



HUNTER'S HILL COUNCIL

SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

TREE PROFILE SHEET

1. LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Street: Ferdinand Reserve
Suburb: Hunters Hill
Post Code: 2110
GPS: Co ordinates : Longitude 151.1522775 Latitude -33.83203784
Other: At the top of the steps leading down to Ferdinand Reserve



2. DETAILS

Listed Significant Trees:

Botanical Name	Common Name
<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>	London Plane Tree

Public or Private Type: Public

Group or Individual: Individual

Date of Assessment/Inspection: 19.11.2015

3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *Platanus x acerifolia* (London Plane Tree) is considered a specimen of significant height and spread, making a valuable contribution to the aesthetic quality of the Ferdinand Street Reserve area (*aesthetic value*).

The London Plane Tree is associated with Council's early 20th century approach to public planting and recreational activities around the Lane Cove River. The specimen is an old example of this taxon for the Hunters Hill area (*historic value*).

The Platanus x acerifolia (London Plane Tree) is considered to have individual local significance in terms of aesthetic and historic value.

4. IMAGES





5. SIGNIFICANT ATTRIBUTES

Cultural/Social/Commemorative Historic Botanical/Scientific Ecological Visual/Aesthetic

6. SIGNIFICANT LEVELS

Local State National

7. BACKGROUND

The *Platanus x acerifolia* (London Plane Tree) is located at the northern end of Ferdinand Street Reserve on the entrance path to the reserve. The tree is positioned on the outside of the eastern boundary of 18 Ferdinand Street 'Walshale'.

In 1839, John Roby Hatfield purchased 18 acres on the north side of the peninsular. The grant covered the land between present day Mount Street, Alexandra Street and Ferdinand Street. It consisted of flat ridge-top land along Alexandra Street, falling north and west to the river by a series of sandstone outcrops and cliffs.¹

Jules Joubert purchased and subdivided land north of Alexandra and Madeline Streets, in 1859, with the larger allotments towards the Lane Cove River. Joubert's subdivision was built on, and Alexandra Street became the principle settlement in the Municipality.² The period between 1845 and 1861 saw the formation of new roads in the area resulting from the subdivision of Joubert's land, with Ferdinand Street being named after one of the children of Jules Joubert.³

In 1852, 'Walshale' was commissioned by local saddlers' ironmonger Henry Brooks and built under the direction of Jules Joubert. Jules Joubert and his brother Didier utilized the skill of Italian stonemasons in the houses they had built in Hunters Hill, including 'Walshale', 'Passy' 1 Passy Avenue, 'The Haven' 1 McBride Avenue, 'Innisfree' 11a Ady Street and 'Windermere' 25 Ernest Street. Henry Brookes who was elected an alderman in the first Hunters Hill Council elections of 26th January 1861 also had 'Maruna' built at 12 Ferdinand Street. 'Walshale' was used as an infant school for boys and girls from 1898 to 1899. Brookes' parcel of land, on which 'Walshale' was built, remained intact until well into the 20th century. Two new lots to the south were made by 1968, and a further block to the west was made in the 1980s.

The stone wall that forms the eastern boundary of 'Walshale' is the original boundary for the site and the only original boundary that remains.⁴ The stone wall forms the western side of the entrance path to Ferdinand Reserve. The eastern side of the entrance is defined by the stone boundary wall for 21 Ferdinand Street 'Cleverton' c. 1876.

An analysis of 1943 aerial images of the area shows the path leading down to the reserve. Trees are evident, intermittently located, on either side of the path. Interpretation of historical images shows that trees were frequently planted in areas close to public wharfs and access paths around Hunters Hill. It is likely that the London Plane Tree, along with additional trees, possibly of the same species, was planted by Council along the entrance to the path as part of a public planting beautification approach.

The London Plane Trees in Passy Avenue Hunters Hill were planted around 1935.⁵ The London Plane Tree at Ferdinand Street is of a greater size than the Passy Avenue trees. Whilst it is difficult to determine the exact planting date for the London Plane Tree, it is likely the tree dates from the Interwar period (c.1919-1938).

The foreshore is a defining natural feature of Hunters Hill and extends for 16.25km. During the 19th and 20th century, the foreshore was used profusely for public and private transport, and recreational activities. Due to the exceeding steepness of the peninsular, Council constructed many access paths either by cutting into natural rock or from large cut and dressed stones. Many of the sandstone steps winding down to the foreshore remain, including the steps leading to Ferdinand Street Reserve.

Ferdinand Street Reserve is thought to be a "left-over" portion of the 100 acre reserve that was decreed by the Governor Ralph Darling to the foreshore of Sydney Harbour c.1835. It is understood that the reserve was offered to adjoining land owners following the introduction of the Crown Lands Act (1884), which allowed alienation of Crown Land as a grant by rescission. (HHC, Heritage Officer, Greg Patch, personal communication, 24th February 2016)

The recreational potential of the Lane Cove River opened up when the Joubert family started the Hunters Hill and Lane Cove River Steam Ferry Company in 1871. The Sydney Morning Herald extolled the virtues of the river's 'calm, secluded bays and cool retreats for picnic parties and pleasure seekers'. The service operated from Figtree House where people could make use of the Avenue Picnic Grounds or hire boats and fishing tackle.⁶ The 1888 Illustrated Sydney News described how, along the Lane Cove River at Hunters Hill, 'a romantic looking stone bathing house projects into the tide, and one of the most magnificent fig trees in the colony overhangs the bank.'⁷

A subdivision auction notice from 1883 for the area shows a bathing place and bath house on the Lane Cove River directly north of Ferdinand Street within the now Ferdinand Street Reserve. It is likely that the path and stone steps were constructed by Council to provide access to the recreational activities available on the Lane Cove River and possibly access to the adjacent Fig Tree Wharf and the Avenue Pleasure Grounds located westward from the reserve.



SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

The London Plane Tree was a popular species throughout the late 19th century to mid 20th century and was frequently planted as a single or double avenue. *Platanus orientalis* (Oriental Plane) was first listed as a cultivated species at the Botanic Gardens, Sydney, in 1828. It is noted that *Platanus orientalis* (Oriental Plane) was used in a broader sense during 19th century to include the *Platanus x acerifolia* (London Plane Tree).⁸

The subject London Plane Tree is a specimen of significant height and spread. With a broad spreading canopy the specimen contributes to the aesthetic quality of the streetscape. The London Plane Tree is thought to be one of the older examples of the species in the Hunters Hill area.

The specimen tree is considered historically significant for its association with Council's early 20th century approach to public tree planting and recreational activities around the Lane Cove River.

References:

- ¹ Pike, Penelope, 1990, *Assessment of Heritage Significance*, Municipality of Hunters Hill, pg 2
- ² Walker, Meredith, 1984, *Hunters Hill Heritage Study: Heritage & Character Report*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 42
- ³ Walker, Meredith, 1984, *Hunters Hill Heritage Study: Heritage & Character Report*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 43
- ⁴ Pike, Penelope, 1990, *Assessment of Heritage Significance*, Municipality of Hunters Hill, pg 2
- ⁵ Walker, Meredith, 1984, *Hunters Hill Heritage Study: Heritage & Character Report*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 64
- ⁶ Russel Kate, 2009, *Some of the Lost Wharfs Of Hunters Hill*, Hunters Hill Trust Journal, <http://huntershilltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Vol-47-No-2-Oct-2009.pdf>, accessed 25.02.2016
- ⁷ Illustrated Sydney News, 1888, *Sydney: It's Harbour and Views*, Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/63621313>, accessed 01.03.2016
- ⁸ Sydney Living Museums, 2014, *Colonial Plant Database*, accessed 20.02.2016

8. ADDITIONAL IMAGES

IMAGE SOURCE:

Ryde Library Local Studies Collection, Hunters Hill: valuable properties belonging to H.C. Brookes Esq. to be sold at the rooms on Friday 27th July 1883, Richardson & Wrench

RTA, From the Skies, 1943

