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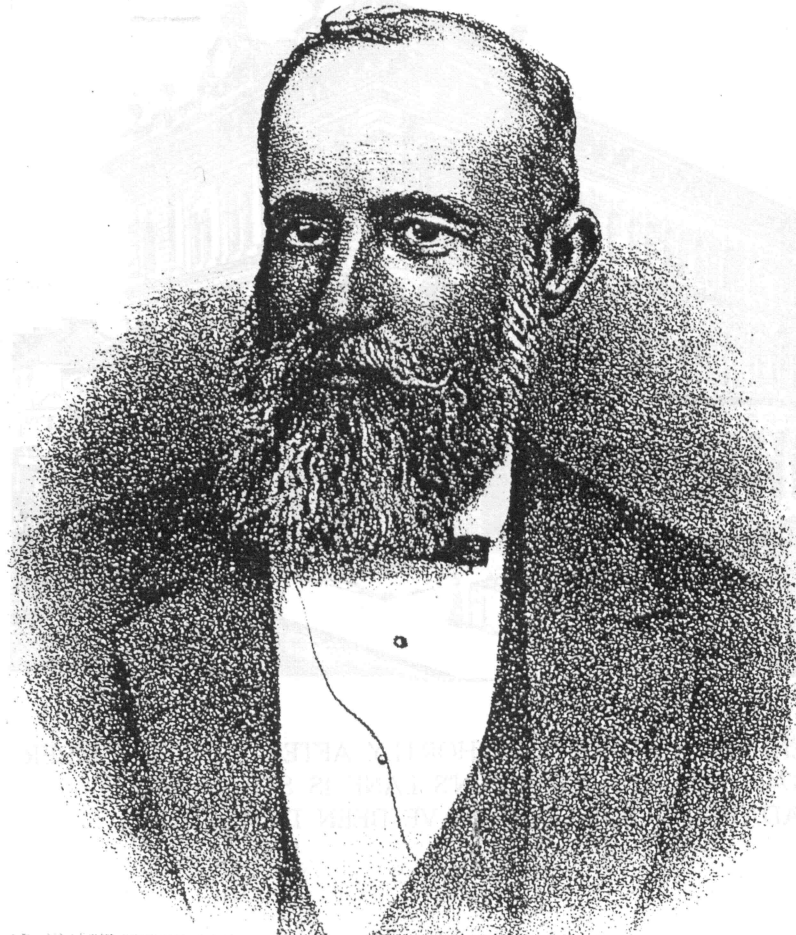DATE: 25 May 1998

ANGELO TORNAGHI

(1823 - 1906)

Angelo Tornaghi, a prominent and well-respected resident of Hunters Hill, was born in Milan, Italy in 1823. [1]

As a young man he supported the Italian patriots, Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807 - 1882), and Giuseppe Mazzini (1805 - 1872), in their unsuccessful campaigns of 1848-49 to defend Rome against the French. [2]

Both Garibaldi and Mazzini were Freemasons and Past Grand Masters of the Masonic Grand Orient of Italy. [3]

Following their disastrous defeat by the French, Garibaldi, Mazzini and many of their followers, left their beloved Italy to make a new home in various parts of the world.
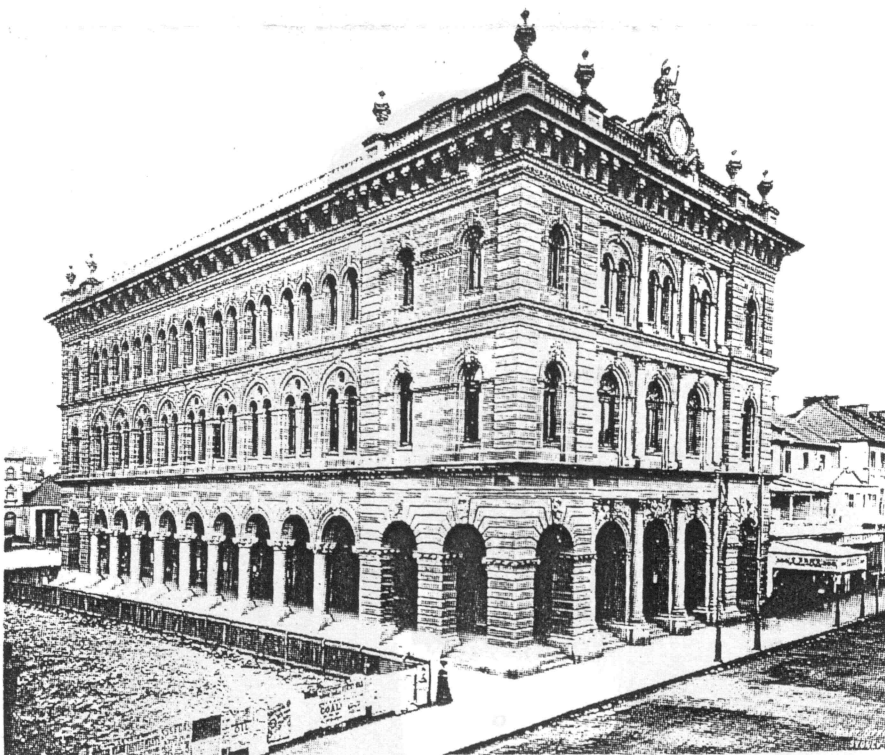

ANGELO TORNAGHI

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Some of them came to Australia and among them was the thirty-one year old Angelo Tornaghi who arrived in Sydney in 1854. [4]

He established himself at No. 312 George Street, Sydney as a Mathematical and Scientific Instrument Maker. [5] He was also an horologist, a term widely used at the time to describe a clock or watch maker.

He constructed tide gauges, barometers, micrometer eye-pieces and a variety of other instruments for the Sydney Observatory and a circumferentor for quick and accurate surveying for the Department of Lands.

A feature of the first stage of the General Post Office in George Street, Sydney, was a large clock designed and constructed by Angelo Tornaghi.

The opening ceremony for this portion of the building was performed by the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency Sir Hercules Robinson, G.C.M.G., who was also a Freemason, on 1 September 1874. [6]

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE SHORTLY AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 1874 OPENING. ST.MARTIN'S LANE IS STILL VISIBLE. ADJOINING BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN DEMOLISHED.

At the time of its construction, the clock was one of the largest and most elaborate in the world.

The clock face was visible by day and night and, instead of bells, the chimes consisted of suspended chromatic tubes.

The clock was set in an ornate carved stone surround above the cornice of the George Street facade. It was surrounded by a figure of Britannia and twelve stone urns to represent each month of the year. [7]

ORIGINAL G.P.O. CLOCK, GEORGE STREET FACADE 1874

Unfortunately, the clock face was difficult to see from street level and then only from directly in front. The city architect who designed the building was James Barnet and he replaced the traditional two-handed clock face with an elaborate system which had a travelling pointer on the outer rim to indicate minutes and it gave an early version of a digital reading of say 9.20 instead of twenty minutes past nine.

The clock was unpopular with the public and Barnet replaced it with three faces which was housed in a mounting which projected outwards from the building facade and was visible from a distance along George Street.

Although a clock tower had been included in Barnet's original design, it was not completed until 1891 and Angelo Tornaghi found himself at the centre of a serious controversy.

He was the contractor for the supply and installation of the clock and bells but, on his own initiative, he placed a number of lighter, tubular chimes in the tower because, he claimed, traditional bells would be too heavy and a danger to the tower. [8]

A test was arranged to compare the tone of bells and chimes and Barnet and Tornaghi went to Hyde Park to make the comparison. Tornaghi admitted that the tubes were inferior and Barnet ordered their removal.

This was only the beginning of Tornaghi's troubles.

Henry Daly who was the unsuccessful tenderer for the clock and bells, whilst he admitted that his tender had not conformed to the original specifications, nevertheless claimed that they nominated a design which was unworkable. As a result, Tornaghi's contract was cancelled and new tenders were called.

Tornaghi was again successful and again Daly objected. This second contract was also cancelled and tenders called for the third time.

This time, Tornaghi gave up and Daly, who was the only tenderer, was successful.

Angelo Tornaghi was a gifted and skilful craftsman and he produced metal sculptures and a cast bronze piece, which comprised three figures that represented Humanity, Dignity and Strength, was erected on the facade of the Mutual Fire Assurance Company building at the corner of King and Pitt Streets.

In spite of his set-back with the General Post Office clock, Tornaghi's business expanded and he re-located into larger premises at 379 George Street.

Angelo Tornaghi married Antonia Maritti shortly after his arrival in Australia and they had three children; Angelo (Jnr.), Garabaldina and Remo.

The family lived at Hunters Hill, in a two-storied residence at 31 Madeline Street, which Tornaghi purchased for 500 pounds from the builder, Antonio Bondietti, in 1866. He named his home *Milano* and employed

Bondietti to enlarge the sandstone house which had been built on land which Bondietti had purchased from Didier Joubert for 50 pounds in 1863.

MILANO

The Tornaghi family occupied *Milano* from 1866 to 1892. [9]

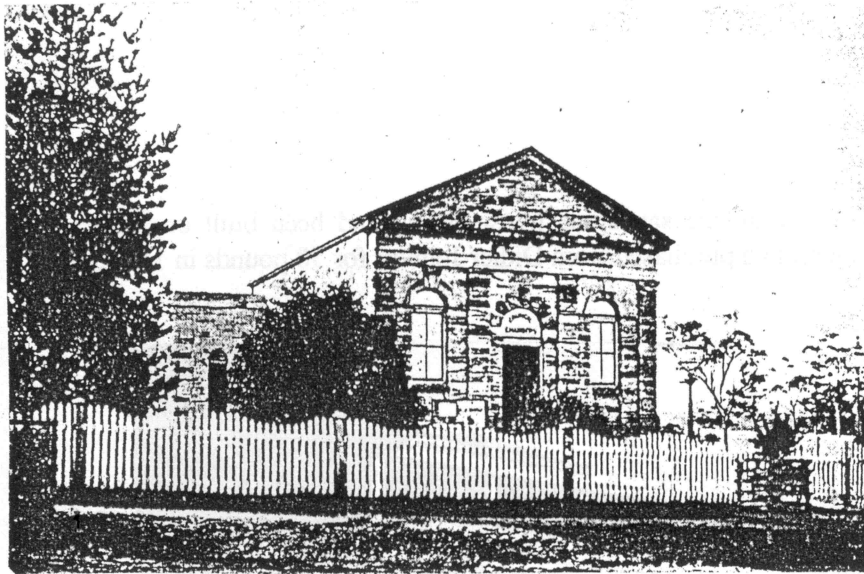The property later became known as *Clevedon*.

Tornaghi was also involved with buying and selling other properties in Hunters Hill.

In 1881, he purchased the property at 21 Mark Street from Didier Joubert. He sold it later in the same year to Jane Roberts. [10]

He purchased lots 5 and 6 at 59 Woolwich Road in 1887 from the New South Wales Property Investment Co. Ltd. He sold both lots in 1891 to James Lawson, the furniture warehouseman. [11]

Some time prior to 1897, Tornaghi had built Braemar at 29 Madeline Street [12] and, from 1889 to 1890, he owned the 30 acre (12 ha) *Italia* estate at 31 Bonnefin Road. [13]

Angelo Tornaghi took a detailed interest in the development of Hunters Hill and he was elected a Councillor on the Hunters Hill Municipal Council at its inauguration on 5 January 1861. He became Mayor of Hunters Hill in 1879 and again in 1882 and 1883. [14]

HUNTERS HILL TOWN HALL (BUILT 1866)

In 1884, Tornaghi left for a business and pleasure trip to Europe and, before his departure, he was entertained at a banquet held in his honour which had been arranged by James Squire Farnell, M.L.A., one-time Hunters Hill Councillor and Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales Freemasons.

One many occasions, Angelo Tornaghi had shown kindness to his countrymen and he regularly assisted Italian refugees when they arrived in Sydney. [15]

In 1880, he gave liberal support to the Italian members of an expedition to New Ireland who landed in Sydney in a state of destitution.

The King of Italy conferred upon him the Cross of Italy in recognition of his outstanding and valuable services. [16]

It was not, however, a case of all work and no play. Tornaghi was one of the prominent athletes of his day and he was involved with the Hunter's Hill Amateur Athletic Club which had been formed in 1878. [17]

Following in the footsteps of his former Italian heroes, Garibaldi and Mazzini and his Hunters Hill friends, James Squire Farnell and Charles Edward Jennerett, Tornaghi became a Freemason.

He was balloted for in The Australian Lodge of Harmony, No. 556, English Constitution, meeting in Sydney, on 9 March 1864. [18] He was

made a mason the same evening and, at the meeting held on 8 June, he entertained the members with an Italian Scena which he presented with great enthusiasm.

He made progress in the lodge to the rank of Master Mason on 13 July 1864. [19]

He became an enthusiastic officer and attained the mastership of his lodge in 1870. The June 1870 meeting was reported in the *Australian Freemasons' Magazine*:

> This lodge held its June monthly meeting on Wednesday, the 8th. Some candidates were initiated, one passed, and a small sum voted for Charity. The ceremony in the second degree was very ably interpreted by our talented and highly esteemed Brother Signor Angelo Tornaghi. We believe this is the seventh or eighth occasion on which he has rendered similar services to this Lodge of which he is an old and distinguished member.

He affiliated, as a Past Master, with the Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia No. 266, Irish Constitution.

Bro. James Squire Farnell belonged to this lodge which became No. 2, on the register of The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

Bro. Tornaghi was advanced to the Mark degree in the Sydney Lodge of Mark Master Masons, No. 25, English Constitution, on 28 September 1864, just two months after becoming a Master Mason. [20]

A further two months later, on 28 November 1864, he was exalted to the Royal Arch degree in Zetland Chapter No. 390, English Constitution. He served this chapter as Treasurer in 1883. [21]

No doubt encouraged by his friend James Squire Farnell, who, at the time, was Provincial Grand Master of the Irish Constitution for New South Wales, Wor.Bro. Angelo Tornaghi attended a meeting on 5 July 1877 to establish The Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

This body came into being on 3 December 1877 with Most Wor.Bro. James Squire Farnell, then Premier of New South Wales, as the first Grand Master.

Wor.Bro. Angelo Tornaghi was the foundation Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.

The United Grand Lodge of England denied recognition to the newly formed Grand Lodge of New South Wales and, as a result, Angelo Tornaghi was excluded from The Australian Lodge of Harmony. [22]

He continued his membership of The Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia which had become No. 1 on the register of The Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

At the Quarterly Communication of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales held on 4 March 1885, a letter was read from Right Wor.Bro. Castellazzo of the Grand Orient of Italy appointing Wor.Bro. Angelo Tornaghi as the representative near New South Wales. He received honours and congratulations from the Grand Master, Most Wor.Bro. Dr. Harman J. Tarrant at the June Communication. [23]

He was an early visitor to the Hunters Hill Lodge which was consecrated in 1885 as No. 2111, English Constitution, and which became No. 139, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales in 1888. [24]

In accordance with the English Constitution, he should have been refused permission as he signed the attendance book as a member of Lodge No. 1, which was the Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia belonging to the unrecognised Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

The constitutional differences within Freemasonry came to an end when the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales was inaugurated in 1888.

Following the masonic union, the representation near the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales of the Grand Orient of Italy was awarded to Right Wor.Bro. De Courcey Brown but, at a special communication held in the Sydney Town Hall on 11 June 1891, the Grand Master, Most Wor.Bro. His Excellency, Lord Jersey, P.C., G.C.M.G., formally announced that Wor.Bro. Tornaghi would resume the representation. [25]

Angelo Tornaghi died in Sydney Hospital from carcinoma of the stomach on 15 October 1906. He was aged 83. [26]

His address was recorded as 298 Oxford Street, Sydney; his religion as Church of England and he was buried in Waverley Cemetery on 27 October 1906.

The undertaker was one of Sydney's leading Freemasons, Very Wor.Bro. Joseph T. Coffill.

Angelo Tornaghi was survived by his wife, Antonia and their three children. [27]

Angelo Tornaghi was remembered in Hunters Hill. Angelo Street was named in his honour and The Hunters Hill Historical Society possess a brass parallel ruler made by him at his city premises.

ANGELO STREET HUNTERS HILL, 1996

NOTES

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        The Australian Dictionary of Biography, Canberra, 1987

2.   *The Great Encyclopaedia of Universal Knowledge*, Odhams
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3.   William R. Denslow, *10,000 Famous Freemasons,* Transactions
        of the Missouri Lodge of Research, 1958, Vol. 2, p.96;
        1959, Vol. 3, p.158

4.   N.S.W. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

5.   Everard Digby [Editor], *Australian Men of Mark*, Charles F. Maxwell, Melbourne, 1889, Vol. 2, p.226

6.   *The City's Centrepiece*, Australia Post, 1988, p.31

7.   *Ibid*, p.77

8.   *Ibid*, p.43

9.   *Heritage of Hunter's Hill*, The Hunter's Hill Trust, Hunter's Hill, 3rd. Ed., 1982, p.79

10. *Ibid*, p.29

11. *Ibid*, p.108

12. *Ibid*, p.78

13. *Ibid*, p.18

14. I. Brodsky, *Hunters Hill New South Wales*, John D. Jukes Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1961, pp.30, 49, 55

15. Beverley Sherry, *Hunter's Hill Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb*, David Ell Press, Balmain, N.S.W., 1989, p.54

16. *Australian Men of Mark, op.cit.*, p.229

17. J.C.M. Boult, *Cavalcade of Hunter's Hill 1794 - 1938*, Sydney, 1938, p.23

18. *The Australian Masonic News*, Sydney, April 1864, p.29

19. *Loc.cit.*, August, 1864, p.37

20. *Loc.cit.*, October, 1864, p.34

21. W. R. Ernste, *A Short History of the Zetland Chapter of Australia No. 1.*, privately published, Box Hill, Victoria, 1973, p.73

22. *The N.S.W. Freemason*, Sydney, December 1968, p.12

23. The Grand Lodge of New South Wales, Proceedings, Year Ended June 1885

24. P. W. Cuthbert, *Hunter's Hill, The Early History of the District, Municipality and Freemasonry,* Unpublished paper, 1968, p.10

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26. *Australian Worker,* Sydney, 18 October 1906, p.1

27. N.S.W. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.