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Hunters Hill Trust Journal

Vol. 1. No. 1. — APRIL, 1972



"YOUR SUBURB, YOUR WAY OF LIFE"

"It wouldn't be so bad if once in a while the kids had some fresh air to breathe, or maybe a little playing area to get them off the streets. Everytime they go out you have to worry about who they are going to meet. Once we had nice homes and trees and things . . . it's all so crowded now." (quote from an urban redevelopment study, Boston Mass. 1969.)

This is NOT Hunters Hill in 1972, but it does describe a former quiet residential area given over to high density housing ostensibly because it was only five miles from the city centre and serviced by an expressway. Hunters Hill may never reach this condition, certainly it will not as long as we have a Council caring about preservation and maintaining a separate identity. However, the threat of amalgamation is with us in a very real sense.

Shortly, the Mayor of Hunters Hill will be directing a vigorous campaign presenting the municipality and its council in the best light as a self contained unit. Undoubtedly, assistance will be called upon from all residents and ratepayers.

For most people, young and old, living in Hunters Hill, the suburb itself reflects their way of life.

Hunters Hill, stretching from Victoria Road in the west through to Woolwich in the east, is an ideal

family suburb. There IS room to breathe. The greenery and heritage of many years is ever present and quiet tree lined streets are bordered by homes which reflect their owner's pride. Parks and reserves in the area are used by the people. Residents with hobbies find space to carry them out, in a situation close to nature. A village atmosphere prevails in Hunters Hill; small, yet adequate, commercial development retains that most necessary tradition — personal service from the corner store.

For many years, the suburb's geographical isolation has led to a type of development which is unaffected in the main by that of its neighbours.

The close integration of landscape, residential de-

velopment and consequently social and communal activities has led to the creation of a self-sufficient community effectively guided for over 100 years by its own separate council.

Despite the large areas of unrateable land in the municipality, the Hunters Hill Council has, since 1861, improved progressively and has kept an even balance between progress and preservation. The rate has remained one of the lowest in the metropolitan area and the standard of all services and facilities is considerably high when compared with other municipalities.

Hunters Hill has been recognised as an important living document of history. Organised tours as well as private visitors continue

to come to the area without any intrusion on the privacy of the residents.

The large number of active cultural, social and sporting and other associations in the municipality indicate the extent to which Hunters Hill has developed to a self-sufficient integrated community. There is no certainty if the municipality of Hunters Hill is amalgamated, that these bodies will continue to function or continue to operate as effectively.

These are some of many reasons that a large number of people in Hunters Hill are concerned about any suggested amalgamation.

Next time you step from your home, remember your suburb and your way of life.

The location of a multi-lane highway in the Lane Cove Valley has been approved and gazetted by the New South Wales Government. Recent representation by residents and Mr. P. Coleman MLA in opposition to the proposal suggests that there may be

new light shed on the Expressway

The fact that a minister has been appointed, by the State Government, for Environment Control is the best 'shot in the arm' conservationists and others concerned with preservation have had in the past decade.

Guidelines have been set down for environmental impact studies to be prepared by all developers seeking to begin new projects.

Government Departments, as well as private enterprises, are generally required to undertake these studies. One such State body is the Department of Main Roads, who should now be writing environmental impact reports for their future proposals.

The question affecting the Lane Cove Valley Expressway is — should these studies be retrospective? The answer, clearly, is yes.

This important factor, together with other relevant points, was raised in Parliament by Mr. Coleman MLA as recently as March 16, this year.

Mr. Coleman pointed out that decision to build the expressway was made five years ago prior to the creation of the new ministry for environment, at a time when people laughed at the very mention of environment or ecology. Now the atmosphere is entirely different. It is recognised on all sides that these factors are tremendously important.

The commissioning of the \$1.5 million Sydney Transport Survey, under the direction of Dr. Robert Neilson, was also mentioned by Mr. Coleman.

Dr. Neilson was instructed in his terms of reference to include road developments in the survey.

With these facts in mind, how can any irreversible steps be taken on the expressway without an environmental impact study and without the Neilson report?

Mr. Coleman directed questions on these matters to Mr. Morton, Minister for Local Government and Highways.

The blandness of the Minister's reply must surely astonish everyone, in that he states —

"The transportation study of the Sydney area will not really have any bearing on the location of the expressway already approved on the western side of the Lane Cove River. Consequently, so that people affected by that route can be informed as soon as practicable, it would not be desirable to interfere with the normal processes of the survey and design now being undertaken by the Department of Main Roads."

NOW, at a time when the very use of the expressway to further choke the centre of cities is in serious doubt; at a time when environmental studies will immediately affect the climate we live in; and at a time when this expressway is not yet designed, has not the funds for its construction, but has the definite possibility of a more westerly route — How can we accept Mr. Morton's views as those of an enlightened Minister?

Mr. Morton would do well to take note of recent plans announced by his Victorian counterpart, the Hon. Alan Hunt, Minister for Local Government.

In a recent address to the Urban Land Institute, Mr. Hunt put forward a program to submit a forthcoming road project to the public with four alternative routes for public discussion before a decision is finally reached.

Mr. Hunt believes that authorities are too inclined to avoid taking the public into their confidence when planning major projects. He further claims that experts, while being very necessary in planning new works, never have all the answers. They are not as well placed as those ultimately concerned with an area. Proposals which are theoretically sound in every way, can have hidden practical implications of enormous importance.

Such is the Lane Cove Valley Expressway, but surely it is a pity to require someone from outside our own State Government to show some enlightened thinking.

Mr. Morton is to retire shortly, and it is to be hoped that Mr. Askin appoints a more sensitive successor.

The possible wanton destruction of some of the finest, little remaining foreshore and bushland in Sydney deserves our closest attention. A long battle against the routing of this highway has been fought by residents, municipal council, Save the Lane Cove Valley Committee, and the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists. Your support is needed.

HUNTERS HILL TRUST JOURNAL

ANNUAL MEETING - MAY 10th

Trust gains St. John as leading speaker

The Hunters Hill Trust is indeed fortunate in gaining the services of Mr. Edward J. St. John, QC, as the leading speaker for this year's annual general meeting.

Mr. St. John, who is well known for his activities as a champion to the cause for conservation, is a former MP with such outstanding achievements to his record as the instigation of the much publicised 'Voyager Commission' in 1968.

Prior to entering Government in 1966, Mr. St. John had a very large commercial practice as a barrister. More recently, he has acted as a consultant in mining matters, including the Clutha development.

Mr. St. John will speak on "Conservation Action", the effect of conservation moves in a world environment, Australia, and specifically Hunters Hill.

The annual general meeting is the most important event on the Trust's calendar.

An address from the Trust's president, Dr. Alan Bradfield, will summarise the Committee's activities during the past year.

Mr. David Saunders, a

Trust member and recognised authority on Town Planning, will speak on behalf of the Town Planning sub-committee whose thorough investigations of the Draft Town Plan were recently completed.

The annual election of committee members takes place at the meeting each year.

The committee consists of nine members of the Trust, who manage the Trust's affairs on an honorary basis. The nine members must include at least one representative from each of the three wards in the municipality.

According to the constitution, six members of the committee, who have been longest in office, shall retire at every annual general meeting.

Members of the Trust are eligible for election to the committee if they are residents or ratepayers within the municipality of Hunters Hill, as long as they are not an elected member of a local government body or of the State or Commonwealth Parliaments.

Any two members of the Trust may nominate another for election. Nominations must be signed by the two proposers and bear the written

consent of the member nominated. They must reach the secretary at least fourteen days before the date of the annual general meeting.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS ONLY are permitted to vote at the meeting. Following the election of the committee, the newly appointed members then elect office bearers at the first committee meeting. Officers include a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

General Meetings of the Hunters Hill Trust have proved popular events for all members and other residents during past years. From the first meeting, with an attendance of more than 500, interest in the Trust's activities has remained at a high level.

New residents are particularly encouraged to attend this year's meeting, which promises to be the most interesting held to date.

Your participation at the annual meeting proves that you, as a resident, care actively about the future of our unique suburb.

The meeting will be held at the Town Hall on Wednesday, May 10, commencing at 8 p.m.

Pollution?

A recent brochure issued by the Hon. J. G. Beale, Minister for Environment Control, should be of interest to all persons concerned with rising pollution — in all forms. The new publication, titled "POLLUTION — WHO TO CALL", itemises those authorities responsible for receiving complaints or enquiries.

Today we are threatened by pollution of our most vital resources, the air we breathe, the land we depend on, our rivers and seas.

The Ministry for Environment Control was formed, last year, specifically to act as watchdog for this most important problem. However, the people themselves, in all areas, must be the ultimate watchdog.

Residents of Hunters Hill will be interested in these telephone numbers, published to handle your enquiries.

VISUAL POLLUTION
Department of Environment, 221-1844.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Resident,

As the first edition of the Hunters Hill Trust Journal goes to press, the Trust is introducing a new form of communication for the people of Hunters Hill.

Replacing the former 'Newsletter', the 'Journal' has been designed to provide all residents with a full understanding of the Trust's aims and activities. Matters of local interest will be recorded and your comments as residents is eagerly sought.

A substantial community spirit exists as present in Hunters Hill. The people are proud of their suburb.

With your way of life reflected throughout the pages of the 'Journal' more and more people outside the municipality will 'Sit up and take notice' of Hunters Hill.

Please write and let us have your views.

Correspondence should be addressed to:—

The Editor,
Hunters Hill Trust
Journal,
P.O. Box 85,
Hunters Hill 2110.

AIR POLLUTION

Aircraft Pollution,
D.C.A., 92-0411.
Aircraft Noise, Sydney
Airport, 769-6981.

LAND POLLUTION

Vacant Crown Land,
Lands Dept., 20579.
Parks, Historic Sites,
National Parks,
27-9711.

NOISE POLLUTION

Vehicle Noise, Police
Dept., local station.
Noise from waterways,
M.S.B., 20545.

WATER POLLUTION

Rivers, M.S.B., 20545.

Remember — do your part by keeping these phones ringing — Don't talk to your neighbour, talk to the authority!

Sunday Walk and House Inspection

A "Walk through history" and historic house inspection has been arranged by the Trust Auxiliary for Sunday, April 23rd, from 11.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Tickets are \$2.00 (financial Trust members \$1.50) and are available by sending a cheque or postal note together with a stamped addressed envelope to:— P.O. Box 85, Hunters Hill, or by telephoning: 89-5175, 89-4505.

The area chosen for this Sunday Walk is one of the earliest settled and most historic parts of Hunters Hill — that section of Central Ward around Figtree and the Lane Cove River. It is the area largely developed by Didier Numa Joubert and his brother Jules, who were perhaps the most prominent of the French founding fathers of Hunters Hill.

Through the kind generosity of the owners of some historic homes, to whom the Trust is deeply indebted, the visitor may inspect "Figtree House", "Annabel Lee", "Kaoota", St. Marks Church and "Glenrosa".

The original Figtree House, built around 1836, was extended by the Jouberts, in stone and timber in the 1850's. The historic house, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Challenor, was part of Mary Reiby's Figtree Farm until 1847, when it was bought by D. N. Joubert. Nearby stood a "cottage of stone and rubble", Reiby Cottage, which was demolished only a decade ago, along with the grandest of the Joubert houses, "St. Malo", built next to Reiby Cottage in the 1850's.

Across the bridge (or under the bridge) in Joubert Street, stands "Annabel Lee" — formerly a part of "Coorabel", but now a separate house owned by Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay Grant. Joubert built "Coorabel" — a 23 roomed stone house — in 1872, and over the years none of its warm, French rural character has been lost.

From "Annabel Lee" the walk continues to No. 1, Figtree Road, where visitors can have tea and light refreshments on the verandahs of another gracious stone home of the Joubert era — "Warawillah" — recently bought by Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Franklin. "Warawillah" is a simple stone home, graced by creeper-entwined long verandah, and built around 1878. Its "twin", "Kaoota", owned by Mrs. Hindwood, is another stone house built on a Joubert sub-division

and stands near St. Marks Church, formerly Figtree Chapel.

Figtree Chapel, opened in 1858, was designed by Edmund Blacket. It originally stood on the corner of Church and Joubert Streets. Didier Joubert, as trustee of his family land, donated the site for the Anglican Chapel, and was involved in raising subscriptions towards the proposed building, although he and his family attended Villa Maria Church.

St. Marks was the only historic building re-sited and preserved when Figtree bridge, and the expressway, tore through this historical part of Hunters Hill in 1961.

The walk continues past St. Joseph's College, built on land bought from Joubert, and opened as a boys' boarding school in 1884.

Next we visit No. 12 Mark Street, "Glenrosa", a tiny stone cottage, garlanded with wisterias and vines, which was built by Carlo Ceruti in 1884, on a small portion of land bought from Didier Joubert.

Although today this "Joubert area" is cut by an expressway, a main road, numerous sub-divisions and developments tending to obscure its original character, there is still much of Hunters Hill's history to be found here.

With the able help of Trust Archivist, Mrs. Doceen Saunders, and co-operation of owners and many older residents of Hunters Hill, the Auxiliary has produced a detailed brochure on the houses to be visited. The brochure will be freely available during the Sunday Walk.

BACKGROUND TO EARLY HUNTERS HILL

The history of the "Didier Joubert" area goes back to 1835, when John Rochester and Mary Reiby bought land between Tarban and the Lane Cove River.

Mary Reiby was a remarkable business woman of early Sydney who was transported to the colony as a child of 15 for "horse stealing". Later she married Thomas Reiby and became a woman of wealth and ability. She established a farm on the Lane Cove River, Figtree Farm, which by 1838 consisted of 110 acres. It contained a house in the rough and two unfinished cottages for the men. There was a garden of 6 acres in cultivation, planted with all kinds of fruit trees including pears, apples, plums, apricots,



'Figtree House' on the Lane Cove River, built around 1836, is a highlight of the Sunday inspection.

'Annabel Lee' a majestic two storey stone home typical of the Joubert era.



peaches, quinces, lemons and oranges. Vines, laden with very fine fruit, were planted along the sides of the paths. The house and cottages were under the figtree and the farm had an abundance of very beautiful native flowers. The river had plenty of fish, with rocks covered by oysters and the water was a luxury to bathe in. This "very pretty Figtree Farm of Mary Reiby's" was offered for auction by Isaac Simmons and Co. on Wednesday, 15th August, 1838, at 12 o'clock. However, there were evidently no buyers and the Figtree Farm was then offered for lease at £40 a year for three years, with an option to buy at anytime for £500.

Mary Reiby never lived permanently in Hunters Hill, but perhaps Reiby Cottage was her "country retreat", for it was not until 1847 that Figtree Farm was sold to Didier Numa Joubert for £500, on quarterly instalments for four years. The original receipts for this transaction are in the Mitchell Library.

D. N. Joubert extended Figtree House by adding

first a timber room, sloping to fit the roots of the big Moreton Bay Figtree, and then later on a two storey stone extension. His son, Numa, had the timber tower built much later by Mr. Howard, a shipwright.

The Joubert estate stretched from the quarries of Mount Street to Augustine Street, from Church Street and Gladesville Road along the Lane Cove River. Jules Joubert's property was directly east of Mount Street.

D. N. Joubert had various houses built with the help of stone craftsmen brought out from Italy. Some houses were rented and others were family homes for the Jouberts.

"St. Malo", the last of Didier's homes, was built in early 1850's, "on a gentle sloping ground between Joubert Street and Lane Cove River", next to Reiby Cottage. This was a house of beautifully cut Hawkesbury sandstone, with distinctive black and white majolica tiles, and a domed ceiling

with skylight in the entrance. While the house was being built, the Jouberts lived in Reiby Cottage. "St. Malo" stayed in the Joubert family for over a century — his grandson, Mr. Ferdinand Du Boise, lived there.

The influence of the Jouberts today pervades many realms of the life in Hunters Hill. Jules Joubert was the first Chairman of the Council, when the municipality was incorporated in 1861. Didier Joubert was the first mayor — 1867-1869, and his son, Numa, was also Mayor in 1888.

Didier was one of a committee instrumental in getting Hunters Hill connected to Sydney by bridges — the Gladesville bridge was opened in 1881, and four years after Didier's death in 1885, the first Figtree bridge was opened.

The great changes in this area came about only a decade ago, and many residents will remember the old streets, the old buildings and the boat shed and tea rooms, that were part of the scene.

HUNTERS HILL TRUST JOURNAL



Arched-head, octagon and debased venetian windows in a row—all unrelated to 'Passy' and to each other.

A recent photo of 'Passy'. The main house stands, as yet, without external alteration, however the wing on the left, with a window totally out of keeping, indicates the threat. There is an application before Council for extended changes to the main house.



\$25 Prize for Students

The Trust has long been interested in the activities of young people in the municipality. As they pass through their years of schooling, it is important that young folk gain an insight of not only the world outside, but also the current affairs and rich background in their own area.

To encourage this interest in our suburb, the Trust is sponsoring an essay competition open to primary and secondary school students RESIDING in Hunters Hill municipality.

Students are requested to write on "Life in Hunters Hill".

With this broad heading, any aspect of life within the area or any community activity may be described. To spur on young and imaginative authors, who would like to tell us why they enjoy living in Hunters Hill, the Trust will present a cash prize of \$25.00 for the winning entry.

The maximum length required for the competition entries is 600 words, but the essays may be shorter, even 150 words, if desired.

Envelopes should be marked "Essay Competition" to facilitate handling and judging.

Entries must be accompanied by an "Essay Competition" coupon, appearing in the 'Journal' and showing the student's name, address, school, age and telephone number, if any.

The competition will close on June 30, 1972. The winning entry will be printed in full in the Hunters Hill Trust Journal.

Judges for the competition will include two representatives from the Trust committee together with Mr. R. L. Rushbrooke, Principal of Hunters Hill High School.

"Life in Hunters Hill,"
ESSAY COMPETITION,
P.O. Box 85,
Hunters Hill 2110

Name

Address

School

Age Phone No.

HUNTERS HILL TRUST JOURNAL

Things are happening at Passy

"Passy", in Passy Avenue, Hunters Hill, has always been acknowledged as one of the district's leading houses. Many people who know little about Hunters Hill still know of "Passy". Some know it because six years ago the National Trust chose it for a B classification ("Highly significant, preservation strongly recommended"). It is one of the handful of remaining houses of its character in the Sydney region. It is later — 1854 or thereabouts — than "Glenalvon" in Campbelltown, or the disfigured "Willandra" in Ryde, but comparable with them in size and style.

"Passy" was built for L. F. Sentis, then French consul to this colony. It was constructed, and probably designed by Jules Joubert, who was so closely associated with the early history of Hunters Hill. It originally stood in thirty acres, with a generous water frontage to Lanc Cove.

It is remarkable that it remained until now so well preserved, so little altered, and in such adequate grounds.

But things are happening at "Passy"—Unfortunately, regrettable things from the viewpoint of anybody interested in the preservation of historic and admirable architecture. It is being enlarged and altered, and the changes have already disfigured the colonial character. The tall Norfolk Island pine, so apt for the house and which dominated it, has been destroyed.

Worse may well follow, for plans submitted to Council for transforma-

tion of the main house indicate a scheme tragically out of keeping. The garden front may be kept intact, but other parts are to be changed out of recognition.

When the present owner purchased "Passy" last year some said it was a good day for the house. Events have indicated otherwise.

There have been several months of argument and an appeal against council's refusal of building applications is still before the appeals board.

It was the Council, as it existed before the elections, which took up the challenge of that Appeal, and instructed its legal advisors. At the first two of three hearings held by the Board part of the Council's evidence consisted of demonstrating the incompatibility of the proposed alterations (and those already done) with the historic character of the house. That objection by Council is entirely in

line with the Draft Town Plan's provisions for historic precincts, but because the Plan is not yet in force, it was not introduced into the case. At the opening of the third session of the hearing of the appeal, Council's legal advisor announced that Council had now instructed him to offer no more evidence about the house. Among witnesses prepared but not called to give evidence, as a result of the Council's decision, was David Saunders, head of the Hunters Hill Trust, Town Planning Sub-committee, Senior lecturer at the Power Institute of Fine Arts and a leading authority on the Preservation and restoration of old buildings.

The Trust has been reticent about publishing the unfortunate situation of "Passy" earlier, in case the Council's proceedings might suffer. It is now impossible to remain silent. The spoiling of "Passy" is far too serious to occur without vigorous attempts to deter such action. Council's advice and rulings have been ignored in several ways. The National Trust's advice to use an architect skilled in historic restoration, was also not followed. The Hunters Hill Trust now intends to make it widely known that "Passy" is being treated in this way, and to encourage protest.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Financial members of the Trust are shortly to receive their own 'membership cards'.

The cards, which will be valid to the year ending February, 1973, give the member several benefits including a reduction to the fees charged for House Inspections and a clear identification for voting purposes at the Annual General Meeting.

Cards will be forwarded to members this month.

Make sure that you are financial.

PRESIDENT STEPS DOWN

A feature of the Hunters Hill Trust has been its ability to find, amongst its members, chairmen and presidents of considerable capacity.

None has been more outstanding than Dr. Alan Bradfield. It is with great regret we learn that he will be relinquishing office very shortly.

Dr. Bradfield has been president of the Trust for a collective period of 2½ years, however it is understood that he has many demands upon his time and regular attendance of committee meetings will be no longer possible.

We are grateful for his work for the Trust and its aims in which he so firmly believes, and are glad to know that he will continue to work to this end despite his stepping down from the top office.

We all extend to him and his family every possible good wish and

acknowledge our appreciation of his perception, tolerance and good deeds.

Those of us who have had close contact with Dr. Bradfield know that it would be very hard indeed to repay the hours and work that he has given to the Trust.

MASTHEAD

The masthead for the new "Hunters Hill Trust Journal", was designed by prominent graphic artist E. A. Foster of Mount Street.

In order to express the bucolic values which were reinstated in Hunters Hill from late 18th century Europe by the early settlers of property, Mr. Foster has referred to the work of Thomas Bewick whose wood engravings depict aspects of life close to nature.

The indigenous Wood pigeon is an example of Bewick's work selected from the History of Quadrupeds published in Newcastle in 1790.

The typeface, Baskerville Old Face, is a revised form of an original cut in the 1750's, which ideally compliments the period flavour of the design.