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Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

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JULY, 1983.

"Marika"

BEFORE

and

AFTER



"Marika" 1980



"Marika" 1983

Photographs by Douglass Baglin.

The above pictures tell a story. They are photographs of "Marika", 46 Ryde Road, a house built in 1902 and an excellent example of Federation architecture. The photo on the left was taken in 1980, the one on the right in 1983, after nearly two years of solid work by a family who bought the house in 1981 and set about restoring it. In 1980 "Marika" was in a state of gentle decay, although still a charming and familiar landmark of Hunter's Hill. When it was put up for sale in 1981, it offered a distinct advantage: it was a true original, structurally unaltered.

The new owners realised this and had the good sense not to do over the house in a modern style but to restore it faithfully. Much of the research for the project they did themselves. They read whatever books were available on the subject of Federation houses; they consulted with the Heritage Council of NSW; they even made enquiries among the older neighbours about the early appearance of the house and garden.

One of the most notable achievements is the paintwork. The colours are shades of light khaki ("Old Colonial" and "Clay Pan") with a deep red-brown trim ("Ranch Brown"). These colours blend with the original coloured-glass panels of the windows and doors and are carried through to the details of the chimneys. Federation houses are distinguished by timber decoration and the

paintwork of "Marika" picks out the timber detailing on the decorative gables, verandah, window hoods at the sides and back of the house, and bay window on the northern side.

Hugh Fraser, an architect with the Heritage Council of NSW, observes that "Marika" is a Federation house in a relaxed, country style. Built of timber and galvanised iron and with extensive verandahs, it is certainly unlike the usual compact red brick houses derived from the Queen Anne style which were being adapted for Australian conditions around 1900. It is a more frankly Australian house and resembles the Queensland houses illustrated in Balwant Saini and Ray Joyce's book, **The Australian House: Homes of the Tropical North**. With country houses, outbuildings generally followed the shape of the main house on a smaller scale and a carport at the back of "Marika" has been built with this in mind; the result looks rather like a coach house or stables.

Not least in the restoration of the property is the regeneration of the garden. The garden had been laid out originally in formal patterns, with decorative tiles bordering each bed. Fortunately these patterns remained and were a basis to work on. The paths have yet to be restored but the garden is beginning to flourish again; even the lavender walk along the front path has been replanted.

WHY "VIENNA" IS IMPORTANT

by

Meredith Walker

In the last two decades many people have expressed views about the purpose of cultural heritage conservation, its value to individual communities and to society as a whole. The interest in old buildings in the 1960s reflected mainly an appreciation of the architecture and aesthetic appeal of buildings. This interest has broadened and today buildings are also regarded as evidence of the lifestyle and values of society. Together with conventional documents and oral history, they can tell us much about the past which is of value in the present. Manning Clark has said,

"I want to show you that a knowledge of Australia can help a person to find answers to the great problems of life. I want to show how the discovery of Australia throws light on all the things that had puzzled and bewildered me in life."

(Boyer Lectures, 1976)

The built environment generally, and historic buildings in particular, can open our eyes to the past. But the ability of a building to awaken our imagination depends upon our knowledge of the past, our knowledge of the building, and upon the authenticity of the building. The more authentic a building the greater its power to evoke the past.

In recent years, practitioners in the field of heritage conservation (architects, town planners, engineers, archaeologists, historians) have been developing procedures and techniques for evaluating the significance of old buildings and places of heritage value. Organizations concerned with heritage matters have recognised the need to take a methodical approach in making decisions. Unfortunately, we have learnt the hard way, with many places of heritage significance being destroyed because their value was not properly researched and understood **before** major decisions about their future were made. There have been several notorious instances in Australia where the oldest part of a building has been demolished in the course of "restoration" because it was mistaken for an addition! Australia ICOMOS (a branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites) has set down guidelines known as "The Burra Charter", after the town in South Australia in which they were formally adopted. In the Burra Charter, cultural significance means "aesthetic, historic, scientific, or social value for past, present, and future generations."

The investigation in April 1983 of the cultural significance of "Vienna", a stone cottage at 38 & 40 Alexandra Street, Hunter's Hill, demonstrates the correct procedure for evaluating historic buildings. A conservation analysis and plan was made. Clive Lucas was consulted as a restoration architect; Philip Jenkyn researched the history of the building and the

family who owned it; and I was asked to advise on the cultural significance of "Vienna" in the context of Hunter's Hill. In order to guide the National Trust "Vienna" Appeal Committee, a booklet entitled **"Vienna — A Conservation Analysis and Plan"** was published and includes a summary statement of the cultural significance of the cottage:—

"'Vienna' is an excellent example of a tradesman's cottage of the 19th century, complete with its detached kitchen block. Its intactness makes it rare in Sydney. It is evidence of the period 1861-1890 when Hunter's Hill was first developed as a suburb and it stands on the earliest successful small lot subdivision in the village. The subdivision was undertaken by Jules Joubert who, with his brother Didier, were together the first, and most prominent, developers of Hunter's Hill."

'Vienna' combined with the adjoining Hillman cottages of 'Alroy' and 'Redleaf' demonstrate the once common pattern of family property ownership, and the later re-subdivision of the land demonstrates, in microcosm, the speculative nature of land ownership in Hunter's Hill.

The unbuilt-upon land, once an orchard, is rare evidence of the reliance of suburban families in the 19th and early 20th century on home produce and is a significant feature of the property.

The cottage has considerable educational as well as historical and architectural value. It demonstrates the tradesman's way of life in the 19th century and how the family adapted the cottage to accommodate changing needs and standards.

'Vienna' is an integral component of a precinct and suburb of outstanding cultural significance."

Why then is "Vienna" important? It is important because of its authenticity, which gives it exceptional power to evoke the past. This power would be retained if the building were conserved as a house museum. It is a unique opportunity for New South Wales.

Meredith Walker is a consultant town planner who specialises in cultural heritage conservation. She has undertaken many studies of towns and suburbs in Queensland and New South Wales. In 1981-82 she co-ordinated a study of the Hunter Region and in 1983 is undertaking a study of Hunter's Hill for the NSW Department of Environment and Planning and the Hunter's Hill Council. Other projects include a nationwide study of the theory, techniques and practice of conservation for the NSW Department of Environment and Planning.

TRUST'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Villa Maria Hall, May 24, 1983

This was a very pleasant evening. It began with pre-dinner drinks, followed by a delicious dinner prepared and served by our members and organized by Anne McNally — many thanks to all.

JAMES BROADBENT on "Good Manners"

Next came food for the mind from architectural historian, James Broadbent, who gave an illustrated talk on "good manners" in architecture and townscape. He was preaching to the converted of course at a gathering like this but, thanks to this **Journal**, his message reaches a wider audience. He argued that residents have a responsibility to their community to exercise "good manners" in the design of houses, gardens, fences etc. in relation to the total streetscape. They have a duty to take a look at their house occasionally from the other side of the street or from a vantage point down the street to see how it fits into the environment.

James Broadbent's points were stimulating and he exercised good manners himself by limiting the length of his talk to allow time for discussion. Kerry Wherry and Meredith Walker both hit some nails on the head by pointing to the rights of the individual and to a judicial system which allows people to do pretty much what they like in their own front yards.

The talk left us all with this question: in an area like Hunter's Hill, of acknowledged heritage value, how far should the individual be allowed to go his own sweet way, ignoring townscape and the special character of the area? Surely it is bad manners to insert, for example, a high white wall in the middle of a line of stone walls or to plant (Council forbid!) a square block of units between two Victorian houses.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

James Broadbent was followed by the President of the Trust, Dr. Malcolm Lane-Brown. Excerpts from his Report are printed here.

*"In the past year the book you see here tonight (**Heritage of Hunter's Hill**) was launched. Book sales are proceeding well. The positive participation of members has been ongoing through the year, especially in the field of publications — thanks are due to Diana Drake, Beverley Sherry, Alice Oppen, Roslyn Maguire, and photographer Douglass Baglin.*

Recently a house inspection organized by Anne McNally gave an insight into the zeal of some of the younger people in the area who are faithfully restoring Federation houses. It was a joy to see "Marika" on Ryde Road, as well as "Villa Floridiana", the stunning Joubert house kindly shown by Douglass Baglin.

"Vienna" has been espoused by the Bicentennial Committee on which the Trust has a representative. Jo Rees is our appointee to that position, and the Trust is taking a very active interest in what is proceeding. Jo resigns tonight as Secretary and we thank her for the tremendous job she has done in the past year.

Alice Oppen, who has given so much time, energy, thought, and productive work to the Trust, is resigning as a special member of the Committee, but we note with pleasure her election to the Council's Townscape Advisory Committee.

Ongoing problems include the persistent thorn of Urban Consolidation as it will affect Hunter's Hill and the absolute standstill of the disposal of the radioactive waste in Nelson Parade with its radon gas and affected soil; some of the waste is obviously leaching into Sydney Harbour from the plastic bags in which it is contained." See below.

A BURIED PROBLEM **Uranium in Hunter's Hill**

The Hunter's Hill Trust wrote to Mr. Brereton, NSW Minister for Health, expressing concern at the decision to allow radioactive waste to remain in Nelson Parade and Kelly's Bush. We quote from Mr. Brereton's reply dated 22nd September, 1982.

I refer to your recent letter concerning the Government's intention to leave radioactive contaminated soil in the ground at Hunter's Hill.

I can assure you that the proposal to bury the contaminated material on two cleared residential blocks at Hunter's Hill and fence it off from the public is the cheapest and best solution.

A number of other proposed solutions have been canvassed but, after thorough evaluation, have been rejected. One proposal was to transport the material to the far west of New South Wales and bury it. This, of course, is only transferring the problem and is estimated to cost, in 1980 money terms, more than \$1 million.

Another suggestion was to 'dump it' at sea. While the material concerned is of only low level radioactivity, it would still cause some pollution of the oceans and has been rejected twice by the New South Wales Government.

I have been assured the proposal is safe. The radioactive material will be transferred in one area and covered with 1.5 metres of clean fill. The harmful radon gas emitted by the radioactive material will be absorbed by the top soil and I am advised that the radiation level will not be measurable from the normal background radiation level and the area will be safe for general use.

The most significant health risk — and it is a long-term risk — is when the radon gas given off by these deposits at low levels is trapped, as happens in a house built directly on top of these deposits.

Even though there will be no significant health risk, when this site is cleared and filled, the Government will declare it unhealthy building land and fence off the entire area including access by both road and harbour foreshores and prominent signs will be erected warning people of the radiation hazard." !

ACTIVITIES

THE NEW TRUST COMMITTEE

The following Committee was elected at the A.G.M. and office bearers were elected at the first meeting of the new Committee.

President:	Mr. Michael Lehany	816-1526
Secretary:	Mrs. Anne McNally	89-2035
Treasurer:	Mr. Sam Sheffer	89-1712
	Mr. Douglass Baglin	89-1534
	Ms. Caroline Burke	816-1526
	Mrs. Doreen Carter	89-3410
	Mrs. Roslyn Maguire	896-1614
	Mr. Hudson Shaw	892-2311
	Mrs. Bev Sherry	816-2107

Co-opted to Committee:

Dr. David Bryant	89-4139
Dr. Malcolm Lane-Brown	816-2553
Mr. Tony Simmons	896-1912

A Social Sub-Committee is being formed which will function as a women's auxiliary. Any ideas for friendly and informal get-togethers of Trust members, please ring Anne McNally — 89-2035.

Heritage of Hunter's Hill (Compiled and published by the Hunter's Hill Trust, 1982). The only book-length study of Hunter's Hill in print, covering the history, architecture, and natural environment, fully illustrated. For mail orders:

Send \$21.00 plus \$2.00 postage to:
The Hunter's Hill Trust, P.O. Box 85
Hunter's Hill, NSW 2110.

THANK YOU

The Trust's annual House Inspection was held on May 1st. We would like to say a very warm thank you from all our members to the owners of "Marika" and "Villa Floridiana" and to the Hunter's Hill Primary School (custodians of "Eulbertie") for giving the general public an opportunity to view these fine buildings and for giving the Trust an opportunity to raise money.

Many thanks also to Anne McNally, who organized the event, and to the many Trust members who helped on the day.

HOUSE AND GARDEN INSPECTION

Visit "Oatlands" in the Spring

"Oatlands" is one of the earliest sandstone houses of Hunter's Hill and is set in a beautiful garden. The owners have generously offered to open it for inspection in order that all proceeds might go to the "Vienna" fund. There will also be a Plant Sale and a White Elephant Garage Sale to aid "Vienna".

"Oatlands", 10 Ferry Street, Hunter's Hill
Sunday, September 11, 10 a.m. — 4.30 p.m.

For information and tickets,
ring Anne McNally — 89-2035.

JOHN HORBURY HUNT

and

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, HUNTER'S HILL

On Thursday, September 1, 1983 a group of people taking part in a week-long study course of the work of architect, John Horbury Hunt, will visit All Saints' Church, designed by Horbury Hunt in 1884. Anyone interested is invited to attend at 9.30 a.m. to hear a talk given by Dr. Peter Reynolds of the University of New South Wales.

The study group is being led by Frank Bitmead, a lecturer at New England University, commencing on August 27th at Armidale. For full enrolment details contact Roslyn Maguire (896-1614) or Frank Bitmead (067 73-2123).

The Trust extends sincere appreciation to Dr. Malcolm Lane-Brown for all the work he has done in the past year as President.

The Heritage Council of NSW offers guidelines for the restoration of Federation houses, including working drawings of carports, garages, verandahs, fences, and walls. The Heritage Council also keeps lists of suppliers of materials needed in the restoration of both Victorian and Federation houses. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this service should either visit the Heritage Council at 175 Liverpool Street, Sydney, or telephone 266-7111.

"Vienna" — Conservation Analysis and Plan. Copies of this publication are available from the National Trust "Vienna" Appeal Committee — contact Pamela Chippendall (896-2870) or Philip Jenkyn (89-2677).

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership

1983—1984

Due March 1, 1983

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.



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