...SAVE IN HIS OWN HOUSE...

Most people interested in Illawarra history know that "Hillcrest", the old house which is the nucleus of the United Protestant Association home at Stanwell Park, was the home of Lawrence Hargrave. Not so well known is the fact that the deed by which the Association acquired the property included a clause prohibiting the use of "Hillcrest" as a Lawrence Hargrave memorial.

The house was built by Ralph Hargrave, Lawrence's elder brother. He died in 1888, leaving the property on trust for Lawrence for life and afterwards for his children. In 1940 the Perpetual Trustee Co. Ltd., the trustee of Ralph's will, and Lawrence's surviving children (all of whom are now dead) conveyed the property to Mrs. Margaret Letitia Jane Campbell. She in 1949 made a gift of the property to three very Germanic-sounding gentlemen, as trustees for the Temple Society of Australia, for use as a home for the aged and sick.

The conveyance contained certain unusual clauses. One, wholly admirable, expressed a wish that as few trees as possible should be cut on the lands. Another provided that the path between the Post Office and the Railway Station should be kept open; but, to prevent any prescriptive right being acquired, the trustees should close it to the public on 22 June each year. (The choice of date is not explained).

The oddest of the old clauses reads: "It is the express intention of the Donor and an express condition hereof that the land hereby assured is to be retained in perpetuity and kept in its entirety and shall never be sold and further that it will never be used for the purpose of a Lawrence Hargrave memorial" (Italics mine—Ed.).

Some years later the Equity Court, having decided that the particular charitable purposes set out in the conveyance were impracticable, but that a general charitable purpose was disclosed, approved the appointment of the United Protestant Association Trust Limited as trustee for generally similar purposes. The ban on a Lawrence Hargrave memorial was continued. Perhaps John Fletcher Hargrave, Primary Judge in Equity, turned in his grave; perhaps not—there is some reason to believe he would have thought that the Hargrave who deserved a monument was not Lawrence.

The conveyance leaves unexplained Mrs. Campbell's motives for changing "Dinna forget!" to "Dinna mind!" Was there a feud between Campbells and Hargraves, to be pursued beyond the grave and from generation to generation, till Cruachan crumbles and four-legged foxes make their lair in Inveraray Castle? Did she believe the theory once advanced that Hargrave's inventions were not made by Hargrave, but by another man of the same name (i.e. the Judge); and did she act in the spirit of a Baconian who had the chance to shut down Shakespeare's birthplace? Did she simply think that Lawrence Hargrave was a Bad Thing? (With that feeling, at least, one could sometimes sympathise. If, when your nose was
in the classic soil of Greece and fifty or a hundred Stukas and Messerschmitts were all devoting their attention to you personally (which may not be literally true but is how it felt), anyone had mentioned Lawrence Hargrave, it would have been impossible to think of any hell hot enough to consign him to).

This is all speculation. There is no evidence of motive — simply that extraordinary stipulation. “A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house.”

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Wollongong or Mount Ousley.

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Wollongong Argus, 13 April 1889.

(This was in a boom period. Five years later Mr. Dobinson could not have given his land away).