

Published by Granville Historical Society Inc.



# The Granville Guardian

Patron Laurie Ferguson M.P. B.Ec.(Syd) M.A.(Syd)

Volume 18 Issue 10

November 2011

**The next general meeting of the Granville Historical Society will be held at 1.00 pm on Saturday 26 Nov 2011 at our Research Centre  
62 Railway Parade Granville  
This will be our Christmas Party!**

The society will close 23 Nov 2011  
Open 1 Feb 2012

Our Centre is open every Wednesday from 10 am to 4 pm and on the fourth Saturday of the month for personal research. Visitors and members of family history societies are welcome. A fee applies for non-members

**TO CONTACT US:**

62 Railway Parade  
Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 9682 1290 (Wed.) 9631 0216

[www.granvillehistorical.org.au](http://www.granvillehistorical.org.au)

Email:

[granvillehistorical@bigpond.com](mailto:granvillehistorical@bigpond.com)

Write to P.O. Box 320 Granville  
2142

## Granville Historical Society

*A Place where heritage & culture are valued & celebrated*

### President's Report

The Holy Trinity Primary School PowerPoint on the history of Granville was a fantastic success, with children getting up off the floor where they were sitting, saying history is now their favourite subject. This was a pilot to test if this could work with the current curriculum. As it was a success the society has decided to do an education series for Parramatta and Granville Schools. Granville will feature the *Forest to Factory* and the *Darug Contribution to Australia*, and the Parramatta one will be a virtual walk through Parramatta Park and the Heritage Riverside project featuring the Kings school, The Old Catholic Orphanage, Female Factory and the Parramatta Gaol. We have applied to the Parramatta City Council for grants to accomplish this project, which will take the form of PowerPoint presentations and a book of notes. This will allow teachers to present the session, or the society will go to the school and deliver it. The grants will be decided by Council officers next year and we will be notified about June 2012. We have lent story boards of photographs used in our displays in the Parramatta Heritage centre to the schools; they were extremely useful as a visual tool for the students.

We have been asked to prepare a photographic display for the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Granville Train Disaster in the Granville Town Hall on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012. We have applied for a small grant from Parramatta City Council to accomplish this, as our last display was held 15 years ago and it needs updating.

We had a phone call from a granddaughter of Jack Lang. She has donated one photograph and is allowing us to copy newspapers, photographs, and artefacts. Her father James Christian Lang was a collector of the family and we have access to many artefacts such as printer's plates, medals and other great treasures. The genealogy of the family hasn't

been done, so we have undertaken to assist with this. June and I have accompanied Dorothy to Rookwood where we set about grave hopping, discovering where the relatives were buried. Good fun was had by all and our archives are swelling at a massive rate. Our member Gerald Lefurgy who resides in Canada and who has been doing research on Lang is excited with our new-found information. We are seeking photographs of any of the family.

During this last month we were asked by the Parramatta Heritage Centre's Local Studies Librarian Shayne Bray, to supply information on Barry's first cousin twice removed "Billy Hart the Flying Dentist". It is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Billy Hart's landing on Parramatta Park this month. This led to a scramble to extend our research on the Hart family of Parramatta. Thanks to Pat & Dorothy from the Friends of Mays Hill and Enid Turbit and Audrey Meisenhelter from Parramatta Historical Society who supplied information, we produced a 34 page booklet that will be available to researchers who visit the Local Studies Library. Shayne has been able to procure a model of Billy Harts airplane made in 1978 and in the possession of the Powerhouse museum. It is currently on display in the Heritage Centre.

Thank you to all members for your massive effort this year; we have accomplished all that we set out to and many more things that were put on us at short notice. We did not disappoint anyone, even Granville real estate agents Laing & Simmons, who wanted a photo of the Royal Hotel to adorn their side wall. The size is massive and will look splendid and we get free advertising. Watch this space. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all, get ready for the new year of work and research.

**Barry G Bullivant OAM President**

## **The Hart Family and their Contribution to Parramatta Including their favourite son William Ewart Hart (Billy the Flying Dentist)**

**By June Bullivant OAM**

### **Paul Hart, Great Grandfather of William Ewart Hart**

The story of the Hart family has been traced back to 1796 when Paul Hart, the great grandfather of William Ewart Hart, was born in Freshford, Somerset, England. Paul, who, according to his son William's death certificate, was a weaver, married Anne Viles at Trowbridge in Wiltshire. The 1841 English Census shows that Paul and Anne, together with sons John, William, Joseph, James and daughter Mary Ann - were living at the time in Trowbridge. By 1851 son John had moved out of the family home. Anne Hart is listed in the 1851 English Census as a grocer. One could imagine they were living on the premises of a shop. The Census described William as a carpenter, Joseph a bookkeeper and James and Mary Ann as scholars. By 1861 Paul and Ann both aged 64, had only Mary Ann, aged 23, at home at 41 Mortimer Street, Trowbridge. Paul died on 19 July 1870.

### **William Hart, Grandfather of William Ewart Hart**

William Hart was born on 22 February 1830 in Trowbridge. On 2 January 1855 he arrived in Sydney on the *Wacousta* with his wife Elizabeth (née Daniels) whom he had married on 9 June 1852 in Trowbridge, and daughter Mary Jane, born in Trowbridge in 1853. The newly

arrived family settled in Elizabeth Street North Parramatta. During his life William and his family lived in Isabella Street Parramatta, Harris Park and Wentworthville. The children, born to the couple in Parramatta, were William Henry, George, Joseph, James, Elizabeth, and John Wesley, and two females who died in infancy.

William, a carpenter by trade, found work in the building industry after his arrival in the colony. His first job was on the construction of the King's School in O'Connell Street. By 1856 he was working on the construction of a house in Sorrell Street for Reverend Gore of All Saints' Church of England, later occupied by Mr T.W. Bowden and his family. He formed a partnership with Jabez Lavors and they set themselves up as builders at "Honiton House" in Church Street North, just above Ross Street. The business was responsible for many of Parramatta's churches and public buildings such as the Parramatta South Public School, now the Arthur Phillip High School, the Old House Museum (1873), Dr Charles Johnson's house (1879), and the Parramatta Post Office in Church Street (1880), as well as C.J. Byrne's Woollen Mills (1882) on the site of Peisley and Dempsey's meat works at Clyde. This building was closed in 1888 and demolished in 1909 to make way for the extension of the Clyde railway yards. In 1883 they built the Parramatta Town Hall in Church Street with a hall at the rear. The firm also built the Methodist Church in Macquarie Street. This is still standing in 2011 and was one of the costliest buildings built for the Methodist Church in New South Wales.

Hart and Lavors built the George Street Gatehouse for the Parramatta Park trustees at a cost of £590, and in 1886 they built the School of Arts in Macquarie Street, which was opened by the then Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, and demolished about 1926. William Hart and Jabez Lavors both signed a petition on 27 May 1861 for the establishment of local government in Parramatta. This resulted in the proclamation of the municipality on 27 November 1861. When William Hart and Jabez Lavors decided to take a trip to England, and were away for several years, their sons William Henry Hart and Samuel Lavors carried on the business.

In 1887, the firm of William Hart and Sons Timber Merchants was begun with William Henry and George. This business was dissolved in 1894 and William Henry Hart started a partnership with W.W. Hitchcock as Hart and Hitchcock and Company. It was about this time that William Hart senior retired; he had earlier bought land in the Harris Park and Wentworth estates, on which he erected houses which he rented out. By 1893 his property was valued between £500 and a £1000. He was forced into bankruptcy in 1897 because he was guarantor of the Friendly Societies' Hall when the failed Australian Joint Stock Company held the mortgage.

William Hart senior died from a cerebral haemorrhage on 4 March 1910 at his home in Wentworth Street, Parramatta at the age of 80, and was buried the following day at Mays Hill Cemetery on the Western Road (sometimes know as the Western Road Cemetery) with his first wife Elizabeth, who had died on 5 October 1896 from breast and liver cancer. William married Hannah Meads in Parramatta in 1897 but didn't have any children with her.

### **William Henry Hart, Father of William Ewart Hart**

William Henry Hart was born at North Parramatta on 1 December 1855, the year that his parents, William and Elizabeth, arrived in Australia from England. His schooling started in Mr Breathour's school in Albert Street, North Parramatta, but shortly after he left to attend



William Hart.

Mr Sladen's Methodist School at the corner of Grose and Church Streets. Later he went on to attend the Old National School near Lennox Bridge, run by Mr Murray, only missing three days in a year. When he started work as a carpenter he worked with his father and Jabez Lavors. He also received valuable tuition from William Ring, the contractor who built Rings Bridge in Parramatta Park. William Henry and George with their father started the timber merchant business in Darcy Street formerly the Cumberland Steam Saw Joinery Works. William Henry earned the reputation for best bench hand in Parramatta, with an unmatched knowledge of timber. His work on the bench would have contributed significantly to his severe deafness in later life.

Hart & Hitchcock was a very successful business, consisting of a large yard with mill and storage buildings. They also had extensive wharves and mills in River Road on the bank of the Parramatta River near Rosehill Racecourse. In 1911 Mr Hitchcock retired and sold his interest to George Folkhard and to his son William Hitchcock. George Folkhard worked in the office and was married to William Henry's daughter Florence. William Henry and his family lived at *Castrella* (named after his daughter Cassie) at 127 Wentworth Avenue Wentworthville until 1898, when he moved to a house in Darcy Street near the timber mill for a year or so, then to a house called *Bertonia* named for his youngest son Bert, at 25 Wentworth Street, Parramatta.

William Henry Hart was a keen bowler, and a member of the Parramatta Bowling Club from 1886. He was club champion in 1907, 1908 and 1911, and was also pairs champion with George Coates. He was made a life member in 1936. William Henry was also a keen fisherman and went fishing from Brooklyn almost every weekend for over 50 years until he was 80 years old. He built a house at Brooklyn, which he called *Lingalonga*, in about 1910. His launch was built by Mr Shay at Brooklyn and named *Essie* for his youngest daughter. William Henry Hart was well regarded in the community and was very generous to charitable causes and to his family. According to his daughter Essie he built a house for each of his daughters when they married, except Essie who was given money. William Henry was a life governor of Parramatta District Hospital. He had a tremendous sense of humour and a never-ending list of stories.

William Henry Hart married Maria Alice Gazzard, daughter of Moses Gazzard and Caroline Newling, at Parramatta in 1880, and they had 12 children - Minnie Florence, George Daniels, William Ewart, Frederick Claud, Cassie Amy, Winifred Newling, Caroline E., Stanley John, Mary A. M., Dorothy, Albert Hugh, and Esma Victoria. William Henry Hart died at Parramatta on 5 May 1937 and is buried in Rookwood Cemetery Old Wesleyan Section 2B Row 19 grave 405-409 with his wife Maria and their sons George Daniels Hart, and Frederick Claud Hart.

Maria died on 30 March 1933 at her home in Wentworth Street Parramatta, following a three-month illness. Maria was very charitable and hospitable, and was highly esteemed by a large circle of friends. In her younger days she was a warm supporter of the Parramatta Methodist Church of which she was a Sunday school teacher.

### **George Hart, Uncle of William Ewart Hart**

George, the second son of William Hart and Elizabeth Daniels, was born in North Parramatta in 1857. He was educated at the old National School presided over by Mr J. H. Murray, whose sons established the extensive local business bearing the family name. George married Mary Floyd in 1883. They had four daughters and an adopted son A. V. Brown. George worked in the family firm with his brother William Henry for several years, but severed his ties when his brother began a partnership with Mr Hitchcock. He worked for many years as a carpenter and builder. He was a keen bowler, and a member of the Parramatta Bowling Club. He died on Saturday 7 March 1932 at his home *Kinross* in Hassall Street, Parramatta. His funeral was well attended by businessmen and people of note, including the Mayor, Alderman H. Olsen, Alderman W. Cameron, and members of the Newling and Gazzard families.

### **William Ewart Hart (Bill)**



William Ewart Hart was born in Parramatta on 20 April 1885, the third of nine children of William Henry Hart and Maria Alice Gazzard. William Ewart was educated in Parramatta, and after completing his schooling he was apprenticed to a dentist Mr Maxwell of Parramatta.

When his apprenticeship was completed, he practised dentistry in Wyalong, where he made history by riding the first motorcycle and driving the first car to enter the town. The motor cycle was a simple belt driven machine and not too powerful, according to Mr Leadbitter, who witnessed his arrival, but it certainly created excitement, for every horse in the street attempted to bolt, many succeeded. William Hart then practised in Newcastle and from 1919 at Boomerang House at 139 King Street Sydney.

Bill Hart was 25 when English envoy Joseph Hammond, representing the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company Ltd, came to Australia to convince the Commonwealth Government to buy the company's flying machines. The year being 1911, nobody in Australia had seen an aeroplane in flight. The machine's possibilities were undreamed of. The Australian Government declined to do business with Mr Hammond and he had to return to England, but left behind his spare machine in charge of a mechanic named McDonald. This was Billy's opportunity. As he had an inventive and mechanical mind he had a look at the aeroplane as it lay on the outskirts of his native town, and decided to buy it for £1,300, complete with a guarantee from the mechanic in charge that he would teach the purchaser to fly. The English makers refused to honour the offer because Bill would not promise that he would not make planes in Australia. Bill left with the aeroplane saying that he would teach himself or break his neck in the attempt. The mechanic McDonald gave him a thorough briefing on flying instructions, but before Bill could make an attempt to fly it, a gale blew it over while it was housed at Belmore Park, Penrith, and in a few minutes it was a crumpled wreck.

Billy got to work on the wreck and with the help of some friends and the mechanic he built a new machine. After some time working out the controls, he felt ready to fly. Billy told the story in an article in the Aero Club of NSW journal *Flying* in December 1929:

*“One day a local resident asked when I was going to take it up, more in a jocular spirit than anything else, I answered ‘tomorrow morning’. News travels fast in a small country town, but I did not anticipate the crowd of five or six hundred who turned up to see me take off. However having burned my boats it was a case of now or never. The engine worked well, and the machine started off, gathering speed as it made for the end of the paddock. The supreme moment had arrived. Pulling the controls, I found myself thirty feet in the air almost before I realised it.”*

Thus took place the first Australian flight by an Australian airman. On this eventful morning in November 1911, Billy rose into the air in his locally made machine, and before the astonished gaze of his fellow townsmen succeeded in coming down safely. In his own words: *‘I fluked a good landing.’*”

Next day, 4 November 1911, he flew from Penrith to Parramatta with his brother Jack as a passenger. It is said the experience scared 16-year-old Jack so much he never flew again. They landed in Parramatta Park after attaining a height of three thousand feet, a splendid and most plucky performance. In 1938 the people of Parramatta acknowledged Hart’s feat by raising the money to put up a monument adjacent to the place where he landed in the park.

The Parramatta flight was followed after some more days’ practice by a flight from Penrith, via St Marys, to Sydney, ending in a spectacular landing at the Royal Agricultural Society’s Showground. At 47 miles, it was the longest flight in the Southern Hemisphere at the time. On 5 December 1911, after a very intense examination by the Royal Aero Club officers, Bill Hart was given his most valued possession, the first aviator’s certificate ever granted in Australia.

On 3 January the following year, the Postmaster-General C.E. Frazer opened Hart’s Aviation School at Penrith. Billy decided to issue a prospectus inviting the public to subscribe to his company. In March he transferred his operations from Belmore Park to Ham Common, Richmond, which is now the site of the R.A.A.F. Base.

Billy had to appear in the Sydney District Court on 9 May 1912 before Judge Backhouse over a complaint by Hugh Byrne from the Elizabeth Dairy, Epsom Road, Waterloo.

*The plaintiff claimed that Hart had propelled an aeroplane over, upon and against his land, on which his dairy cows were depasturing, with great noise and disturbance with the machine, and thereby frightened, disturbed, and stampeded the herd, with the result that two cows were killed, and others injured, besides which the supply of milk greatly diminished, and he was hindered and disturbed in carrying on his business. Hugh Byrne further claimed that Hart had broke and entered upon his premises wherein the cows were being depastured. Hart had offered to pay him £10 but he never did. After evidence from many witnesses Judge Backhouse awarded Hugh Byrne £20 damages.*

On 29 June 1912, Hart defeated an American Eugene (Wizard) Stone in an air race from Botany to Parramatta Park, a distance of twenty miles. Hart covered the distance in 23 minutes. Stone lost his way in a rainstorm and landed at Lakemba; the prize was £250,

'winner take all'. At various times through the years, cinematographer Ernest Higgins made 18 flights with Hart, shooting enough footage to make three films *The Camera in the Clouds*, *Among the Clouds with a Camera*, and in 1913 *Australia Calls*. The first of these was screened by the Lyceum Photo Show and claims to be the first moving picture ever taken from an aeroplane. In 1912 Hart's Aviation Company built a two-seater monoplane with a fifty horsepower seven-cylinder Gnome rotary engine. It was successfully tested at Wagga Wagga and later made 27 flights from Richmond.

On 4 September 1912 Billy crashed his plane from about two hundred feet at Richmond. The



aircraft was wrecked and he was seriously injured. He was hospitalised for two months with a fractured left leg and right knee cap and head injuries. In January 1916 Bill enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces as a Lieutenant in No. 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps. He went to Egypt and Britain where he acted as an instructor. However he was declared medically unfit (epilepsy) and returned to Australia. He was discharged on 11 September 1916.

William Ewart Hart travelled to Canada on 27 March 1920; his reason for the visit was given as plane invention.

Bill resumed his career as a dentist at the end of World War I and opened new surgeries on a whole floor of Boomerang House, King Street, Sydney. He married Thelma Claire Cock at St Philip's Anglican Church, Sydney on 10 August 1929. They lived in Chorley Avenue, Cheltenham and had one child, William Junior.

Bill died on 29 July 1943 from heart disease - he was found dead in Stuart lane, off Bathurst Street, Sydney. Bill was cremated at Rookwood with Methodist Forms. The R.A.A.F. flew overhead in salute. His wife and son survived him. At the time of his death he was Vice President of the Air Force Association. The minutes of the organisation recorded that William Hart was a resourceful, courageous, pioneer soldier, airman, loyal friend, good citizen, loveable personality and gallant gentleman.

This year (2011) is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of William Ewart Hart's landing in Parramatta Park on 4 November 1911. In 1976 Parramatta Foundation Week Committee used "Flight" as the theme. Mr W. A. Mantle prepared a short paper outlining the contribution of Parramatta-born William Ewart Hart to the development of the aircraft industry in Australia.

Holroyd District Historical Society inducted William Ewart Hart into the Linnwood Hall of Fame as Australia's first Aviator, on 25 May 1987 to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the group. He was proclaimed a son of the Western Region of Sydney. A Summary of his contribution to aviation was presented in a well prepared Souvenir Program.

**Sources:**

English birth records

William Hart's death certificate, courtesy Friends of Mays Hill

State Records NSW: Bounty Ships passenger lists; 4/4791, *Wacousta*, accessed online 14 November 2011 <http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.asp>

English Census: 1841, 1851, 1861

Memorial Inscription, Hart Family Grave, Mays Hill Cemetery, courtesy Friends of Mays Hill

*Jubilee History of Parramatta 1861-1911*

Hart Family History, Richard Hart, courtesy Parramatta Historical Society

Gazzard Family History, researched by Barry Bullivant, Granville Historical Society archives *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 6 April 1933, p. 14

Report on W.E. Hart, courtesy Enid Turbit

Short biography of W.E. Hart by James Hoskin, courtesy Parramatta Historical Society

K. Isaacs, 'Hart, William Ewart (1885–1943)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hart-william-ewart-6592/text11347> , accessed 14 November 2011

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 1911, p. 21, 5 February 1938, p. 8, 10 May 1912, p. 5, 30 July 1943, p. 4