



Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

Volume XII No. 1

FEBRUARY, 1983

“THE COUNCIL ‘MAY’...”

Hunter's Hill now has a town plan, Local Environment Plan No. 1, which was gazetted on December 10, 1982.

In the opinion of the Hunter's Hill Trust, this Plan gives Hunter's Hill Council provisions which go a long way towards fulfilling the aims and objectives stated:

- “2. The aims and objectives of this plan are to preserve and enhance the identity, character and residential amenity of the Municipality of Hunter's Hill by --
- (a) regulating the use and development of the land in the Municipality to retain the tree-covered environment for which the area is noted;
 - (b) encouraging the conservation of items of the environmental heritage within the Municipality;
 - (c) increasing the area and standard of public open space in the Municipality;
 - (d) improving public access to the shores of the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers”

Other aims cover provision of parking, public amenities and support services *“consistent with development of the area”*.

Good provisions are contained for items of environmental heritage, allowing Council to assess the significance of a building, the effect of proposed changes, and to consider suitability of design and materials. Council may consult with the Townscape Advisory Committee in making its assessment.

The point to be stressed is that “MAY” is the operative word. The State Government has placed responsibility for using these provisions completely on Hunter's Hill Council. Council may adopt a foreshore building line, may adopt a list of heritage items.

This Trust wishes to support Council in its use of the provisions by publicising the benefit to all residents of tree cover, additions which will enhance the historic character of the area, and green open space.

Continued overleaf

YOUR 1983 MEMBERSHIP FEES

ARE DUE ON MARCH 1st

(See page 6)

COMPARISON WITH OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

The table below compares requirements for site size, floor space ratio to land size, height of buildings and distances between buildings and foreshores, with those of other councils. Hunter's Hill Council could do still better

in curtilage area requirements around historic houses and in foreshore protection, and it is to be hoped that the Heritage Study will make recommendations in this regard.

	MOSMAN (1982)	HUNTER'S HILL (1982)	LANE COVE (NEW PLAN TO COME THIS YEAR)	RYDE (1979)
Residential Zones: Historic	1400 sq. m.			
Minimum areas: 2(a3)	450	1000		580, or
(most of munic. 2(a2)	930	900	550	740 for
falls in one of 2(a1)	700	700	550	hatchet block
Maximum floor space	40% ¹	50% ¹	* 2	* 2
Maximum height	8.5 m	10 m	* 3	* 4
Foreshore Building Line		3, 10 or 15 m	30 m ⁵	* 6

1. Percentage of land covered by one-storey building, less of course for two-storey.
2. Distance from boundaries (1125mm, 1500mm for three-storey building) as laid out in Ordinance 70 determines floor space.
3. Two-storey; generally 7 or 8 metres; neighbours' views taken into account.
4. Three-storey; no maximum.
5. In practice, topography determines restriction; no building may make additions closer than the building next door.
6. Variable; line does not follow shoreline at a set distance.

HERITAGE STUDY

The Heritage Study is now being conducted, and it is to result in an additional Plan. Additional buildings, between one and two hundred of them, need to be added to those already receiving protection under Clause 19. This Trust is pleased to be involved in providing and verifying some of the material for the Study.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS as such do not exist in the Plan. However, many of the concentrations of historic buildings are in 2(a3) zones, which have, comparatively, the largest land settings. Serious omissions however, are the northern side of Woolwich Road, and Bateman's Road.

A FORESHORE BUILDING LINE appears on the map, showing variations: most of the foreshore has a line of 15 metres (or greater in the case of institutions), but some stretches along The Point have been reduced to 10 metres. One block in Henley has a line of 3 metres.

KELLY'S BUSH has been omitted from the Plan as if the radiation and the battle over it could be wiped off the map as easily. However, the area owned by A. V. Jennings Co. is not coloured green, as would have been expected from previous State Government promises that the area would not be built upon. This, in the opinion of the Trust, is an ominous sign that the "too-hard basket" is tipping Jennings' way.

MOBIL OIL's depot at Pulpit Point shows a reduced green "Private Recreation" buffer zone, increased purple "Industrial".

LANE COVE VALLEY EXPRESSWAY land is still reserved by the Department of Main Roads. In a report several years ago, it was listed for commencement in 1992, and the D.M.R. has steadfastly refused to take it off the map, although there have been disclaimers before elections that it will ever be built.

GLADESVILLE HOSPITAL and grounds, rumoured to be nearing transfer to a regional authority, could be deemed surplus land by the State Government and, if the proposed policy suspending planning restrictions on surplus land at sale go through, this land could be zoned for whatever will bring the most profit. The historic buildings within the grounds are listed by the Heritage Council but are being allowed to fall into serious disrepair.

FLATS, TOWNHOUSES, UNITS, ETC.

In line with the State Government's proposed legislation (see page 3), Hunter's Hill's Plan allows conversion to residential flats in all areas previously zoned for dwelling houses only. In the Trust's opinion this, and the existing legislation for reduced standards for flats for the aged, may in areas undermine the standards and aims of Local Environment Plan No. 1. The Department of Environment and Planning is giving the Municipal Council planning controls, then legislating to over-ride and negate those controls to force greater density development.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PLAN No. 1

This Plan shows regard for neighbourhood differences, for the special historic character of Hunter's Hill, and should allow Hunter's Hill Council to proceed with locally determined provisions. It is a clear demonstration that planning should be local, that neither sweeping state changes nor amalgamation should be forced upon a municipality which meets its locally determined needs.

URBAN CONSOLIDATION

STATE POWER GRAB

The Hunter's Hill Trust has submitted its objections to the Draft State Environmental Planning Policy on Medium Density Housing.

Town Planning

This Trust has objected in the strongest possible terms to both the principle and the practice of forcing a major zoning change on Local Government areas. Residential zoning has, in the past, been decided by that tier of Government which is best acquainted with local needs and wishes. It should not be possible for the State Government to legislate to take this power away from Local Government. The State Government seeks the power to impose flats in all residential areas, contrary to local decisions, or there would be no need for the legislation. This over-riding power of the State would negate town planning done with local knowledge and in response to local requirements. It makes a mockery of Hunter's Hill's efforts in achieving a town plan suitable for an historical environment.

Historic Community

Hunter's Hill has developed a sense of community along with its historical identity. It was New South Wales' first suburb, with its wooded allotments, stone and timber dwellings, ferries running to the city, and an infrastructure of market gardens, dairies and local trades. The village of Hunter's Hill has been united in its own defence, as can be seen by the existence of the Save Hunter's Hill Committee and our own organisation. Such strong loyalty is a direct result of the experience of living in a small community where residents become involved in local services and activities, where people know each other and collectively feel they have some control over the future of their environment. The threat of multiple dwelling intrusion would erode any certainty that people might have when choosing an area in which to live, and in the Trust's opinion this would be contrary to good planning policy and practice. Medium density development is, in the opinion of approximately 87% of the residents of Hunter's Hill, a terrible prospect. Residents of more densely developed areas seem to become apathetic; while this might seem an advantage to the State Government, to Hunter's Hill it would be a very great loss indeed.

Power Move

The concept of 'home' has powerful emotive qualities, and it is not surprising that there is an antagonistic reaction to several recent moves of the State Government to force development. The instruction that Hunter's Hill Council must approve a quota of 30 multiple dwelling applications this year is one such move, as is the Draft State Environmental Planning Policy on Surplus Public Land, which would allow State-owned public land to be exempt from planning laws when it is sold (this could apply to Gladesville Hospital, the foreshores at Boronia now reserved for highway use, Clarkes Point.....).

Heritage

The more than 300 historic buildings in Hunter's Hill would be adversely affected. Unfortunately, it has been proved that, in many cases, the character of fine old buildings has been seriously diminished by development in the vicinity.

Street Width

Streets are extremely narrow in much of Hunter's Hill, and the car population has posed a problem for many years. Increase will cause more serious problems.

Tree Cover

The tree screen which softens the aspect and cools the area would suffer from increased site coverage. Trees and foliage in general are a significant factor in reducing air pollution, and garden suburbs as well as parklands are necessary to combat the increasing air pollution in the Sydney basin.

Social Effects

Social interaction would move towards the impersonality of large city dwellers. Residents in home unit blocks rarely know their neighbours as do single dwelling residents. A greater strain is thus put on artificial helping, e.g. welfare services which would need to be funded.

Survey

The Hunter's Hill Trust conducted a survey to show residents' opinions. An information sheet was provided, including a resume of the draft policy and our opinion of its impact, as well as diagrams of building bulk on an average building block.

The survey, conducted by noble volunteers in a heat wave, covered 1339 houses, units and flats. The results:

1. Do you think that residential flat buildings (57, 50 or 43 per hectare) should be permitted in your neighbourhood?

NO	1170	87.4%
YES	116	8.7%
No Answer	53	3.9%

1339

2. Do you think that the State Government should be able to over-ride Hunter's Hill Council's zoning in all residential areas?

NO	1176	87.8%
YES	120	9%
No Answer	43	3.7%

1339

URBAN CONSOLIDATION

State Power Grab (Continued)

These results show overwhelming opposition to blanket medium density zoning for Hunter's Hill.

Many respondents wrote comments on their questionnaire forms, a cross-section of which we print here:

"Local Government must have power to decide what is best for the municipality it represents."

"Yes - Hunter's Hill Council has made some absurd decisions on occasions."

"... but how about some control by the Council, viz. Joubert Street?"

"Of course not. They would spoil the unique character of this suburb, clutter the landscape and lay waste to lovely old gardens and trees."

"Bit late now isn't it ... State Govts ought to be able to override any council, councils are the most bureaucratic (sic) organisations controlling our lives."

"Absolutely not, as they do not have our local interests at heart ... Just another example of the faceless bureaucracy's interference in the name of progress."

"I would like to see Hunter's Hill made an exception on historic grounds."

"Prevention is better than cure. Statesmen urgently needed."

"This would be a serious loss of freedom for N.S.W."

Hostility to the local council seemed to be behind a significant proportion of the 'yes' answers approving of giving the State Government power.

The End?

A window on how neighbourhood morale deteriorates was provided by response variations. The highest 'no' response came from single dwelling areas with extensive tree coverage, while residents of units and flats, if at home, were more likely to be suspicious of callers, or stated that they did not care. While such a response is understandable from elderly retirement home residents, heavily home-united areas seem to mitigate against local interest. An increase in medium density dwellings, therefore, would not be in the best interests of the preservation of this historic village and its way of life.

Hunter's Hill Local Environment Plan No. 1, gazetted on 10 December, 1982, is available at the Hunter's Hill Council Office. The Zoning Map costs \$5.00 and the Planning Instrument \$3.00.

A NOTE OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

In October, 1982 it came to the attention of the Hunter's Hill Trust that some old records, previously thought to have been burnt in the fire at the Town Hall in 1978, had been stored in a safe room and had escaped fire and water damage. These records are the **Hunter's Hill Rate Assessment Books** for the years 1861, 1864, 1866 to 1881-82, the **Rate Ledger Book** covering the years 1861-70/71 and the **Hunter's Hill Council Minute Books** back to the year 1861, the year the Municipality was incorporated. The **Rate Assessment Book** is particularly interesting because it lists both the names of owners and occupiers for each property, indicates whether there is a house, cottage or hut on the land, whether it is stone, brick or wood and, by the 1870's, includes street names. As David Saunders says in his book "A Manual of Architectural History Sources in Australia" Volume 1 (University of Adelaide, Dept. of Architecture, 1981):

"The account of properties which is embedded in the records of rate collectors is unique. It complements the Directories (which list occupiers) and the Titles (Land and Ownership) by recording something of the buildings. As often as not all four are revealed in the rate books - owner, occupier, land and buildings."

Unfortunately, the Trust did not know prior to the publication of the "**Heritage of Hunter's Hill**" that these early rate books were still in existence. The trust has suggested to the Hunter's Hill Council that these records, which are unique and fragile, should be copied so as to preserve them from the risk of future damage and to make them readily available to interested persons.

If copies can be made available, the Trust has offered to go through the Rate Books for the Heritage Study being undertaken by Meredith Walker and Associates.



TRIBUTE FROM OLDER RESIDENT

In a recent letter to the Trust, Miss Mary T. O'Farrell, resident of Hunter's Hill for 60 years, writes:

"Thank you for the work you all put in to keep the Hill something like it used to be in my childhood."



HUNTER'S HILL REVISITED

by HOWARD TANNER.

The new edition of the "*Heritage of Hunter's Hill*" is a welcome addition to the growing number of detailed studies of Sydney's historic suburbs. The cover photograph conveys Hunter's Hill at its most evocative, with an example of picturesque nineteenth century architecture set between a tranquil harbour and a background landscape of giant figs and araucarias punctuated with cottages and villas.

Hunter's Hill is indeed a rare Australian entity of fine groups of buildings set on a landscaped peninsula between two estuaries — only a few older parts of Hobart offer similar charm and interest.

The past two decades have witnessed the destruction of many fine residential quarters in Sydney, generally for the construction of multi-storey home units. Hunter's Hill Council had the wisdom to restrict home unit development and the result has made Hunter's Hill one of the most desirable residential areas in Sydney. Popularity is not always a good thing, and the trendification of much of the peninsula must be noted with regret. Also, the process of attrition, where old buildings gradually lose their details and character through a lack of maintenance or a desire for an overall blandness. The two photographs (page 102) of "*The Towers*" circa 1927 and 1982 are very telling — it takes a second glance to realise that it is one and the same building. Subdivision, too, has taken its toll on the established environment.

The Figtree Freeway cut the district in two and destroyed its commercial credibility — observe the rich array of shops and pubs (page 73) that provided a civic core to the activities of the suburb.

Like so many historic areas in Australia the strength of character comes from the numbers of simple sandstone and weatherboard cottages and the general denseness of the introduced vegetation. One senses a great interest in gardening in Hunter's Hill, but the surviving nineteenth century gardens or unusual botanic specimens are not listed — a deficiency worthy of remedying in the next edition.

The inclusion of Federation-style buildings is most welcome. This was perhaps the most intriguing phase of architectural development in Australia, for it allowed an expression of individuality and nationalism. While a full understanding of this period has not yet been achieved, houses such as "*Moonmeera*" (page 88), "*Millthorpe*" (page 112) and "*Mornington*" (page 115), will be some future historian's delight.

Reading of Croxsted's (page 129) lively past, provides a better insight into the earlier role as a maritime suburb, and whets the appetite for more information about the social realities of Hunter's Hill pre 1940. How did the grain store in Ady Street operate, and whom did it serve? Why is "*Clifton*" (page 103) part typical Victorian mansion, and part academic Georgian Revival facade? Where were the quarries, and what were the sources of brick and timber, slate and tile? Which pattern books did Joubert and Jeanneret use — and why?

Hunter's Hill has some excellent 1920's and modern buildings — one hopes that a future edition will list the massive and lumpy, dark and cobblestoned, California bungalow in The Point Road — and eventually its brand new post-modern neighbour — for they are both part of the interesting architectural fabric of the district.

These suggestions and questions are not asked just to confront this volume, — for it is delightful and most adequate in its way — but in the hope that the next layer of exploration and research will soon bear fruit in an even more illuminating publication or series of articles. Beverley Sherry's recent essay on Henry Budden has provided an excellent beginning.



"The Towers" - corner of Woolwich Road and Ferry Street, 1927.
Photograph copied by Douglass Baglin.



HOWARD TANNER is a Sydney architect who has been involved with the restoration and alteration of a number of houses and gardens in Hunter's Hill. His publications include *Restoring Old Australian Houses and Buildings* (to be republished shortly) and *The Great Gardens of Australia*.



ACTIVITIES

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST, (Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110).

"Keeping Hunter's Hill Alive". This is a description of the reasons why restorations, additions and new buildings should be designed to blend with the best of historic Hunter's Hill. Text is by Beverley Sherry and photographs by Douglass Baglin. Published by Hunter's Hill Trust, 15pp., 1981; \$2.50.

"A Glimpse of Hunter's Hill: A Short Walk through History". This pamphlet guides walkers around the Town Hall area, with its diversity of historic buildings. A clear map, with reference to descriptions of thirty-four key buildings, takes walkers back in history along tree-shaded streets, lanes and stone steps. Prepared by Jo Rees. Published by Hunter's Hill Trust, 1981; \$1.00.

"A Glimpse of Hunter's Hill: A Short Walk — Some of the Grand Homes". This pamphlet and map guides walkers from Alexandra Street through Passy Avenue, Jeanneret Avenue and Wybalena Road to Ferry Street. Prepared by Jo Rees. Published by Hunter's Hill Trust, 1982; \$1.00.

"Heritage of Hunter's Hill". Published in October, 1982, this book is the third edition of "Old Buildings of Hunter's Hill". Edited by Alice Oppen, 150pp.; \$21.00 (plus \$2 postage).

A review of this book by Howard Tanner is included in this issue of the Journal (page 5).

The Trust's thanks go to all those members who helped to obtain residents' opinions on the Government's urban consolidation plan. In many instances this meant visiting each house more than once to deliver a questionnaire and get the answer. Results of this survey which covered 1339 houses are shown elsewhere in this Journal.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 8.30 p.m. in Villa Maria Hall, Mary Street, on Tuesday, 24th May, 1983. Following the meeting and dinner (6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m.), a guest speaker will address the members. RSVP 89-2035. NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

ANNUAL HOUSE INSPECTION

An inspection of historic buildings is being organised for May 1st between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

For tickets send cheque and self-addressed envelope to P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110, or ring 89-2035 (Mrs. Anne McNally) after 15th March, 1983.

Tickets are \$6 each and \$3 for pensioners and students.

HERITAGE WEEK

This year Heritage Week will be observed from 10th - 17th April. Special activities are being organised, ending with a Heritage Week Fair in Observatory Hill Park, Sydney, on Sunday, 17th April. The Fair is being organised by the National Trust and will be held near the Trust Centre. Stalls will be erected by 11 a.m. and the public are invited to picnic in the park prior to the commencement of the entertainment at 1 p.m.

HERITAGE WALK

The Hunter's Hill Trust will be conducting guided walks on Sunday, 17th April as part of its contribution to Heritage Week. The walks, beginning at 2 p.m., will be the same as those organised in 1981. The walks will start at the Town Hall, continue along Stanley Street, Mount Street, Madeline Street and Ady Street to Alexandra Street. Booklets will be on sale at the starting point; there is no charge for the walks.

SYDNEY HARBOUR CRUISE

The annual cruise held by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Sydney Harbour Foreshores Committee will take place on SUNDAY, 10th APRIL.

The ferry will leave Circular Quay at 9.15 a.m. and return at 4.30 p.m. Cost \$10. Bring lunch and drink. For further information, telephone Fay Sutton, 665-2869.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE ON MARCH 1st MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership	1983-84	Due March 1
Single	\$ 5.00	
Family	\$ 10.00	
Pensioner	\$ 1.00	
Student	\$ 1.00	
Life Member	\$ 75.00	

*The Hunter's Hill Trust,
Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.*