



Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

Volume XIII No. 1

FEBRUARY, 1984

IN 1984 A TREE SURVEY OF HUNTER'S HILL BY HUNTER'S HILL TRUST



A leafy corner of Villa Maria grounds - photographed by Douglass Baglin

The built environment of the Municipality of Hunter's Hill has been fairly well covered by conservation surveys to date, carried out by local and state bodies such as the Hunter's Hill Trust and The National Trust of Australia (NSW), including the pioneering co-operative effort between the Hunter's Hill Historical Society and the Hunter's Hill Trust in identifying and mapping our unique stone walls.

The primary aim has been to assess and describe the area with a view to the ongoing conservation of specific buildings and sites.

WHY A TREE SURVEY? Because many of these past surveys have eventually led to legislative conservation protection.

Local residents often take the quality of their environment for granted and the high quality of the Hunter's Hill environment is in marked contrast to some neighbouring suburbs. It is in the nature and extent of tree cover that the contrast is greatest.

Distinctive plantings, such as the **Brush Box** groupings on both sides of Woolwich Road, have a dramatic streetscape impact. Trees planted at this density significantly lower the ground temperature, especially by shading bitumen surfaces, and thus play an important microclimatic role.

Of garden trees, the **Jacarandas** (*J. mimosifolia*) and the **Illawarra Flame** (*Brachychiton acerfolium*), traditionally planted together and flowering in November, form a unique setting for the old buildings of Hunter's Hill.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE RECOGNITION: A local register of Heritage trees will enable identification of specific examples and verify their importance for preservation. In terms of the tree protection order of the Heritage Act (NSW), a tree may be classified as 'an object or place' deserving recognition for a number of reasons; that is, for an aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value.

The concept of '*heritage recognition*' helps to estimate the value of a tree which creates an understanding of the past and enriches the present, as well as believing that it will be of value to future generations.

An '*aesthetic*' value of a tree may be described in general terms as its 'beauty' for its position in the landscape/townscape, whereas an '*historic*' value may encompass a number of factors: either as a reminder of an historic event, such as being planted by a notable person, or as part of an historic site or setting. Its value may be considered regardless of its aesthetic importance.

A '*scientific*' valuation would consider historic significance or rarity in itself, or a uniqueness of form or shape, while '*social*' value regards the importance to a community of a tree or trees, such as possessing a special focus for cultural sentiment.

New categories for valuation may emerge for a particular tree as the appreciation within a community develops.

One of the aims of the 1984 tree survey of Hunter's Hill is to identify and describe specific types and individual examples.

10ver



LOCAL HISTORY FOLD

Old photographs provide us with valuable detail in the study and research of local and family history. The above photograph was kindly loaned to the Trust by Mr. W. Huntington of Ramsgate, whose parents lived here at No. 36 Woolwich Road, known as 'Sunnyside'. It shows a simple cottage with a 'formal' front lawn and flower gardens in contrast to the flourishing vegetable garden growing corn and cabbages; cows can be seen and note the timber covering of the well and the pump sited directly in front (left) of the verandah.

A grander two-storey house, No. 42 Woolwich Road, is in the background (east), opposite are the high stone walls of the Jeanneret houses (Nos. 27 and 29 Woolwich Road) providing a contrast to the more recent sturdy paling fence of Number 36.

This house was not included in our current edition of 'Heritage of Hunter's Hill', and the previous edition had inaccurate details about 30 Woolwich Road since we were unable to identify 'Sunnyside' from information then available

to us. The photograph and details supplied by Mr. Huntington have made it possible to identify 'Sunnyside' (first listed in Sands, 1894), as No. 36 Woolwich Road. According to **Sands Directory** of 1913, John W. Huntington was occupying the house and the photograph is dated approximately that year (a car can be detected in the original). The property adjoined the still extensive Passy Estate to the west and the Simpson home 'St. Ives' to the north, and Mr. Huntington recalls that his parents worked for the Simpson family.

The photograph serves as a reminder that only seventy years ago much of the area was quite rural, situated as it was between the village centres of Hunter's Hill and Woolwich. Many of the 1890's local subdivisions were of land along Woolwich Road, with views of either the Lane Cove or Parramatta Rivers. The domestic scene portrays an aspect of local life different to the prosperous sandstone-mansion-image with which we are more familiar.

TREE SURVEY 1984 (Continued from page 1)

SOME IMPORTANT TREES:

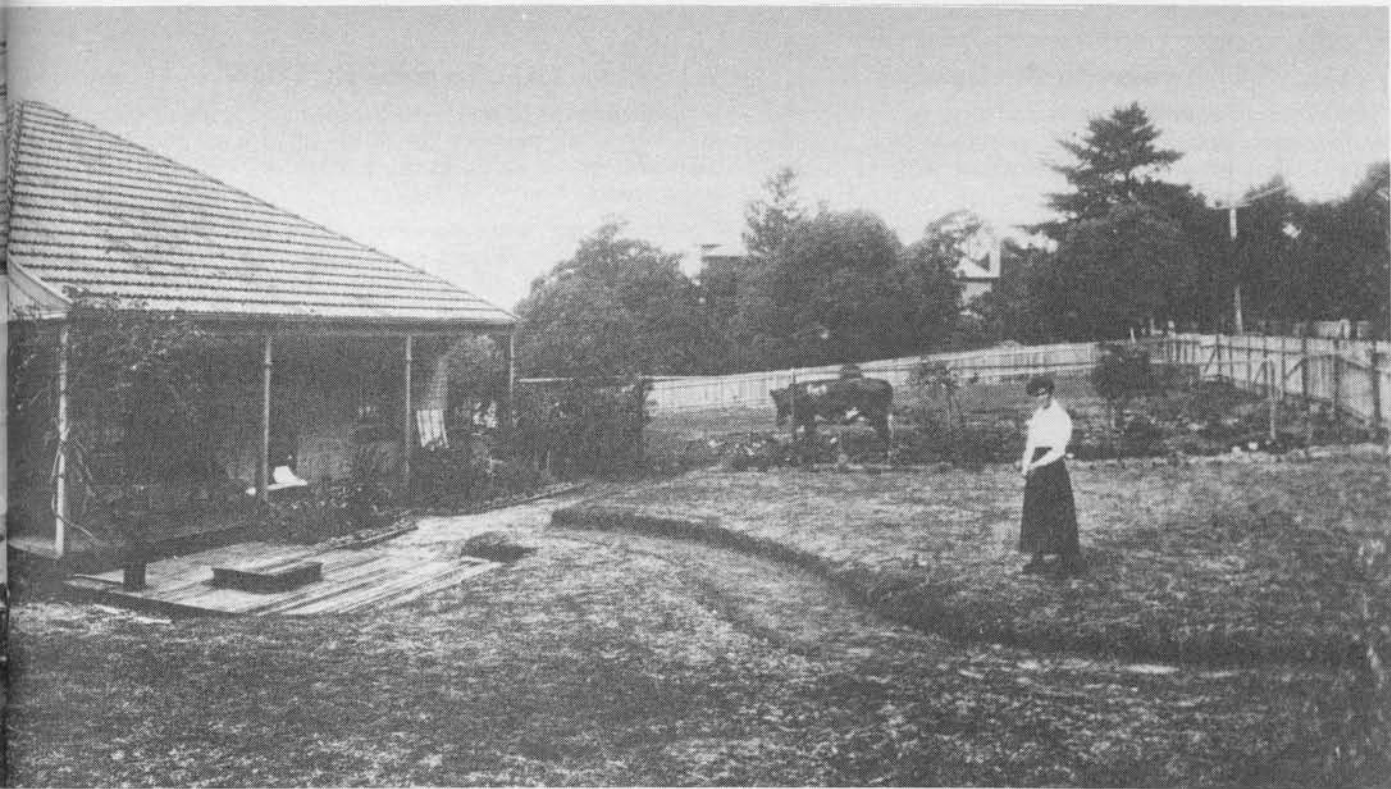
Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucarias*) are important landmark trees in Hunter's Hill (and in Australia generally), usually situated near old houses. Sadly, these pines are reaching the end of their life and many are senescent. A Norfolk Island Pine formed the central roundel to the carriage way at Passy, until it was replaced by a wishing well, so that the opportunity to conserve a distinctive setting has been missed.

A famous 'historic' tree was the **Norfolk Island Pine** (*araucaria heterophylla*) planted in 1819 by Mrs. Macquarie. It became known as the "Wishing Tree" and was originally in the centre of the Sydney Botanic Gardens (now the Royal Botanic Gardens), raised from seed by Major Antill, Governor Macquarie's aide-de-camp. Forty years ago it died and appears to have been made into souvenir napkin rings(!). The site is marked by a tablet sculptured by Raynor Hoff. Current conservation ethics would require its replacement by another tree of the same species.

The **Cook Island Pines** (*Araucaria columnellaris*), see photograph, were planted from seeds brought back from the Pacific Islands by the missionary Fathers, and form an important landmark grouping beside Tarban Creek. They date from approximately the 1860s and display an unusual characteristic of leaning away from the direction of the prevailing wind. Of similar age are two **Cook Island Pines** symmetrically placed about the main eastern garden axis of Government House, Sydney, framing a view of the Heads.

The species is fairly unusual in Sydney and, from a conservation point of view is ideal for new planting in smaller gardens since it requires little room and is very hardy.

Moreton Bay Figs (*Ficus macrophylla*) feature prominently, denoting the principal early estates of Hunter's Hill: for instance, the one at Figtree House, and two close together in Ferry Street (one in Muirbank Avenue) that formed part of the gardens to Bordier's four houses of the 1850s.



Copied by Douglass Baglin from the original

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

Historical investigation into other material such as directories, rate books, personal letters, diaries and individual recollections assists an examination and interpretation of old photographs. Each one is a document of some aspect of personal and local history.

For those who have collections of early photographs, we would like to recommend a publication '**Conserving Historic Photographs**' (National Trust), a collection of papers presented at a seminar held in 1981. In his introduction, Peter Stanbury, Director of The Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, said:

Historical photographs are an extremely valuable record of our community's past; they provide an important source for research into the nation's social and environmental history ...

Advice is also available from the State Library of N.S.W. and a Field Librarian will visit people who request assistance. The Small Picture File at the Mitchell Library is recommended for

comparisons with family copies: photographs are filed according to locality and portraits by subject.

We should remember that a family photograph is also a document containing information about property, social conditions, dress and local development.

Mr. N. Vine-Hall's paper, 'Family History and Photographs', gives warnings about the protection of photographs,

All should be acquainted with the dangers of marking photographs with biro about rusty pins, sunlight and sticky tape ... genealogists have condemned their ancestors for not naming and dating their photographs. Do not give your descendants this same reason to speak ill of you.

(Conserving Historic Photographs, p.22.)

Fig trees contrast noticeably with local flora and have historic connections with many early rural settlements. The large **Moreton Bay Fig** at Singleton recently destroyed by the local council was associated with the early pioneers as a landmark of an 1840s river crossing.

However, large **Moreton Bay Figs** present the most difficult heritage problem as they are frequently in 'conflict' (particularly in sub-divided gardens) with the demands of current householders.

Although some property owners have love-hate feelings for the **Brush Box** (*Tristania conferta*), their historic importance in places like Gladesville Road cannot be denied. They have a special historic and social significance as they were originally planted and marked with plaques in memory of soldiers who went to the Great War.

Some residents in the vicinity of Mary Street recall that a fine old *Magnolia grandiflora* in the garden of '**Dacre Villa**' traditionally supplied local brides with three blooms.

THE BENEFITS OF THE SURVEY: The Heritage survey of trees will identify the remaining trees of cultural significance in Hunter's Hill, in the hope that conservation planning practices carried out either by State or Local Government, will ensure their protection for future generations.

END OF PART ONE

This will be followed by Part Two in the next edition of this journal, outlining the importance of a bushland and remnant indigenous vegetation survey in Hunter's Hill.

Michael Lehany.

READING

Kartsoff, J. — **Nature and a City**. Edwards and Shaw Pty. Ltd., Sydney, 1969.

Tanner, H., and Jane Begg — **The Great Gardens of Australia**. Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1976.

Hunter's Hill Trust Journal. Trees of Hunter's Hill, February, 1980.

ACTIVITIES

VIENNA * Two recent developments

The Vienna Committee has asked us to pass on to you two new decisions made in relation to the Hunter's Hill proposed Bi-centennial project to purchase and restore 'Vienna'.

Firstly, as was announced at a recent gathering of three hundred and fifty residents at the Town Hall, the option to purchase 'Vienna' is being exercised. The property will be held in the name of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), but the necessary funds will have to be raised by public donation. The Hunter's Hill branch of Westpac has given the Vienna Committee a loan to purchase and approaches are being made to the State Government and private companies for financial support. However, it is essentially a local project and in need of your (tax deductible) donation.

The second development is a unique and generous offer made to Hunter's Hill Council by the owner of the adjacent 'orchard' block of land, at \$35,000 less than its market value of \$120,000. Terms of the offer require payment over four years by equal yearly instalments, providing the land is used as an orchard-park 'in trust for the people of Hunter's Hill'.

Council's decision is likely while this journal is at press and it is to be hoped that they will recognise the need for an area of open space in the village centre which is becoming increasingly over-developed and crowded, like the Garibaldi-Cuneo-Old Bakery sites on the opposite side of Alexandra Street. The offer provides a rare opportunity to create a park for public use, the only piece of parkland between Shelley Park and Weil Park, on the main thoroughfare of Church Street, Alexandra Street and Woolwich Road.

Donations to: National Trust Vienna Appeal, 16a Joubert Street, Hunter's Hill, 2110.

STOP PRESS!! The 'orchard' block has been purchased jointly by the Hunter's Hill Council and the Heritage Council.

Publications:

The special offer introduced in November offering a complimentary copy of 'Keeping Hunter's Hill Alive' (value \$2.50), with each purchase of our comprehensive study of the houses of Hunter's Hill, 'Heritage of Hunter's Hill', continues — cost \$21.00. (Postage: \$2.00).

Available from us at P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.

We are pleased to draw your attention to a new 'Silver Anniversary — Hunter's Hill High School' publication, celebrating 25 years from 1958 - 1983. The thirty-three page book contains a brief history of the High School with many black and white photographs; compiled by Pat Coyle and Nigel Hubbard.

Copies are available from the High School Reiby Road, Hunter's Hill. Cost \$2.50 plus 70 cents postage.

ANNUAL HOUSE INSPECTION

An inspection of houses at Woolwich is being organised for 29th April, between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Teas will be available in the garden of 'Vailele', 2 The Point Road.

As an 'extra', some members of the Battlers of Kelly's Bush will direct visitors to paths through Kelly's Bush between 2 p.m. and 3.30 p.m., meeting at Weil Park.

For tickets send cheques and self-addressed envelope to P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110. Tickets cost \$6 each and \$3 for pensioners and students. For individual or group booking enquiries ring Anne McNally, 89-2035.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The **Annual General Meeting** will be held at 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 30th May, 1984 at the Hunter's Hill Town Hall, Alexandra Street. The President, Michael Lehany, and the Committee look forward to welcoming you on that occasion. The guest speaker will be Lyn McLaughlin; she will give a talk on the Lane Cove Valley.

The Committee who provided so excellently for the Christmas Party, will serve dinner at 7.15 p.m. Drinks will be served at 6.30 p.m. Please book. \$5.00.

R.S.V.P. Elizabeth Shaw - 89-2311 or Diana Bryant - 89-4139.

HERITAGE WEEK

The dates for this year's Heritage Week are from 8th to 15th April, and on Saturday 14th, the Hunter's Hill Trust will give conducted tours through Gladesville Hospital. This proved popular a few years ago and in view of current uncertainty about the future of the Hospital it is a good opportunity to see the buildings and grounds.

Meet at the Hospital Gates in Punt Road (off Victoria Road). Walks leave at regular intervals between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Enquiries Anne McNally — (89-2035).

On the following day, Sunday 15th April, the **Heritage Week Fair** is being held at Observatory Hill Park, and the Hunter's Hill Trust will have a stall there. Entertainment will commence at 1 p.m. and conclude at 4.30 p.m.

PICNIC

The Annual Boat Picnic of the Harbour Foreshores Committee will be held on April 8, 1983, and members and friends are invited to attend. The ferry will leave Circular Quay at 9 a.m. and the day will cost \$11.

Enquiries - Anne McNally, 89-2035

TRUST MEMBERSHIP 1984-85

MEMBERSHIP fees are due on March 1 each year. Types of membership:— Single \$5.00; Family \$10.00; Pensioner \$1.00; Student \$1.00; Life Member \$75.00. Please post to Hunter's Hill Trust, Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.