



Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

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THE TRUST'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

February 7th, 1988, is the 20th Anniversary of the formal establishment of the Hunter's Hill Trust.

The formation of the Trust was undoubtedly a spontaneous reaction to an increasing number of officially sanctioned acts of vandalism against the environment of this Municipality during the 1960s. The first of these was perpetrated by the New South Wales Government when the Department of Main Roads demolished "Nemba" and "St. Malo", both built in the 1850s and, even more shockingly, bulldozed Mary Reiby's "Cottage" dating from 1835, in order to build 2Km of so-called expressway. The D.M.R. also replaced the Church of St. Marks, set among large trees at the Figtree end of Church Street, with the horrendously ugly concrete canyon we see today. In the next few years, the local Aldermen approved the demolition of many old stone houses perhaps in the belief that, by doing so, they were doing their best for the Municipality, but most probably because none of them was aware that Hunters Hill was, in fact, unique.

By the end of the 1960s, many people had become alarmed at the awful unit developments that were going up all over the Municipality and some began to ask what could be done to combat the developers.

Among the first of these were Charles Martin, an American who was an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, and David Abotomey, a young conservation-minded builder. Stemming from their efforts to rouse public opinion, a public meeting was called at only 3 days' notice late in December, 1967. Although it had to be canvassed by telephone, it says much for the alarm felt by the Hunters Hillites of those days that nearly 100 people crowded into the small R.S.L. Hall in Alexandra Street on the most unlikely day of the year for a public meeting - New Year's Day, 1968. They were there to question Mr. Bell, the Mayor, about the Council's belatedly commissioned Town Plan. The Mayor attempted to soothe their fears and advised "leaving it to the Council". So great was the disquiet left by this meeting that 3 days later a group of eleven met in Peter Elkin's house and determined to launch an association to oppose further home unit development in the Municipality. This was to be called the Hunters Hill Trust and would be launched at a meeting in the Town Hall on February 7th, 1968. This was the largest meeting ever held in Hunters

Hill before or since. Newspaper estimates of those present varied between 600 and 800, with many people standing outside in light rain, endeavouring to listen through open doors! This meeting formally established the Trust and elected a Steering Committee of nine charged with drawing up a Constitution and with pursuing the Trust's Town-Planning objectives. One of the Steering Committee's first actions was to create its all-important Town-Planning Subcommittee to set out its ideas for the planning of Hunters Hill, in order to present these to the local Aldermen.

While this was being done, the State Government announced that it was advancing the next municipal elections by 12 months to a date in December, 1968. The Trust realized that this would provide an exceptional opportunity to influence the Council over the Town Plan and put an enormous effort into selecting nine candidates which it felt able to endorse as supporting the Trust's aims. Although voting in the election was not compulsory for the first time for many years, the turnout in Hunters Hill was one of the highest in the State and Trust-supported candidates swept the poll with 55% of all primary votes cast. All nine Trust-supported candidates were elected and six sitting aldermen deposed.

This victory created great interest in New South Wales; nothing like it had ever been seen anywhere and it probably signalled the real beginning of the conservation movement in this State. Since that time, not only has the Trust been responsible for the retention of a good deal of the historic character of the suburb, but along with The Battlers for Kelly's Bush, it played an important role in the conservation movement at large. The first Green Ban in Australia was placed on Kelly's Bush in 1970 after intense lobbying by the Battlers to stop development of that important piece of foreshore bushland. The extraordinary alliance forged between the Builders' Labourers' Federation under Jack Munday, the National Trust, and local groups like the Hunters Hill Trust and the Paddington Society did a great deal to save important items of natural and urban heritage and indirectly led to the passing of the impressive package of environmental legislation that exists in New South Wales today. ♦

**ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ORDERS 300
HOMES ON PULPIT POINT • SEE PAGE 4**

THE TRUST'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY (Continued)

The Council elected in 1968 extensively revised the Town Plan and when in 1971 this was finally sent to the State Planning Authority, it contained many of the provisions the Trust had fought for.

This is not the place to enter into a discussion of why the planning ordinance that now covers Hunters Hill no longer contains these protective features. The Sir Humphrey Applebys of the State bureaucracy are less easy to deal with than the local aldermen or elected politicians.

The Trust is just as necessary today as it ever was. Philistines and developers are always with us and one can never afford to relax. Pulpit Point is just the latest threat to the Municipality; the situation looked just as grim in 1968. All of those who wish to continue to preserve this suburb must combine and make their voices heard as loudly as others did twenty years ago.

FOOTNOTE

To mark its 20th anniversary, the Trust plans to publish two important documents this year.

One of these is the History of the Trust at present being written by Reg Martin and Richard Temple.

The other will be a reprint of the Trust's first public document "Town Planning and Historic Districts in Hunters Hill", first published in 1969 for submission to the Council and the State Government, and reprinted with many additions in 1970. This document has long been out of print but expresses better than anything else the plans and hopes for and its vision of Hunters Hill that the Trust had 20 years ago. Robert Baird is revising it for the Committee. □



TWENTY YEARS IN REVIEW

THE FIRST TEN YEARS IN REVIEW 1968-1978

(Reprinted from Hunters Hill Trust Journal, February 1978)

When the Hunters Hill Trust was formed in 1968, conservation and preservation were considered by many to be suspect and pinkish issues designed to rob property owners of their rights to taste and profit. With the National Trust (N.S.W.) and local bodies such as Beecroft-Cheltenham, Paddington, Balmain, Glebe and Annandale, the Hunters Hill Trust has spent ten arduous years persuading governments that preservation of architecture and environment are important government functions. Now, in name at least, we have support on government levels:

Federal: The National Heritage Commission
State: The Heritage Council
Municipal: The Townscape Advisory Committee

LOCAL BEGINNINGS

The Trust's 1969 submission to Hunters Hill Council included the strong suggestion that a committee composed of representative experts be set up to advise Council on building decisions affecting old buildings either directly or by proximity. While that provision was deleted from the Draft Town Plan by the State Planning Authority except as an option open to Council, Council has, to its great credit, established the Townscape Advisory Committee, composed of experts from such bodies as the Institute of Architects, the National Trust (but not, interestingly, the Hunters Hill Trust), and local representatives. While the Townscape Advisory Committee has been used infrequently and inconsistently in the past, there are signs that it may become a positive influence in the future.

NATIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The Australian Heritage Commission Act has recently provided for listing to be commenced by the National Heritage Commission of elements of the National Estate – defined as those "things we want to keep", places of "aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations as well as for the present community". The Hunters Hill Trust is at present filling out forms suggesting buildings and natural features for inclusion on the Register. The Commission has no powers of its own; demolition or development proposals affecting items on the Register will be referred, but even in the case of federal buildings demolition may take place if no feasible alternative can be found. The Heritage Commission sees its role as providing an information base and research, and it will not take part in arguments about the designation of areas unless requested to by a state. Any force it may have is persuasive – it could only watch when 85,000 acres were removed from Kosciusko National Park so that the ash trees might be cut.

STATE MOVE

During the second half of 1977 the State of N.S.W. established the Heritage Council, a group of experts from relevant bodies, empowered to list buildings and elements of the environment for preservation, with legislation in train for protection and enforcement. Such legislation, the Planning and Environment Commission foreshadowed, will be able to make the punishment fit the purse, might enable rate revaluations, loans and grants for repairs.

When and if these hopes are realised, a great many of the Hunter's Hill Trust's aims will have been achieved. Meanwhile, feature-building continues in Hunters Hill and Council must wait for a Town Plan from which similar protective provisions have been deleted. ◊

TWENTY YEARS IN REVIEW (Cont'd)

THE SECOND TEN YEARS IN REVIEW 1978-1988

LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION

The N.S.W. Heritage Act was passed in 1977, followed by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in 1979. Over 300 items in Hunter's Hill received interim protection through the Heritage Council to minimise the erosion being caused by delay in completing a town plan. The town plan, LEP 1, was finally gazetted in December 1982. The Ombudsman found no wrong-doing in its delay, but noted that completion of LEP 1 could have been higher among Council's priorities. The plan had taken thirteen years in bouncing back and forth between State and municipal authorities. Kelly's Bush was declared permanent open space in 1983, to be controlled by a Management Committee.

HERITAGE RECOGNITION

A heritage study was commissioned in 1982 and completed in 1984 by Meredith Walker and Associates; a further document on the implications of the study, and recommendations for action, was completed by Penny Pike in 1987. Hunters Hill Council has been considering draft provisions to give additional protection to the area as a whole, as the spot preservation in Clause 19 of LEP 1 has not always been sufficient. The Heritage Commission has listed Hunters Hill as a Conservation Area in its Register. Hunters Hill now has a Heritage Consultant, Penny Pike. The Environmental Heritage Advisory Committee (formerly the Townscape Advisory Committee) is due to be restructured so that its helpful advice to owners of heritage items on proposed changes may become more consistent in dealing with planning principles such as appropriate scale of development.

PROJECTS

Heritage of Hunters Hill (the third edition of **Old Buildings of Hunters Hill**) was published in October 1982. The Hunters Hill Trust has contributed a considerable sum of money towards various aspects of the Bicentennial project, Vienna and the Orchard. Submissions and representations have been made concerning areas such as the Parramatta River and foreshores, Clarke's Point, Boronia Park, urban bushland, urban consolidation and Mobil's plans for Pulpit Point.

THE NEXT TEN YEARS

While this past decade has seen the wished for establishment of protective legislation, the last few years have revealed a growing threat: the State Government now enacts regional legislation which tears holes through its own legislation. We have LEPs, but now we must fight so that they remain law in the face of State Policies such as urban consolidation. Mobil's recent permission to strew three hundred dwelling units on Pulpit Point in contravention of Hunters Hill planning provisions is an appalling example. Conserving the heritage and natural environment of Hunter's Hill will need our continuing dedication. □

HERITAGE CONSULTANT

Hunters Hill Council, at its meeting on Monday, 18th January, appointed Ms. Penny Pike to this position for an initial period of 12 months. Ms. Pike will advise Council and its officers, owners and applicants on all development proposals relating to environmental heritage.

Ms. Pike has been assisting the Council in the past 12 months on the development of its Heritage Study and Heritage LEP, proposed in the 1984 Study by Meredith Walker and Associates. Her work in this area will continue, along with the promotion of public awareness of the importance of the environmental heritage of Hunters Hill and field work research and studies.

The Hunters Hill Trust applauds the decision of the Hunters Hill Council to appoint a Heritage Consultant and assures Ms. Pike of any assistance they can give.

ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

People concerned with strengthening the voice of the environment to ensure proper and thoughtful protection of our natural and urban heritage see the need for Parliamentary representation. Three Independent Environment candidates – completely free of any political party – are standing for the Legislative Council in N.S.W., Mr. Milo Dunphy, Ms. Christine Townend and Mrs. Alice Oppen, well known in Hunters Hill as a long term member and past President of the Hunters Hill Trust.

Mr. Milo Dunphy, an architect, is Director of the Total Environment Centre and has battled for years to have wilderness areas protected in National Parks.

Ms. Christine Townend is a member of the N.S.W. State Government Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

Alice has served the environment movement and Hunters Hill for twenty years, including terms as President of the Sydney Harbour and Foreshores Committee and National Trust representative on the Hunters Hill Council's Environmental Heritage Advisory Committee for seven years. She recently spoke as a member of the panel at the Hunters Hill Trust – CRUSHH Public Meeting on the Mobil Pulpit Point Development Proposal.

NATIONAL TRUST – HOW IT ALL STARTED

Forty years after the launching of the National Trust Movement in Australia at a Public Meeting in Sydney on November 5th, 1947, a book about its formation and early days, has been written by Ivor Wyatt, son of the Trust's founder, Mrs. I. B. (Annie) Wyatt. The book's title is **'Ours in Trust: A Personal History of the National Trust of Australia (NSW)'** and it can be obtained from the National Trust Centre Shop, Observatory Hill at \$20 a copy.

Mrs. Wyatt's interest and involvement with conservation began with her establishment in 1927 of the Tree Lovers Civic League of Kuringgai which later had an associated group in Hunters Hill.

PULPIT POINT - TWO STEPS FORWARD, TEN STEPS BACK

The arrogance of the State Government grasping Pulpit Point planning controls from Hunters Hill Council has aroused local dismay and bitterness. Rejection of the carefully considered Council proposal in favour of a 'developer's delight' to overburden the site with approximately 300 dwelling units, is an unjust and environmentally disastrous decision.

The Department of Environment and Planning's excuse is URBAN CONSOLIDATION, a policy that has become its whingeing cry seeking to justify the sacrifice of heritage and natural areas in the urban environment. Rather than heeding widespread Council-opposition to Departmental quotas, the Minister has chosen to usurp local powers and in the process has attracted fierce opposition.

When ex-Premier Wran gave assurances of green foreshores to the people of Sydney, we believed it to be Government policy. Instead, here is another example of the State Government bending its conscience towards a development that will abuse the local heritage and regional scenic river environments.

Apart from denying residents of Hunters Hill and their locally elected representatives the traditional democratic right to decide on a suitable Plan for Pulpit Point, the Trust believes that the Department of Environment and Planning has acted hastily and irresponsibly, neglecting -

1. to accept the Council Plan thereby abiding by existing municipal development standards of density and height;
2. to recognise the importance of an independent and professional pollution study of the site;
3. to heed every major recommendation set out in the Conservation Study of Parramatta River and the Heritage Study of Hunters Hill, aimed at preserving the special character of each; and
4. its moral obligation to publicly clarify the risks and dangers arising from explosives-storage at Spectacle Island.

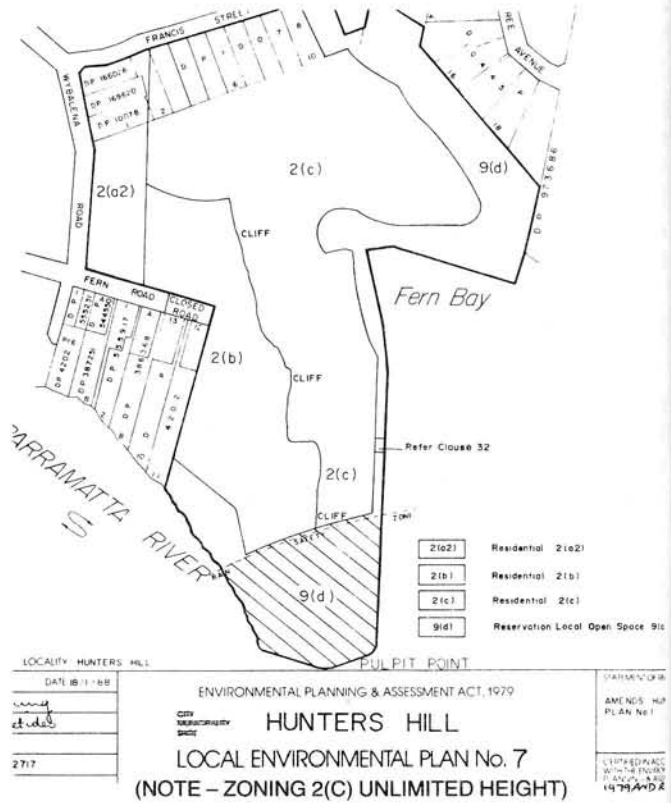
In practical, planning terms, the Trust considers the Department of Environment and Planning's gazetted LEP No. 7, to be ill-conceived because

Firstly, the extent and location of the 2(b) zone along the elevated exposed ridgeline, permitting flat and home unit development, demonstrates the Department's commitment to crammed development NOT Planning that will 'enhance the visual amenity of the area'. The Council Plan carefully limited this area to 2a(2) single dwellings. Not only is the Department's Plan clearly designed for developer satisfaction, the 2(b) zone is at least twice the size of those existing on LEP No. 1.

Secondly, more than a third of Pulpit Point is devoted to 2(c) zoning. Only three small 2(c) zones exist on LEP No. 1, the largest being the Housing Commission block, Blandville Court at Salter Street and Victoria Road. Density and height controls are to be at the discretion of the Department of Environment and Planning, thus exempting a developer from controls that affect the rest of the municipality.

Thirdly, the allocation of Open Space Area in the Departmental Plan is minimal. The Minister's press release claimed that it represents one third of the site. Examined carefully however, it consists of the very least space that could be expected at the southern prominent end, two steep bushland cliffs that will be mere strips of green in an overcrammed development and a meagre stretch of foreshore land in the centre of which a marina is to be allowed.

It is hard to imagine how such a Plan could originate from a Department supposedly concerned with planning control or environmental constraints.



A Report by Deputy Mayor Ross Williams, following a meeting with the Director of the Department, Gabrielle Kibble, clearly shows the seriousness of the situation at present as it was confirmed (information from Council Minutes, February 1988)

- * that the Minister will NOT review the LEP,
- * that the Department sought legal advice and is confident of the Minister's power in gazetted the Plan,
- * that one of the main objectives is to give effect to the Government's Urban Consolidation policy,
- * that the LEP sets maximum standards for development which in practice would be modified by urban design criteria,
- * that no useful purpose would be served by public exhibition.

The only cause for comfort would seem to lie in the assurance that a joint Departmental-Council Committee will prepare guidelines for the vast 2(c) zone and that an apology was made for 'the manner in which Council was informed of the Minister's decision', not as might have been expected, for ignoring the Council's carefully considered proposed Plan and refusing to consult with Council before hand.

The Trust condemns the Local Environment Plan No. 7 prepared for Pulpit Point by the Department of Environment and Planning and the Department's blatant rejection of local opinion and advice. We support the 113 dwelling proposal of Council and regard this as a maximum figure for an acceptable local density.

LE VÉSINET – HUNTERS HILL



L to R – M. Claude Gravelin (Fr. Aust. Ass.),
Mde. Jonemann, M. Jonemann (Mayor of Le Vésinet),
Helen Sheffer, M. Caesar (Councillor).

During December, 1987, the Trust's President Sam Sheffer and his wife Helen, while on a private visit to France, furthered the establishment of a special relationship between the two municipalities as described below. Initial contact was established by a former Trust President, Malcolm Lane Brown, through M. Claude Gravelin, a member of the French-Australian Association in Paris.

"I recently visited the Municipality of Le Vésinet in Paris. The Hunters Hill Council gave me a letter stating their desire to form a "jumilage" or twinning with Le Vésinet. Armed with this letter (and a bottle of Australian wine by courtesy of our Mayor, Sheila Swain) my wife and I were received very cordially by the Mayor of Le Vésinet, M. Alain Jonemann and his entourage. We were given a formal welcome, a magnificent lunch, gifts and much material concerning Le Vésinet as well as a conducted tour.

We were quite staggered at the beauty of their garden suburb dominated by man-made lakes and interconnecting small streams dotted with swans and ducks, beautiful parks, and a fascinating variety of bungalows dating from about 1860 to 1900. The Mayor is justly proud of Le Vésinet – it has been preserved intact since its conception, with the commercial area carefully controlled. It made me realise that Hunters Hill could and should be a much more beautiful place to live in.

Unfortunately, because Le Vésinet is already twinned with three other overseas municipalities, it has declined a formal "jumilage"; however it wants to have a special friendly relationship with Hunters Hill. This was formalised last week during the visit to Sydney of the Mayor and his wife, M. and Mme. Jonemann, and two other Councillors, M. James Veragen and Mr. Raymond Caesar, as part of a delegation for French Week. They visited Hunters Hill on February 23rd for the signing of articles of friendship and privileged relations between the two municipalities.

They were accompanied on Tuesday by M. André Giraud, the French Minister for Defence and his staff and a contingent of French media representatives. An invitation was extended to the Mayor and his party to attend the Trust's 20th Anniversary Party on February 27th."

LE VÉSINET

Le Vésinet is a garden suburb about 16 km northwest of Paris. It was established during the 1850s in a forest of the same name which had been a royal hunting ground during the *ancien régime*. In the middle of the 19th Century a number of bucolic middle-class villages were established in Europe and the U.S.A. as a refuge from the increasing growth and industrialisation of the cities and when the availability of cheap rail travel made it possible.

The first railroad in France, started in 1837, ran through the forest of Le Vésinet reducing the journey from Paris from 2 hours to 26 minutes.

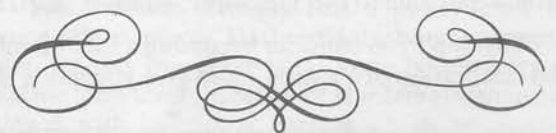
After the Revolution, most of this forest was owned by the State and an enterprising member of Emperor Napoleon's family, the Duc de Morny, assembled the real-estate for the project covering an area of 436 hectares or 1077 acres. Alphonse Pallu, a liberal visionary whose idealism was coupled with a definite capacity for making money, was appointed manager. He foresaw in this development the combination of the conveniences of a large city with the delights of the country. His Company assumed control in 1856 and by 1860 landscaping was completed and many houses built.

The country chalets, villas and cottages built in this beautiful park of grand trees with man-made lakes, rivers and cascades were owned by a wide range of people from very fashionable to simple bourgeoisie. The land was sold at low prices with 'easy payments'.

What was crucial to this development was the skill and vision of the landscape architects, particularly the Comte de Choulot who modelled his series of serpentines on that of London's Hyde Park. He maintained the existing hunting paths of the original forest widening some into boulevards. His major concern was space with trees and plantings interacting in it with light and shadow.

It is a place for walking, where one's eyes and feet are guided through and along wide long spaces called *coulées*. These swaths of lawn are free of traffic and make wonderful play areas connected by paths for walking and cycling. From a strictly economic viewpoint, these areas of green space were unprofitable but Pollu was not an ordinary speculator and he considered them essential to the overall concept.

This project, one of the first and most spectacular speculative ventures, was widely promoted and advertised at the time. As an example of controlled urbanism it was worth visiting then and is even more relevant as an example to be followed today.



ACTIVITIES

20th ANNIVERSARY

The Hunters Hill Trust wishes to warmly thank Trevor and Yvonne Wadland for their kindness and generosity in offering us their beautiful home 'Vailele' for our 20th Anniversary Party on Saturday, 27th February, 1988.

Our thanks also to the Activities Group, Alysoun Ryves, Diana Bryant, Judy Adamo, Jenny Lockyer, Prue Plowman and Marianne Goodes, for their imagination and hard work in arranging such a wonderful evening.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please note that the Annual General Meeting will be held in the Hunters Hill Town Hall on Wednesday, 4th May, 1988 from 7.45 – 11.00 p.m. This year supper will be served at the conclusion of the Meeting, during which the President, Sam Sheffer, will present a review of the year's activities.

The Constitution of the Trust provides for all members of the existing Committee to resign at the end of the year. Should you wish to nominate to join the Committee, please send details (name, address, signature) to the Honorary Secretary, P.O. Box 85, Hunters Hill, before April 13, 1988.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

The resignation of former Journal Editor and committee member, Mr. Hudson Shaw, is recorded with regret. The committee acknowledges his long and strong commitment to heritage and environment matters. Ms. Jenny Sansom has tendered her resignation from the committee and Ms. Kim Murray has joined us – thanks to all.

CORRESPONDENCE IN

- From the new Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Richardson, stating that, although several committees have suggested the introduction of tax incentives to encourage conservation of heritage properties, the Commonwealth Government has not considered the question. There is a current review of the Commonwealth's role in the conservation of the National Estate.
- From the N.S.W. Minister for Education, Mr. Cavalier, advising that the land constituting the southern side of Gladesville Hospital has been transferred to his Department. This site, when no longer used as a Hospital, will become a major educational complex, including the Sydney College of Arts and the City Art Institute and a maritime college. The Minister acknowledges the necessity for a Government commissioned conservation plan to assess the heritage significance of the present buildings and site.

VIENNA COTTAGE OPENING

Vienna Cottage at 38 Alexandra Street, with its adjoining Hillman Orchard, will be opened on Sunday, 29th May, 1988, at 11 a.m. This is one of the main features of the Hunters Hill Bicentennial Programme.

On that Sunday there will be a number of historic houses and buildings open in the Alexandra Street area including the Hillman cottages "Vienna" and "Redleaf", All Saints Church, the Garibaldi, the Public School, and the Congregational Church with a special exhibition of Douglass Baglin photographs in the hall. Carey Cottage (817 3643) and Alexandra's (816 3355) will be open for lunch for those who wish to make a day of it.

Repair work to "Vienna" is proceeding. At the moment, in spite of research, there is an absence of documentary information about its early interior furnishings. As a result the cottage will remain much the way it was when acquired by the National Trust, thereby retaining its feeling of age. Displays will demonstrate its early history and that of its occupants.

Anyone who would like to assist, particularly in relation to the opening, please contact Pam Chippendall (816 5870) or David Macdonald (work 816 2255).

TRUST MEMBERSHIP 1988-1989

MEMBERSHIP fees are due on March 1 each year.

Enclosed with this journal you will find a Membership Renewal Form. Please complete this form and return it as soon as possible to the Treasurer, Hunters Hill Trust.

Why don't you consider becoming a Life Member of the Hunters Hill Trust in 1988, the Bicentennial Year – join in the celebration of a nation – and give yourself a gift to last a lifetime!!