

People of *Waiwera*

Notes for a Talk at Hunters Hill Trust Christmas Party
Waiwera 9 Woolwich Rd Hunters Hill

26 November 2015

Beverley Sherry

I'd like to tell you about three people associated with this house and land, **not forgetting of course that the people longest associated with the land were the Wallumategal, the Aboriginal people of this district.**

The three I've chosen are from the 19th century

a time when anyone with business or professional nous was an asset to society.

These three were assets, but in very different ways.

John Tawell (first European owner of the land)

Charles Jeanneret (built the house)

Dr Frederic Norton Manning (first resident)

The earliest and the most bizarre John Tawell (1784-1845)

He owned the land on which this house sits, an original land grant, and is commemorated in a footpath plaque nearby, corner of Wybalena and Woolwich Roads:

“Forger, ex-convict, Sydney’s first chemist, zealous Quaker, purchased 40 acres here in 1837. Hanged for murdering his mistress in 1845”.

Fair sample of the mixture of initiative and roguery that flourished in early Sydney. Forger (bank notes), ex-convict, but he was **the town’s first chemist (shop in Hunter Street), first exporter of whale bone, cornered the market on whale bone** (then used ubiquitously in women’s corsets, combs, brushes). Zealous Quaker, founder of Quakerism in Australia, erected the earliest Friends’ Meeting House at 195 Macquarie Street, Sydney in 1835.

Became very wealthy (trading and land speculation). Recreated himself as pillar of society, liberal donator to charities.

Displayed his piety ostentatiously by pouring 600 gallons of alcohol into the Harbour. Quakers all teetotalers: **“There was a gnashing of teeth by the thirsty crowd around Sydney Harbour**

on March 5, 1836 as 600 gallons of rum and good Geneva gin were poured into the harbor. John Tawell and friends had offered this on the altar of temperance” . . . SMH 1949

But his criminal under belly still alive and well and the law caught up with him when he returned to England. Women were his downfall. Wife died, married again, took a mistress (two children). She got in the way of his desire to get in with the Quakers again, plus his finances became shaky. So overextended his apothecary’s knowledge by poisoning his mistress with prussic acid and was hanged in London in 1845.

The first case of someone arrested by the new technology of the telegraph: seen getting on a train at Slough after leaving Sarah Hart (the mistress’s) house, police sent a message by telegraph to Paddington station in London, giving the particulars, and ordering his capture: “He is in the garb of a Quaker with a brown coat on, which reaches nearly to his feet.” Arrested, tried, and hanged.

Stunning example of a Jekyll-and-Hyde type.

Charles Jeanneret (1834-98) – a rung up the ladder from Tawell.

Remembered by a visible legacy in Hunters Hill: 18 stone houses, built 1858-1895.

16 in this vicinity – Wybalena Road, Jeanneret Avenue, Woolwich Road, Glenview Crescent, Futuna Street, and Crescent Street. All on Jeanneret’s original *Wybalena* estate, which extended from Crescent Street, where he had his quarry (below St Peter Chanel Church), down as far as Pulpit Point, where he operated his Fern Bay Pleasure Gardens and kept workshops for his steam ferries.

He lived in some houses (*Wybalena* Jeanneret Avenue his main family residence – eleven children), rented out others, and gave others to his children on their marriages. Magnanimous to a fault. A stalwart of All Saints Anglican church, donating a fine window of the four Evangelists in memory of his parents (by Lyon & Cottier 1889). But generous to the other persuasion as well, sold the land for the church in Futuna Street to the Catholics for well below market value (“our good Protestant friend Mr Jeanneret”)

In his day he was “Mr Hunters Hill”. With the Joubert brothers, a driving force for the municipality and for the viability of Hunters Hill as a suburb with access by ferries or bridges to the city. Mayor three times, alderman for 28 years. He owned the Parramatta Steam Company and ran twenty paddle-wheel steamers during the years of his ownership (1875-89). Built houses of the local sandstone. Introduced the tree policy when he was Mayor in 1870: the Council planted trees and gave away trees to residents on the proviso that they were planted near the street frontages. So the tree-lined streets of Hunters Hill very much part of Jeanneret’s legacy.

Jeanneret outside Hunters Hill

Partner in Henry Porter's general agency and actively engaged in farming, mining and preserving meat; owned the Mosman and Neutral Bay Ferry Co. Had the Parramatta Tramway built.

Alderman in Sydney City Council, later MLA, and strong supporter of Sir Henry Parkes for Federation. He was included in the multi-volume publication *Australian Men of Mark* as “**one of the successful of the native-born of NSW**”. Despite his name, he was not French like the Joubert brothers. His parents were from England, his ancestors from Neuchâtel (Switzerland). In Neuchâtel they would have used the French pronunciation, but he was Australian and pronounced his name “Jenneret” with a hard “t”. The poet R.D. FitzGerald (1902-1987) told me this, he played tennis with Frank Jeanneret.

This house *Waiwera*

These two large conjoined houses, *Waiwera* and *St CLaire* built in 1878 -1879 for letting, his most ambitious residential building. **Distinguished architecturally** by boom-style details.

Perhaps the most imaginative of Jeanneret's buildings: a massive edifice lightened by winding balustrades of iron lace and a delicate turret of slate pinnacled with iron-lace cresting. **The stonework** is superior – fine sparrow-pecked finish. This was replaced in later Jeanneret houses (1880s, 1890s) by rusticated (quarry-face) stone – perhaps more picturesque but also more economic. A stone mason told me that four lengths of rusticated could be done in the time for one length of the fine sparrow-pecked finish. The architectural details of Jeanneret's houses evolved over a period of more than thirty years – one of his earliest houses, *Lyndcote* (1858) in Stanley Road, distinguished by decorative timber bargeboards in the Victorian Gothic style, the latest in the 1880s and 1890s incorporating stained glass. The architects and/or builders Jeanneret employed are unidentified but he no doubt used architectural pattern books readily available in the nineteenth century.

Dr Frederic Norton Manning (1839-1903)

Lived in *Waiwera* 1879-1899. The house is outlined on the Wybalena subdivision of 1894 and named as “Dr Manning's residence”. *Waiwera* a Maori name [“hot water”] but I don't know if Manning named the house. He certainly had connections with New Zealand, having served as a young ship's doctor on the *Esk* in the Maori War of 1864. He was known for his humanity and at Tauranga he was carrying a wounded sailor to safety but the man was shot through the heart in his arms. The Sands Directories give *Waiwera* as the name first in 1899.

Manning came to Australia in 1868, Sir Henry Parkes thought highly of him, appointed as Superintendent at the Tarban Creek Asylum (now Gladesville Hospital). **Then a shocking place** – the insane arrived shackled in chains as criminals (argument going on between England and

Australia about who was responsible for them). Manning appalled by the living conditions and the treatment of the inmates.

He became the highest authority on mental illness in Australia in the nineteenth century. Inspector General of the Insane for 20 years in New South Wales; lecturer in psychological medicine at University of Sydney, private consultant.

Far ahead of his time, changing entrenched attitudes and bringing about fundamental reforms. He thought asylums should not be regarded as prisons to shut up dangerous criminals but as *hospitals* “where care and skill are to be employed in the treatment of those to be most pitied on the earth”. Persuaded the government to do away with the term *asylum*, “which sounds like a death knell to patients . . . [whereas] *hospital* suggests hope, cure, and restoration”.

His life wholly dedicated to this cause. When he died members of his staff carried his body about two kilometres from All Saints Hunters Hill to Gladesville Hospital for burial, via Manning Road (named for him). He had asked to be buried there.

Flags at half-mast on the steam ferries and the training ship *Sobraon*.

Inscription on his headstone: “A wise and faithful counsellor, an upright gentleman, revered by all. He served the State in many offices”. People said of him, “His religion was illustrated by his life for he went about doing good”.

Bachelor, a handsome man, “cultivated and well read . . . of refined taste and native judgment”. Not related to the other Manning family in Hunters Hill (Edye Manning and family).

Conclusion

All three very different men, served society in their different ways:

Tawell driven by profit but an asset as chemist and as founder of Quakers in Australia, driven also by philanthropy and self-aggrandizement. Went bad on returning to England!

Jeanneret the most public-spirited of the three, spread himself more widely, business man but also politician, went into politics to help change society.

Manning the most focused of the three: his expertise psychological medicine, an area crying out for reform. Probably the greatest innovator of the three.

Dr Beverley Sherry is an Honorary Associate at the University of Sydney. The material for this talk is based on her book *Hunter’s Hill: Australia’s Oldest Garden Suburb*.