



HUNTER'S HILL COUNCIL

SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

TREE PROFILE SHEET

1. LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Street: Salter Street
Suburb: Gladesville
Post Code: 2111
GPS: Co ordinates : Longitude 151.1334965 Latitude -33.83738368
Other: Located on crown land near 2-6 Salter Street



2. DETAILS

Listed Significant Trees:

Botanical Name	Common Name
<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>	Port Jackson Fig

Public or Private Type: Public

Group or Individual: Individual

Date of Assessment/Inspection: 19.11.2015

3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig) is associated with the Government Asylum phase of 'The Priory'. The specimen fig provides information about the evolution and layout of 'The Priory' over time and remains as an important cultural planting (*historic value*).

The Port Jackson Fig is considered an outstanding example of the species with a broad, domed crown (*aesthetic value*).

The Ficus rubiginosa (Port Jackson Fig) is considered to have significance at a local level in terms of historic and aesthetic.

4. IMAGES





5. SIGNIFICANT ATTRIBUTES

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

6. SIGNIFICANT LEVELS

Local State National

7. BACKGROUND

The *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig) is located within an area of crown land at 2-6 Salter Street, to the south of the 'Priory'.

In 1836, journalist, musician and auctioneer Thomas Stubbs purchased two allotments of land at Tarban Creek and proceeded to build a single-storey farmhouse. Stubbs, his wife, two servants and a gardener resided at 'Longwood' until 1847.¹ In 1847, Thomas Stubbs sold the house, the outbuildings and farm to the French religious order The Society of Mary (Marist Fathers). It would become their first base in Australia. The Marist Fathers extended Stubb's original sandstone farmhouse under the architect William Weaver and named the site 'Villa Maria'.²

In 1864, the Marist Fathers moved their order to the other side of Tarban Creek and transferred the title 'Villa Maria' to their new home. In 1874, Thomas Salter purchased the original building and renamed it 'The Priory'. Under Salter's tenure, the site included a shed, latrines, out house, tennis court, stables, poultry yard, cultivation paddock and coach houses.³

In 1888, The Priory was purchased by the Crown with 20 acres of land for use as part of the Gladesville Asylum. It was known as Ward 2. The resumption under Superintendent Dr Frederick Manning's administration was to provide more patient accommodation, to prevent the land being sold for residential allotments, for storage and for farm buildings. The surrounding land was farmed by patients for the production of fruit and vegetables for hospital use, and in WWII an air raid shelter for patients and staff was cut into the terrace.

Under Dr Manning and his successor, Dr Eric Sinclair, a pastoral environment came to dominate at the Hospital because of its perceived therapeutic effect. This was consistent with the Victorian idea that pleasant or beautiful surroundings would help ease the mental anguish of the inmates.⁴ The gardens around 'The Priory' were transformed to provide pleasant and shady grounds for the inmates, and trees, possibly donated by the Director of the Botanic Gardens, were planted.⁵

The townhouses at 2-6 Salter Street were completed in 2011 on the site of 'The Priory's' former stables. The stables structure was built during the Government Asylum phase (later Gladesville Psychiatric Hospital) most likely some time in the first decade of the 20th century and certainly, according to surviving documentation, between 1888 and the 1920s. The structure was built on a level piece of ground between Salter Street and a curving drive to the south-west of the 'The Priory'.

The Priory Ward was an open male ward where patients tended the garden and vegetable farm as part of their physical and mental health. During this period, the stables housed the horses used on the vegetable farm.

Vegetable farming ceased in 1957. The stables were demolished c.1969 in anticipation of a new Out Patients centre which was never built.

The Port Jackson Fig, in addition to the four adjacent Port Jackson Figs, is evident in aerial images from 1943. The trees form an avenue along the southern perimeter of the stables structure. The four Port Jackson Figs are small specimens with a relatively short Useful Life expectancy. The four Port Jackson Figs are located within the site boundary of the town house complex at 2-6 Salter Street. Despite their difference in size, it is likely that the avenue of five Figs were planted at the same time and are associated with the Gladesville Psychiatric Hospital phase and construction of the stables complex. The four Port Jackson Figs have associational value and are considered contributory items.

Ficus rubiginosa (Port Jackson Fig) is a locally native species naturally growing as a lithophyte clinging to clefts in rock and sandstone scarps. The species has the potential to self-seed.

Whilst Port Jackson Figs are endemic to the Hunters Hill area, the specimen is a cultural planting due to its location in the landscape. The species has been widely cultivated in private gardens, large estates, institutional lands and public parkland throughout the Hunters Hill area and Sydney. The species has a long association with Sydney and is among the most iconic Sydney tree species. Plantings of figs in public parks and large gardens reached its height in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Port Jackson Fig is considered an outstanding example of the species with a broad, domed canopy. The subject tree remains as evidence of remnant plantings and provides information about the evolution and layout of 'The Priory' site over time.

References:

¹ Pike, P, 2004, *Heritage Assessment of the Priory*, Hunters Hill Council

² Hunters Hill Council, 2016, *The Priory*, accessed 10.04.2016, http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=410

³ Hunters Hill Council, 2016, *The Priory*, accessed 10.04.2016, http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=410

⁴ Pike, P, 2004, *Heritage Assessment of the Priory*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 8

⁵ Pike, P, 2004, *Heritage Assessment of the Priory*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 12

⁶ Pike, P, 2004, *Heritage Assessment of the Priory*, Hunters Hill Council, pg 13