



# Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

Volume X No. 2

October, 1981.

## CALL FOR A CONSERVATION PLAN

The Hunter's Hill Trust's public meeting on September 23rd issued a call for a conservation plan to protect, guide and regulate development in Hunter's Hill.

Guest speakers John Morris (National Trust) and Ken Latona (Town Planner) pointed to the long delay of thirteen years in the preparation of a town plan, to the national importance of Hunter's Hill, and commended the proposals of the Hunter's Hill Trust.

### JOHN MORRIS ...

*"I think that one of the dangers of not having an urban conservation plan is a gradual attrition of good things .... it happens so gradually, always on the basis that the particular property owner must be allowed to do it, and it doesn't take long before the whole character of an area can be changed ... subtle change, but change for the worse, simply because people are looking at individual dwellings, not at a total area."*

*"If people want to go to a more vital sphere, there are plenty of places for them to choose outside of Hunter's Hill. In my view, the special quality of Hunter's Hill is its understatement, its quietness .... The qualities of Hunter's Hill are a very special part of the heritage of Australia ... it is with wider appreciation of those qualities, I think, that you avoid the awful possibility of becoming an appendage of one of the amorphous local government areas outside Hunter's Hill."*

*"I must say that the people who are in charge of the plan seem to me to be endeavouring to make it more historic than the suburb of Hunter's Hill itself. The period of gestation of this plan is now getting beyond that of the elephant, and we are all hoping that something will be produced in our lifetimes."*

NOVEMBER CRUISE AND DINNER

GENERAL MEETING

See page 4.

### KEN LATONA:

*"I would urge you tonight to consider a number of matters. The first one would be that this Council be urged to take up the Heritage Council's offer to investigate some very detailed preservation provisions that can apply to the Municipality. The second, that it certainly push for the finalisation of the Plan which has been going on for so many years. The third, that it look towards another plan which is a conservation plan which is unarguably not anything but a conservation plan, that deals with the very special character of Hunter's Hill."*

*"All that gives the Council a very special role and responsibility, and I echo the thoughts of previous speakers when they say that if there is possibly one avenue open to council to resist amalgamation, it would be that it can adequately demonstrate that it can manage a very special area."*

### RESOLUTION

The following resolution was moved by R. T. Martin, seconded by R. B. Temple and carried unanimously:

That this meeting expresses its concern at what it believes to be inexcusable delays in achieving planning protection for Hunter's Hill and requests the Committee of the Hunter's Hill Trust to formally convey its concern to the Hunter's Hill Council, the Minister for Environment and Planning and the Heritage Council; That in conveying its concern to these bodies it document its struggle for a Town Plan in Hunter's Hill and seek from these three bodies an opinion as to what they believe is still required for an appropriate Conservation Plan for Hunter's Hill to be approved and how long they estimate it will take to meet these requirements.

## CALL FOR A CONSERVATION PLAN

(Continued from page 1)

Ken Latona, experienced in planning protection for historic areas, suggested that *"the gestation period of the plan of some thirteen years is not just an unlucky number but, I think could augur unwell for any conservation provisions within that plan. While a period like that could indicate great thoroughness, on a practical level there is always changing staff, changing ideas and, in this case, changing legislation. I think it could be said now that to get the plan operative some of the finer corners may have been cut."*

*"Hunter's Hill is still in a period of change with respect to planning. I don't think -- this is a personal view -- I don't think you can sit back and rely on the plan if it is to be released in the near future -- and apparently there are another two or three months, to get the Minister's Certificate and certainly some months after that to complete the matter (Editor's note: this was the time scale predicted by the Department and Council in March, May and July). So we're still talking about quite a few months before you get that plan, but I would suggest that even when you've got that plan, you won't have the sorts of provisions that can adequately conserve Hunter's Hill."*

Mr. Latona mentioned the Heritage Council's offer of \$10,000 to Hunter's Hill Council on a dollar for dollar basis for a conservation study, and suggested that the Heritage Council would also wish the Municipal Council to bring out a Local Environment Plan to deal with demolition matters.

*"Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, a number of Local Environment Plans may apply concurrently. North Sydney is in the situation now where it will have a number of local environmental plans dealing with conservation matters. In addition we have various things that can be done under the Heritage Act; from an administrative point of view, the Heritage Council doesn't have the resources and staff to deal with the Section 130 items (buildings protected from demolition). If Council had a responsible Conservation Plan, any contravention of the provisions could incur penalties up to \$20,000 as prescribed in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 (Editor's note: \$200 for demolition was proposed for the Certified Plan, circa 1975)."*

*"Council has an enormous role to play, ... the powers of the local council are considerable. This Council can resolve to make plans dealing with whatever matters it so desires at any of its meetings, inform the Department within fourteen days, and the Department then aids Council in preparation of plans. They can also, on a very local level, deal with a lot of the matters that are of concern to the Trust, things like street planning, building materials, walls. And they can do that in a very instructional way, through preparation of guidelines that actually give some sort of education in the way things should be done, what should be respected. If there is some very positive literature available through Council, with a sympathetic staff, the power can be greater than that of statutory planning, and certainly more positive."*

John Morris, Director of the National Trust, hearkened back to the early 1970's, when it was felt that Hunter's Hill was going to lead the way in a great breakthrough in conservation town planning. Then the draft plan, he said, was a sieve, *"an appallingly bad plan and it was put forward as a very good one; it was no more than an off-the-cuff standard plan which had been dotted around the place with a few embroidered rosettes to indicate some concept of conservation"*.

Since then, *"people have come along, paid an enormous price then said that they must do dreadful things because the development must be economically viable -- but nobody forced them to buy it in the first place"*.

Mr. Morris suggested that a conservation plan makes good economic sense, because people are made much happier, more confident in looking after a place, staying in that place, improving their place ... the value of the property will rise simply because of the confidence of knowing that the nasties aren't going to arrive.

*"I found something about planning from Lewis Carroll, and said, 'Now I think I'll make a plan to dye my whiskers green' and I thought that if somebody promised me to make a plan to keep Kelly's Bush green forever I'd be prepared to dye my whiskers green."*

Alice Oppen, President, explained that the meeting was being held in response to a call from Hunter's Hill Trust members at the Annual General Meeting in May, and that the meeting had a triple purpose:

1. to inform residents, especially those new to the area, of the continuing issues, to show them what Hunter's Hill was, what it is becoming, and outline what can be done;
2. to convey the Trust's concern to Hunter's Hill Council and the State Government that thirteen years' time had not been sufficient to produce a responsible Town Plan; indeed, any Town Plan;
3. to put constructive planning proposals for the use of Council in future plans.

The Hunter's Hill Trust was formed in 1968 to limit the spread of home units, to list and seek protection for the many historic buildings. There have been gains made: home units have been limited, and kept to two storeys; our list of old buildings has been accepted and those buildings are now under the protection of the Heritage Council at our request; the Townscape Advisory Committee has been established to provide Council with expert townscape advice for its use in making decisions; Clarke's Point has been acquired; and the concept of foreshore protection is now accepted.

However, the needs are still great. We need a town plan so that Council may escape the "appeals mentality" which makes decisions difficult, and we now must learn to think of "The Town Plan" as a series of "Local Environment Plans". We need a statement of intent included, recognising the historical quality of Hunter's Hill and the intention to conserve it. We need a prohibitive demolition penalty. Fine examples of Federation houses should be listed for protection. If there is not to be area preservation in the form of historic districts then the plans must put forward a high standard of control over buildings and their surroundings, and official provision made for townscape assessment.

Comments, illustrated by Douglass Baglin's slides,  
were made on the following areas:

## FORESHORES

A fixed foreshore building line of at least 15m. (Ryde now has 17m.) should protect the foreshores and their vegetation, providing a visual waterscape and a tree screen for buildings. Foreshore land should be acquired by Council when available. The Lane Cove River foreshore area (reserved by the Department of Main Roads for an expressway), now natural bush, aboriginal sites and mangrove foreshores, should be zoned open space. Areas like the High School's foreshore should have fencing placed well back from the retaining wall, planting introduced, and public access provided.

## TREES

Several components make up any scene; the softening and screening effect of foliage is an important attribute of Hunter's Hill, and mature trees must receive protection. Historic fig-trees, essential to the aborigines in the "Figtree" area, have been destroyed or are endangered by bitumen, swimming pool proposals, leaf and root haters. Many trees planted by the Jouberts and other early settlers remain and should receive protection.

## ROCK OUTCROPS

Rock outcrops in the area were aboriginal caves; two have handpaintings, and other aboriginal sites survive. Aboriginal sites are protected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service but need recognition in town planning.

## WALLS

Walls bring continuity to the streetscape. Many of the early estates were surrounded by walls, and these help the new additions to blend with the neighbourhood. High or very white walls appear as an obtrusive element. Picket fencing is a relatively inexpensive alternative to stone, in sympathy with old houses. Council guidelines could be of use here.

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The old buildings of Hunter's Hill can be spoiled by incongruous additions almost as much as they can by demolition. Special protection should include guidelines on roof line, materials, windows matching the original, scale of development on the site. Townscape assessment should monitor adjacent sites to prevent over-shadowing development. Information on sympathetic styles and detailing on period houses should be made available.

## SUBDIVISIONS

The area around old buildings should be covered by special site coverage and site size provisions so that the grounds of mansions do not mushroom with a cluster of differing architectural styles with no room for trees.

## COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The use of historic buildings such as shops, offices, restaurants, etc., may place additional pressures on historic buildings in terms of additions and/or increased use resulting in traffic and parking congestion. Surrounding a building with cars does not enhance its historic character, and shrubby screens are to be encouraged as are usage controls, so that the narrow, quiet streets do not become clogged with cars.

## MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES

Hunter's Hill Council's own structures, such as bus stops, signs, town halls, etc., should be consistent with, rather than contradictory to, the historic character of Hunter's Hill. Council should obey its own design guidelines and tree preservation orders.

## INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Although too often out of a local council's control, institutions and government departments should be encouraged to construct additions in a style in keeping with their earlier buildings in the area.

## PARKLAND

The difference between the mown environment and bushland must be recognised. Kelly's Bush should be zoned open space, and parkland in general should be treated as natural areas.

The slides provided convincing contrasts of familiar scenes in Hunter's Hill. The view back to the city from so many vantage points in Hunter's Hill is a clear reminder of how close this area is to the pressures of urban development, and how much there still is to save.

Alice Oppen concluded, *"I hope we have demonstrated that the controls we propose have a real value for all in Hunter's Hill. They retain its historic character, the beauty and function of its environment, and enable us to go on living in a village. These controls do not benefit developers from outside the municipality or those who wish to build ego-castles. Hunter's Hill must not become a quarry for capital gains ... town planning is needed to prevent this sort of development, as Council is discovering."*

There is, of course, a pressing reason why Hunter's Hill Council must present an innovative plan sensitive to the special needs of Hunter's Hill. If it cannot, and who could say there has not been time, then Hunter's Hill's best defence against amalgamation will be gone. Hunter's Hill Council must justify its existence."





# ACTIVITIES



## RAFFLE

Our thanks to the new directors of the Hunter's Hill Gallery, Judith Rosemonte and Lloyd Boer, for their magnificent donation of a Pro Hart painting for a raffle for the Hunter's Hill Trust. Congratulations to Trust member Trish O'Rourke, who won the painting on September 27th.

## MOOCOOROOOLA CARNIVALE

The history of aborigines in the Moocooboola area and the use and meaning of aboriginal names were the subjects of the Trust's exhibit at the Moocooboola Carnivale.

## BOOK REVIEWS — by the Hunter's Hill Bookshop

**THE HERITAGE OF AUSTRALIA** (Macmillan, \$85) has to be one of, if not the, most important Australian publications ever compiled. A complete listing, state by state, of all buildings, structures and conservation areas registered to date by the Australian Heritage Commission as worthy of preservation. Comprising 6500 entries, 8500 black and white, and colour photographs, 200 maps and extensive index. This superb book is of vital significance to every Australian concerned with their National Estate. Only 5000-odd copies printed and already in short supply, it seems certain to become a collector's item since a reprint is extremely unlikely.

**A SHORT HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA**, by Manning Clark (Macmillan, \$19.95), was originally commissioned and first published by NAL in 1963 for their short "History of the World" series. Reprinted many times, it is still considered to be the most authoritative. It is unusual for a paperback to develop into hardback, but this is such a case. Fully up-dated to the '80's and now illustrated with a large collection of photographs never previously published. This is a valuable book. Manning Clark is the current Australian of the Year.

**AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF NEW SOUTH WALES**, another history, by Cedric Flower (Rigby, \$16.95). New South Wales is one of the world's great success stories; from a harsh and isolated penal settlement it has developed into a vigorous and prosperous community. Well-known painter, Cedric Flower, long-time member of the Council of the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.) and for six years Chairman of their Historic Buildings Committee, tells the whole story in highly readable text with a wealth of paintings, drawings and photographs.

**A FORTUNATE LIFE**, by A. B. Facey (Freemantle), is the memoirs of an unknown, working-class eighty-seven year old Australian. Prediction: this book is a living classic of Australian survival. It will be set as compulsory reading both at secondary and tertiary levels, and, ultimately, made into a film or TV series. An incredible book told both simply (highly readable) and factually, it has rightly won the 1981 Premier's Award and is nominated for the N.B.C. Awards.

### Recommended:

**SYDNEY: THEN AND NOW**  
**STEAM ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS**  
**WILDERNESSES**  
**D. H. LAWRENCE**  
**HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF AUSTRALIA, VOL. 2**  
**HEAR THE TRAIN BLOW**

## TICKET APPLICATION FORM

### HUNTER'S HILL TRUST CRUISE AND DINNER/GENERAL MEETING — SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd

Cruise aboard the "Royale", which departs from Valentia Street at 4.30 p.m. . . . . \$ 5.00

General Meeting at the Villa Maria Hall, Gladesville Road at 7.00 p.m.

Dinner will follow the meeting at 7.30 p.m. . . . . \$ 9.00

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Name .....

Address .....

No. of tickets: .....

For information:  
 89-2035 (day)  
 89-5175 (evenings)

Post cheque and form to: *The Hunter's Hill Trust, Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.*