

Waverley House



Waverley House, unknown date

Waverley the suburb and Local Government Area was named after a private home, Waverley House, built by Barnett Levey. Levey was the first free male Jewish settler in Australia. Waverley House itself had been named in honour of the book *Waverley* by Scottish author Sir Walter Scott, published in 1814 and often regarded as the first historical novel.

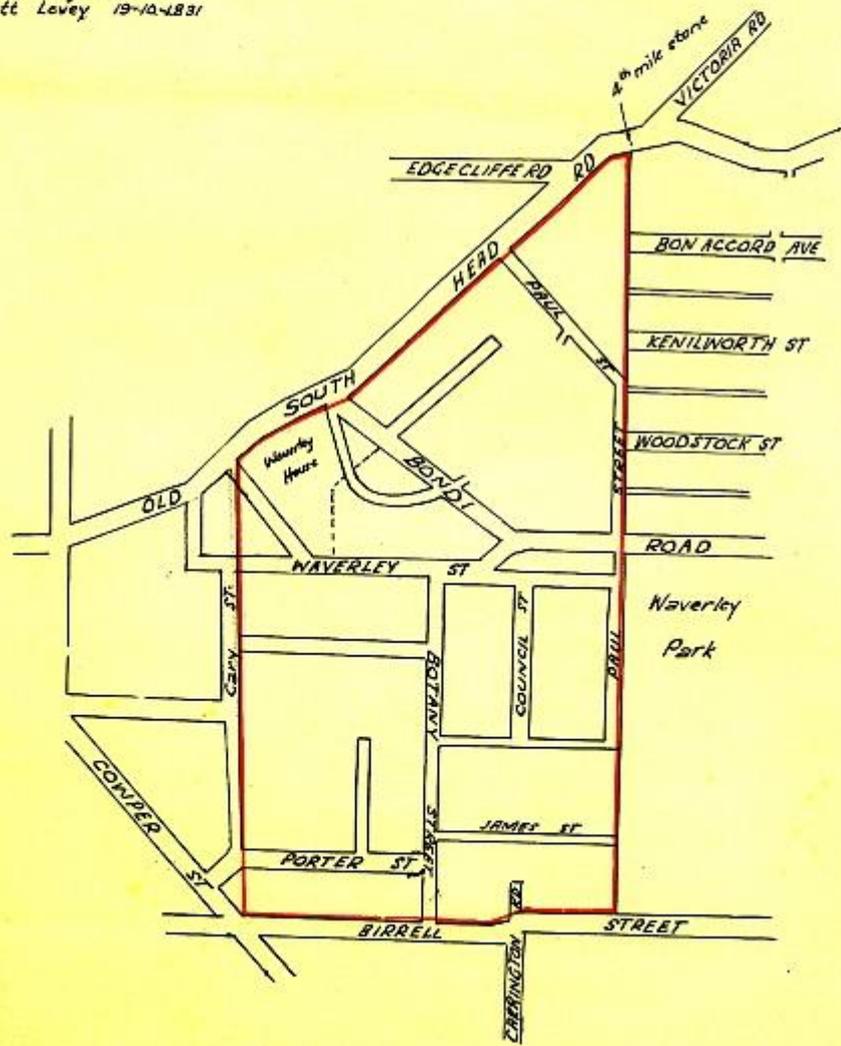
Levey arrived in Sydney in 1821 from the East End of London full of grandiose plans. He was an enterprising figure, one which we would now describe as a 'colourful' business identity. At various times of his life he was a windmill proprietor, developer, speculator, vegetable grower, jeweller and the originator of Sydney's first lending library. Because he founded Australia's first permanent theatre, the Theatre Royal in the Royal Hotel in George Street in 1829, he is often described as the 'father of Australian theatre'.

Sketch

of Barnett Levey's 60 acre Grant in
Waverley

(Traced from Municipality map dated 1887)

Plan 92N shows the grant as
being to Barnett Levey 13-10-1831



In *Theatre Comes to Australia*, Eric Irvin describes the building of the Georgian-style Waverley House, on his 60-acre farm in Old South Head Road, at corner of Bondi Road, Bondi Junction:

"In July [1827] work was started on a 'cottage' on his South Head property, 50 feet by 35 feet, designed as a residence for the Levey family. There was to be attached to this house a garden from which Levey proposed to supply Sydney with vegetables at a third cheaper than the market rates. The cottage itself was

on the usual Levey grand scale. It had three large cellars and kitchen in the basement; two parlours, two bedrooms, and a lobby on the first floor, and a bedroom in the attic. There were stables and other offices, and a well with a plentiful supply of water.'

Despite its grand design Levey never lived in Waverley House, it was always leased, both to individuals and to organisations. Later in its life Waverley House was home to a Catholic orphanage and a series of private schools.

Levey also became one of the earliest building promoters in Sydney, and the first in Waverley, when in 1830 he erected cottages in Waverley Crescent. Waverley House was demolished in 1904, but the name lives on in the suburb of Waverley and in the name of our Local Government Area.

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