Looking up Tarban Creek from Hunter's Hill Wharf towards Villa Maria ◇ 1900

The timber structure in the foreground may be C.T. Metcalfe's bathing house just beyond Mount Street reproduced from The Cumberland Argus & Fruitgrowers Advocate 19 December 1900

