



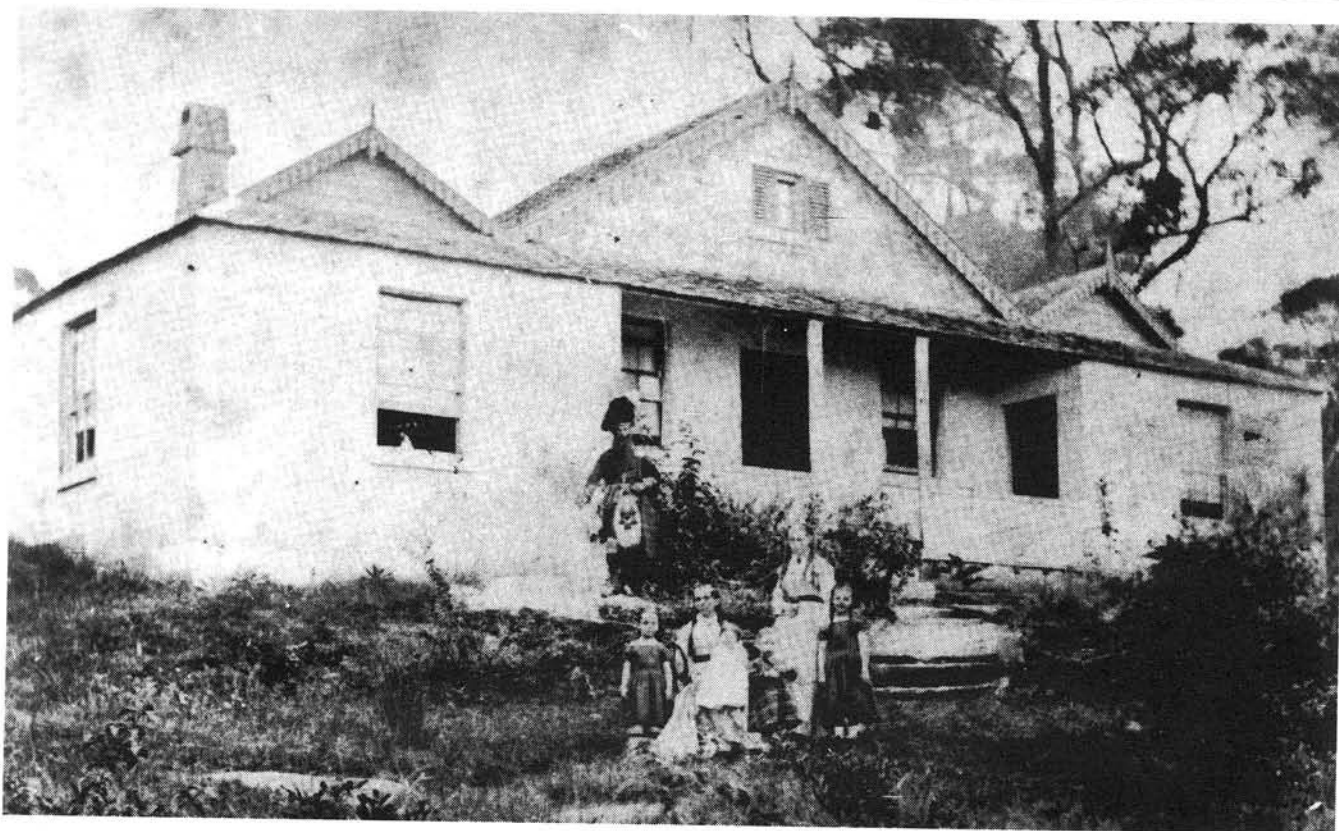
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*John William Hume & family in front of their home Woodstock, Alfred Street, Woolwich ◇ 1871
photographed by Henry Beaufoy Merlin*

WOODSTOCK & ITS EARLY TENANTS

Megan Martin & Diana Drake

Woodstock in Alfred Street Woolwich is believed to be the oldest house still standing in Hunters Hill. It was built on a 16 acre portion of land purchased by shipwright John Clarke in 1835. Clarke bought an adjoining 15 acre block in 1836, and his eldest son, also named John, had previously purchased a third adjoining block of 10 acres. (AONSW reel 1110)

In today's terms the Clarke land stretched from Kellys Bush to Clarkes Point. Over a period of 50

years the Clarke family built a number of houses on this land - at least 5 stone residences as well as some timber buildings. (Crown Lands Plan 12-440)

The first of these houses was probably built by John Clarke junior. John Clarke senior had land in the city and it seems unlikely that he ever lived at Woolwich. He was licensee of the *Shipwrights Arms* in Windmill Street Millers Point from 1833 to 1837 and died there in July 1838. (SMH 25.7.1838)

The first Clarke house at Woolwich was built on Clarkes Point and called *Viewforth*. In March 1850 an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as "a stone house on the point opposite Cockatoo Island" consisting of "five good rooms, with kitchen and servant's room detached". There was "ten acres of land fenced in, a garden, and well of good water, with two convenient wharves, and a boat-house."

It was at *Viewforth* on an August day in 1838 that John Clarke junior's stepdaughter Charlotte Webster married his brother William. A third brother, James Richard Clarke, married Lavinia Woodley at the same time. William, Charlotte and James all gave their address as *Viewforth*. The Clarke brothers were cabinetmakers, listed in directories and parish registers in the 1830s and 1840s at city addresses.

In January 1839 John Clarke junior, as heir to his father's estate, divided the 16 acre block at Woolwich into two 8 acres portions, one going to William and the other to James Clarke. *Woodstock* was probably built at this time, on James' portion. The 1841 census lists two households for the Clarke family in Hunters Hill. One was John's, comprising himself, his wife Charlotte and daughters Susannah and Mary Ann. The other was William's and included his wife Charlotte and two single men and a single woman. The men may have been the youngest of the Clarke brothers, Charles George and Edward Thomas, aged 23 and 19 respectively in 1841. According to the census both families were living in stone houses.

John's house was *Viewforth*. The second stone house was probably *Woodstock*. Although built on James' portion of land, it served as a home for both William and James at various times during the 1840s. In January 1843, when William's son Edwin was baptised, William gave his address as "Woodstock, Parramatta River". Then in May 1844, when James' daughter Emmeline was baptised, James too gave his address as "Woodstock". In November 1844 and March 1847 *Woodstock* was again noted in baptism registers as William's address. William was still at *Woodstock* in 1853 but James had moved to Balmain in the late 1840s and he died there in May 1860. John had let *Viewforth* before 1850 and taken up residence in Balmain where he died in April 1854. Sometime in the 1850s William built a new timber house on his own 8 acres.

According to rate books Lavinia Clarke lived at *Woodstock* briefly in the mid 1860s but otherwise the house was let to a series of tenants throughout

the 1860s and 1870s. John Ford Adams was there in 1866, William James in 1867-1868, Edward William Meredith in 1869 and in 1870-1871 the house was occupied by John William Hume.

Hume was born in Sydney in June 1839, son of teacher John Hume and his wife Emilia Hayes. They had arrived in New South Wales in December 1838, sent to Australia by the British government to serve as teachers in a proposed state elementary school system. They arrived to find that the colonial government had shelved its plans for the system and there was no job waiting for them. Not until 1848 did a newly-created Board of National Education begin the task of introducing a system of secular state schools. In January 1851 the Fort Street school opened as a model school for the national system.

By a nice twist of fate, John and Emilia Hume's son, John William, was a teacher at the Fort Street model school in the mid 1860's. He then taught at Kent Street Presbyterian school until May 1871 when he was transferred to Port Macquarie Public School. He met his death by drowning at Port Macquarie in May 1874 at the age of 35.

John William Hume lived at Hunters Hill with his wife Elizabeth Hamey and their children from around 1867 until 1871, renting a cottage from James Dias until 1869 and then, from 1870 until 1871, renting *Woodstock* from Mrs Lavinia Clarke. Their son Walter was born at the former house and daughter Annie was born at *Woodstock* in 1870.

The photograph reproduced on page 1 was probably taken shortly before the Hume family left Woolwich for Port Macquarie. John William Hume is shown resplendent in Scottish costume atop a rock. The family group in the foreground include John's wife Elizabeth and their children Evangeline aged 8, Beatrice 5, Walter 3 and Annie 1. The older girl may be Elizabeth's sister.

Following the Humes' departure, the tenancy of *Woodstock* reverted first to William James then to William Norris. Lavinia Clarke had died in Balmain in 1870 and the property at Woolwich became the joint inheritance of her 6 surviving children. When the youngest of these children turned 21 in 1880 the family subdivided the property, preserving a large allotment around *Woodstock*. Eldest of the children, Henry Thomas Clarke, a ship's chandler, purchased the *Woodstock* lot and some adjoining lots. He lived in the house from around 1876 to 1885, after which time the house was again let. The house finally passed out of Clarke family ownership in 1900. (NSW LTO Bk.670 No.617)

CLARKES ESTATE

ONIONS POINT

HUNTERS HILL

PARRAMATTA RIVER

For Auction Sale on the Ground Saturday 20th Nov^r by

RICHARDSON & WRENCH



WILLIAM CLARKE

MRS BELLAMY

Ceo. Bishop
Surveyor &c
112 Pitt Street

SP 81114216

In the 1880s Hunters Hill rate books describe *Woodstock* as a stone house of 7 rooms. The house has clearly undergone some alterations over the years. The roof line has been changed and interior modifications have been made, but the stone structure of the house remains much as shown in the 1871 photograph. There is some variation in the quality of the stonework indicating that the building may have begun as a small simple cottage. The stone of the two wings and rear is more regularly cut, and of larger blocks, giving the appearance of having been added at a later stage - possibly replacing wooden structures. This reading of the fabric is supported by the recollections of Charles Fairland who was first Town Clerk of Hunter's Hill in 1861 and who died in 1885. Fairland believed that the central section of *Woodstock* was the original portion and that Henry Thomas Clarke added the wings in the 1860s. (All Saints' archives)

In the 1960s conservation architect Clive Lucas was commissioned to restore *Woodstock*. He later added a small brick wing to the building. Since the most recent sale of the property (1988-89) a large Italianate two-storey extension with underground parking has been built on the southern side of the house replacing the earlier Lucas addition. Council has approved a similar extension on the other side and the grounds have been excavated in preparation for a landscaped garden and pool.

Such out-of-scale extensions have wrought a massive change to the character of the site. Not only has the style and scale of the additions devalued the character of the original stone house but they have also severely compromised the significance of *Woodstock* as a place. One of the most striking aspects of the 1871 photograph and of the footprint of the building shown in the 1880 subdivision plan, is the orientation of the house. It commanded a view across the Parramatta River toward Balmain and the city. *Viewforth* had a similar aspect, as did William Clarke's house *Fernbank* built between *Viewforth* and *Woodstock* on his own 8 acres. The Clarke brothers were not farmers. They wanted to live in the country while they worked in the city. Like others in Hunters Hill they built private jetties and boatsheds and commuted to the city by water transport. John William Hume likewise chose *Woodstock* as a rural residence while working in the city.

Woodstock retains its view through the recent extensions but has lost its air of command and sense of place. Council's approval of these additions seem to be an example of an issue raised during Heritage Week 1995 by heritage writer Geraldine O'Brien.

She asked whether it was worth keeping an important building without a shred of its original context. She quoted Heritage Council chairman Howard Tanner's warning that one of the failures of planning when it comes to heritage matters is a tendency to rely on two-dimensional maps "rather than thinking of the three-dimensional effect". (SMH 6 April 1995 p.5) Although Tanner was the architect of *Woodstock*'s recent extension we suggest that approval of this work should be regarded as an example of heritage planning failure.



Three views of Woodstock:

top: in the early 1900s (courtesy of David Macdonald)
middle: in 1938 (J M C Boulton 'Hunters Hill 1794-1938')
and bottom: Woodstock in April 1995 (Diana Drake).