



Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

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“THE MEAT PACKERS”

A PERSONAL VIEW ON URBAN CONSOLIDATION BY VINCENT SERVENTY A.O.

Politicians never speak of their policies as meat packing, as that is too reminiscent of those horrific scenes on Tokyo trains where packers push the last passengers into an already crowded carriage. They call the crowding of cities Urban Consolidation. The proposed Pulpit Point high density, Balmain high density, Balmoral conversion of urban bushland into housing, and the considered re-zoning of more than thirty ‘surplus parkland sites’ in Lane Cove for housing, are all urban consolidation.

What drives those political riders who, like the **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**, are galloping us headlong towards megapolis?

The **first rider** would claim that big is beautiful. The belief that if a city of a million people is good, a city of two million is twice as good, and four million is four times as good, has an awful mathematical logic.

With hazy economics the politicians claim that a bigger market means more work, and therefore more money for all. In the Sydney Morning Herald of 26 August, 1988, economist Ross Gittins blew that myth into the planning dust bin, where I hope it will remain. His data came from the economic consultants to the Fitzgerald Committee, ignored by most politicians in the excitement of chasing the ‘white Australia’ hare. Sweden and Switzerland are only two of the countries that have achieved a high standard of living with a small population.

The **second rider** would claim that the bigger the city the greater the quality of life. Yet more than two thousand years ago the Greek City States, with populations in the tens of thousands and occasionally hundreds of thousands, developed a quality of life which has been the envy of the world ever since.

The prince of town planners, Canadian Lewis Mumford, showed many years ago that a city of a million people can offer universities, orchestras,

theatre, and the other items that make for civilised life. Tourists and the wealthy, not most of those who live there, love vast cities like London, Paris, Tokyo, New York, Buenos Aires and Mexico City. The tiny heart of such places does offer many treasures. But the heart plays little part in the lives of the vast majority who stay in their enclaves. They do not live ‘but survive’ in the words of poet Alex Hope.

The **third rider** would claim, as does every politician to whom I have spoken, that it is impossible to decentralise our cities. People flock to them because they like the big city life, they say. Country youngsters not only find city life more exciting, but there are jobs available. Cities should become more and more intellectually alive with all these bright young minds pouring in. It doesn’t work that way. A giant city is so vast and chaotic, it is no longer a community. The bright can no longer enliven the rest. City folk rub shoulders not minds with others!

Can the trend be reversed? A survey, some years ago, showed that 35% of young people would leave Sydney if they could find suitable work in smaller places. And what of the retired! Many move out of the cities to live in the smaller places where life is more pleasant. Decentralisation fails because politicians are lazy, and it takes effort to actively decentralise.

Here is a classic example from the Sydney Morning Herald. ‘BHP set to build \$160 million in Sydney’s west’. Under the headline was, ‘The Premier, Mr. Unsworth, is likely to give BHP the green light to build a modern \$160 million steel mini-mill in the western suburbs. The move will mean the creation of 200 jobs in Sydney at the expense of a total of 400 jobs in Newcastle and Port Kembla’.

Two other growth centres become smaller and Sydney bulges. Multiply that a thousand times, and it is easy to see why cities grow and grow and grow.

Continued on next page

PULPIT POINT

The constant noise of heavy trucks labouring through the narrow stone walled streets of Sydney's most beautiful heritage suburb has been a constant reminder of the alienation of nearly 10% of the peninsula by industry. So how exciting it now is that the tanks and the sheds, the wharf piers and piping of the Mobil Oil Company which has occupied the site for over 80 years, have been swept away by the demolisher to provide an uninterrupted view across Fern Bay.

The vexing question now facing Hunter's Hill Council is how to ensure the return of Sydney Harbour foreshore to public ownership while allowing a viable and appropriate residential development of low and medium density housing. Up till now they haven't had much luck. Planners in the State Government, perhaps unfamiliar with such radical concepts as a protected heritage area, torpedoed our modest LEP for 113 dwellings submitted on 17th December, 1987. The officials made up their own plan for Hunter's Hill, managing to squeeze 300 onto the same land.

It was under this zoning that the 13ha terminal was sold in May this year for \$70 million, the threat of court action having receded with the change of government in February. As anticipated, the planning process was returned to the Council who voted to increase the density slightly to 140, apparently enough for the Director of the Department of Planning to allow the plan on public exhibition.

Of all the land on Pulpit Point, the 1ha western tip is most controversial. Considered of great regional significance due to its relationship to the harbour and the Parramatta River, it was zoned 9d County open space. Virtually all headlands on the north side of the harbour from Manly to Gladesville are in public

ownership. Understandably, the Council was not anxious to purchase regional land at great cost to the ratepayers especially as it is in the Navy blast zone.

These days the Council remains split over the strategy needed to produce a 1990's part of our suburb which will have its own character but sit comfortably with the present mixture of Victorian and Edwardian houses in a garden setting. Dissension however, is genteel, and there's little disagreement over the quality standards which should apply. Although the Trust has always maintained that a Development Control Plan must be prepared at the same time as an LEP, the Council seems content at this stage to look over the shoulder of developer Sid Londish who has some good ideas for the site.

No doubt Council's consultant Michael Rolfe of Edwards Madigan Torzillo and Briggs, is preparing some controls. After all, the Point may be sold before and not after the fine architecture and imaginative planning are reality. The last sale is still subject to the lifting of health orders placed by the SPCC. The Council made a brave decision on 6th October, 1988 to stand up for the rights of its residents and question the current theory that, regardless of history or topography, Sydney is a great city but it needs to be more dense! At a special meeting it voted to base the new LEP on 117 dwellings — 36 single houses and 81 town houses. The population would be 320 people.

There will be more confrontation, court action, changes of plan and general disruption to Hunter's Hill as we fight to maintain its unique qualities. In the meantime, locals and developer alike may reflect on the legacy left them deep in the oily water at the bottom of the test holes on Pulpit Point.

"THE MEAT PACKERS" A PERSONAL VIEW ON URBAN CONSOLIDATION BY VINCENT SERVENTY A.O. — (Continued)

The **fourth rider** rarely makes a claim, since the motivation is plain greed. This is the group grimly described by Judith Wright as 'the great corporations whose bellies are never full'. As populations burgeon, land prices rise. It is easier to make a profit without any increase in managerial skill when you have a bigger market. While our expertise in every field except money fiddling declines, corporation bellies bulge. It is laziness and greed that is driving the horse.

Yet there is hope. When I began my own battle against those whose bellies are never full and whose activities were the destroyers of the environment, we were a small band. Today that small band has

grown to half a million voters around Australia, fighting to preserve or create a better way of life for all Australians, whether they are the 85% who live in urban areas or the 15% who live in the country and are the guardians of so much of our landscape beauty.

The Pulpit Points of Australia are not yet lost. The Battlers of Kelly's Bush in Hunters Hill showed what a determined group could do. We are learning new ways of reining in the four riders who are trying to make our cities grow larger and larger, until each one will rival those other civic obscenities, the 'great' cities of the world.

KELLY'S BUSH : A PROGRESS REPORT

Kelly's Bush covers 4.8 hectares of bushland on the lower reaches of the Parramatta River. It is the largest area of near natural bush on the Hunter's Hill peninsula.

Kelly's Bush is linked directly to Weil Park to the north, Nelson Parade and residential areas to the west, the Parramatta River to the south and residential areas and Woolwich Marina to the east.

In 1986 the Kelly's Bush Landscape and Management Plan Report was prepared for the Department of Environment and Planning (now the Department of Planning) under the guidance of an advisory committee, established under Section 22 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act of 1979. The report contained a detailed analysis of the site conditions, construction proposals and management guidelines for the future use of Kelly's Bush.

The underlying concept of the management plan for Kelly's Bush was to conserve the natural bush vegetation with its wildlife habitat, whilst providing for public recreation activities adjacent to and associated with the Parramatta River. In addition preservation of the historical context and preservation of Aboriginal sites were important aims.

The Management Plan broadly divided the site into two areas: The Bush and the Smelting Works Site.

THE BUSH

According to the guidelines the bush is to remain a low intensity, local use area. It is to be regenerated, with the method varying according to the degree of disturbance. A rational and minimal path system is to provide an efficient circulation network. Outlook points are to be incorporated to take advantage of views towards the City and the Parramatta River.

SMELTING WORKS SITE

The Smelting Works Site is to be developed as a high intensity, regional use area with an industrial theme. The development proposes three main areas: an information shelter, a foreshore walk and a central grassed area.

The information shelter is to take the form of the office which existed until 1971 and incorporate toilets and a small secure storage space. The surface is to be hard paved and provide a suitable area for permanent exhibitions of the history and ecology of the site. Paths are to lead to the smelter stack then up stairs cut in the rock face and through the bush. Signs are to identify plants and educational features.

The gravel foreshore walk is to run between the existing sandstone sea wall and a new sandstone retaining wall. A new wharf is to provide boat and ferry access.

Above the foreshore walk will be the central grassed area. This area is to be on fill, mounded to expose sandstone cut and to maximise views towards the Parramatta River. The grass and scattered groupings of trees are to be designed to provide a multi-use area, suitable for picnics, etc. There are to be no barbecues as they are provided at Clarke's Point.

The Management Guidelines set out a staging programme to complete the works. Firstly the native bushland was to be protected and made safe. Secondly the smelting works were to be made safe. Long term projects including the construction of an information and toilet shelter were to be completed in stage three and the fourth stage involved ongoing maintenance.

Documentation of the first stage of Landscape site works for Kelly's Bush were prepared by Travis Partners Pty. Ltd. in accordance with the Kelly's Bush Landscape and Management Plan Report.

This involved the following:

- Removal of rubbish from the site;
- Covering radioactive material on the site with crushed sandstone fill in order to bring the radiation level below acceptable safety standards, then mulching and planting over the fill with indigenous species;
- Clearing, mulching and planting heavily weed infested areas with indigenous species;
- Removal of weeds within a 1.0 metre zone of all paths;
- Fencing the Nelson Parade Boundary and incorporating a stile entry to restrict pedestrian access;
- Clearly but discreetly showing the main pedestrian access points from Nelson Parade and Alfred Street;
- Upgrading the main pedestrian access from Nelson Parade to Alfred Street, by filling depressions with crushed sandstone and introducing sandstone steps where required, and half buried logs to divert the drainage flow;
- Blocking existing tracks with branches to discourage access through them, thus encouraging revegetation of paths;
- Clearing the "old manager's house" site near the Alfred Street Entry to reveal well constructed sandstone retaining walls, steps and grottoes and enable users of the bushland to appreciate the panoramic views of the Parramatta River and city.

The contractors for the Kelly's Bush Project, Regal Landscapes Pty. Ltd., began work on site in June, 1988. They have at all times made an effort to minimize impact on the bushland areas whilst making the area safe and encouraging revegetation.

The work in Kelly's Bush will protect and enhance the bush whilst providing facilities for both local and regional use. It is hoped that Kelly's Bush will then become a positive addition to the open space system of the Parramatta River and Sydney.

This report was prepared by Travis Partners, the consultants who prepared THE MASTER PLAN FOR KELLY'S BUSH for the Kelly's Bush Management Committee.

BOOK REVIEW

CHALLENGE, The Marists in Colonial Australia, Father John Hosie, S.M., publishers Allen & Unwin, available from Villa Maria Bookshop, \$30.00.

The sweep of this book is much broader than the local presence of the French Marist Fathers in Hunters Hill, and it will appeal to those whose local history interests extend beyond the standard geographic limits, especially to those wishing to know more about the stresses and strains within the world of Sydney's religious politics. It makes absorbing reading.

Within Father Hosie's broad historic perspective is the story of the South Sea missions for which the Fathers were responsible. The primary purpose of the Villa Maria mission house was to provide a place of administration and recuperation for their missionaries. Supply needs associated with the Villa Maria mission were attended to, for many years, by Didier Joubert and it is possible to see his purchase of Mary Reiby's large landholding here as his wish to be close by. The shipping of regular provisions to the Marists' island missions also connected with the lucrative South Pacific trade route including the expanding French Government possessions of Tahiti and Noumea.

The struggle behind the Marists' acceptance by the Irish dominated Catholic Church in Sydney is fully dealt with and is fascinating, and early chapters look at the initial establishment of the Order in New Zealand and the hazards of Island mission work. The characters of Father Pompallier, responsible for 'chaos in Auckland', and the antagonistic Archbishop Polding feature most prominently.

Also present are local identities involved in various incidents — the French Consul Louis Sentis, J. K. Heydon the editor of *Freemans Journal* and close friends of the Marists, Eyre Ellis and Thomas Makinson.

Among its many illustrations are early scenes of Hunters Hill, on the cover a painting of the first Villa Maria site on an unreclaimed Tarban Creek, as it must have looked when it was still Thomas Stubbs' farm with a collection of small buildings and cultivated plots. A late 19th century photograph shows a most flourishing and extensive vineyard at the corner of Gladesville Road and Mary Street. Perhaps a good case for a local garden restoration?

The emergence of the Marist teaching role in Sydney, at a time when education standards were becoming a political issue, even an embarrassment, are discussed in full. In 1859 it was said, 'The only house of instruction in the diocese is the little house of studies (Lyndhurst), as wretched as can be'.

Father Hosie's history of the Marists is highly recommended for its careful research of the first French Order to become actively involved in the religious, missionary and educational life of Sydney and the South Pacific.

ROS MAGUIRE

NEW GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Hunter's Hill Council has introduced a new set of guidelines for Development Applications. These list the issues that are taken into account in considering developments, including the impact that is likely on the environment. A copy of these guidelines is inserted in this issue of the Journal.

TRAFFIC PROBLEMS IN WOOLWICH AND HUNTER'S HILL

Since the new Council was elected it has given particular attention to the traffic problems of the Municipality. The Public Transport and Traffic Advisory Committee of Council has considered local traffic issues in an ordered and systematic manner, aware that most traffic problems in Hunter's Hill are due to causes out of our making and beyond our direct control.

In Sydney there has been a 100% increase in the number of vehicles using the roads since 1971. These cars are driving faster and are using residential back streets more than ever before. Hunter's Hill in particular appears to be suffering an increase in through traffic since the increase in the Harbour Bridge toll. Nevertheless, the challenge for this Council is to ameliorate the effect of these changes as they influence the people of Hunter's Hill.

The Council's 1984 Traffic Study divided the Municipality into nine separate zones. Area One covers the Hunter's Hill-Woolwich peninsula to the east of the freeway, Council has recognised that the major problem in that area remains the exit from the peninsula at Church Street especially in the morning peak time. The D.M.R. has indicated that the lights are phased as advantageously as possible, for traffic leaving the peninsula, the green time being limited by the bulk of traffic using the intersection coming from Ryde Road. As there is no other possible exit from the peninsula, Council has considered a plan to realign Church Street between Herberton Avenue and the Overpass so as to increase the number of lanes vehicles may use. The plan involves widening the road into the footpath on both sides of Church Street so as to provide three lanes on the southern side, two of

which will enable left hand turn onto the ramp leading into the city thereby facilitating the flow of traffic and lessening delays. Completion of this work is, however, dependent upon the Pulpit Point redevelopment progressing.

The Mobil site development will increase traffic volumes in the streets between the Overpass and Wybalena Road. A round-about has been planned for the Wybalena/Woolwich Road intersection so as to reduce the speed of traffic and facilitate safe exit for traffic leaving Wybalena Road.

The other area of concern in Woolwich is the parking in the streets around Valentia Street Wharf. The recent Government decision to sell Cockatoo Island probably for residential unit development will signal an end to the Cockatoo Island traffic in Woolwich. It is likely, however, that any reduction in traffic caused by this change would be replaced by additional commuter traffic. All city commuter traffic routes in the Municipality, including Gladesville Wharf and the Gladesville shops, have experienced an increase in commuter parking in the last few years. It is unlikely that this pressure will be reduced at Valentia Street Wharf.

Though Council is limited in what it can do by outside forces and financial constraints, it is believed that the measures outlined will help solve traffic problems on the peninsula.

Alderman JOHN WATKINS
Vice-Chairman Public Transport
and Traffic Advisory Committee

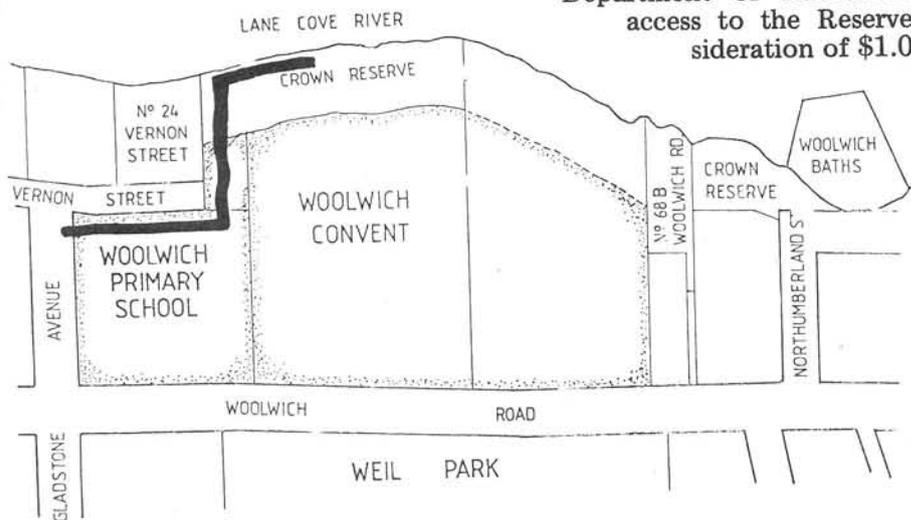
(An account of traffic problems in the west of the Municipality will appear in the next issue.)

WOOLWICH FORESHORE PATH

On July 30th, Mayor Sheila Swain opened the Woolwich Foreshore path. The trail meanders — sometimes quite steeply — from Gladstone Avenue to the Lane Cove River foreshore.

The path had been conceived by Graham Lennan shortly after he came to Woolwich Primary School as Principal in 1979. He saw that the unused and inaccessible land at the rear of the school playground — partly owned by the Department of Education, the remainder by the Department of Lands — would be valuable as a nature reserve for pupils and as a passive recreation area for the public.

Hunters Hill Council, at this time, had no legal means of access to the Crown Land, but in 1984 the Department of Education granted Council an easement for access to the Reserve through its property "for a consideration of \$1.00".



The project was granted \$2,000 by the Hunters Hill Bicentennial Committee, and Council voted \$3,000 and undertook construction. The task entailed the removal of considerable accumulated rubbish, and the construction of wooden steps. The path incorporated some old stone steps which were found on the site. Two tables were installed near the water's edge, secluded from each other by bush.



You are invited to
THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST

Christmas Lunch

on

SUNDAY, 20th NOVEMBER, 1988
 at 12.30 p.m.

*in the Upstairs Dining Room,
 Woolwich Pier Hotel, Gale Street, Woolwich*

Cost of Lunch:
\$20.00 Member \$25.00 Non-Member

Bookings:
Anne McNally — 817 2035
Jenny Lockyer — 816 4922

*A General Meeting will precede the
 Lunch at 12 noon.*



GLADESVILLE HOSPITAL AND WOOLWICH PUBLIC SCHOOL

According to press reports (20/9/88) a Ministerial Committee has recommended changes to psychiatric care in New South Wales. Among the changes is the retention of the nine major psychiatric hospitals which had been ear-marked for closure by the former Labor government. These will now be upgraded and in some cases extended. One of the hospitals listed is Gladesville Hospital. Mr. Collins also said that parcels of surplus or unused land surrounding some hospitals, including Rydalmere and possibly Gladesville, would be sold to help fund the upgrading.

The Sydney Morning Herald of 16 September listed surplus land and properties which could be sold by the Government over the next four years — Gladesville Hospital was among those listed, with an estimated value of \$50 million.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Education, Dr. Metherell, has indicated that he will close 15 schools in the inner-city and the North Shore. Among those listed is Woolwich Primary School, which is threatened with closure at the end of 1989. This will be three years short of its centenary.

The President of the Woolwich Parents and Citizens Association, Peter Pinson, said that this family-like school was nominated for closure without any consultation with parents. He reflected that the forced closure would represent another example of the flawed "big is beautiful" mentality which Vincent Serventy condemned on Page 1.

The main Woolwich building, in stone and brick, dates back to 1892 and is a listed Heritage item. The Trust will seek to ensure the preservation of this building, and the historic buildings at Gladesville Hospital.

THE GREAT NORTH WALK

The Opening of this walk was postponed from 24th September to 29th October, 1988. Maps and brochures were to be available from this date from the Department of Lands, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney, and from the Hunter's Hill Council. Council has erected posts in various streets indicating routes which can be taken through Hunter's Hill.

IN COUNCIL

STONE WALLS:

At their meeting of Monday, 22nd August, 1988, Council acknowledged the importance of stone walls in the streetscapes of Hunter's Hill. They resolved to include all the stone walls in the Municipality which are identified on the Council map titled Stone Walls on the schedule of items of environmental heritage under Clause 19 of Hunter's Hill Local Environment Plan No.1.

Copies of this map were made available for viewing at the Council offices between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on weekdays.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR PLANNING AND CONSERVATION:

At the same meeting, Council re-affirmed the aims and objectives which guided their day-to-day planning and conservation decisions. These aims entailed;

- (a) conserving the environmental heritage significance, townscape, riverscape and tree covered environment of the Municipality through regulation of land, buildings and structures;
- (b) retaining specific evidence of the environmental heritage of the Municipality through conservation of items of environmental heritage;
- (c) increasing the area and standard of public space in the Municipality;
- (d) improving public access to the shores of the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers;
- (e) providing off-street parking facilities at or near shopping centres of Boronia Park, Gladesville and Hunter's Hill; and
- (f) providing or assisting in the provision of public amenities and support services consistent with the development of the area.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Trust has written to the Hon. John Dowd, Member for Lane Cove, concerning the Army land at Woolwich (know as "The Horse Paddock") and its future use. In part, the letter said that the land in its present state is an eyesore and completely ruins a very unique and picturesque part of the harbour. The ideal situation would be that this land become part of Clarke's Point. Mr. Wran, when he was Premier, promised that harbour foreshore land occupied by the Defence Services would be returned to the people of Sydney and the State generally. Army activities are disturbing the residents of Woolwich and Hunters Hill, and the Trust has appealed to Mr. Dowd to see what can be done to rectify this situation and to preserve the beauty and uniqueness of a very lovely suburb before it is too late to counter any permanent damage that may result from the Army's activities.

PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available from the Hunter's Hill Town Hall (lower floor):

'Rising Damp and its Treatment', Technical Information Sheet 1 (4 pages).

'Masonry Renovation', Technical Information Sheet 10 (10 pages).

'Upgrading the Fire Resistance of Timber Panelled Doors', Technical Information Sheet 3 (4 pages).

All these are published by the Heritage Council of New South Wales.

Leaflets entitled 'What is Heritage' (Department of Planning H87/15) and 'Vital Considerations Before Restoring an Old House' (National Trust Information Sheet 5/02) are also available.