



# Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

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## HUNTERS HILL HERITAGE STUDY LAUNCHED

Speech by Mayor Sheila Swain, A.M.  
on November 18, 1988

I have some diffidence in standing before you today, launching the Hunters Hill Heritage Study. I am not an historian, planner or architect. I do not live in an historic house. I have made no systematic study of heritage matters. My knowledge and understanding are based purely on my wrestling with the practical problems of urban conservation over the past 17 years.

When I was elected to Council in 1971 we were still developing our first town plan. Our difficulty was that we saw almost unanimously that we were dealing with a suburb unique in New South Wales, if not in Australia, and yet the thrust of the State legislation was towards standardisation of planning instruments. We spent many long nights in our attempts to build into our scheme controls that would preserve the special qualities of Hunters Hill and at the same time meet our statutory requirements and it took some years before our L.E.P. No.1 was finally gazetted in 1982.

One important element in that scheme was the establishment of what was then known as the Townscape Advisory Committee. However, there was a reluctance on the part of several aldermen to use this Committee. They saw it as an abdication of power to refer these heritage matters to a group of "outsiders". Further the Committee consisted largely of architects, a reflection of the view of many that Hunters Hill was historically important only because of the many historic houses within its precincts, and that if these individual houses – or rather their facades – were retained then we would be doing our duty by our lovely old suburb.

Over the years, however, it has become almost automatic that any application for any change to any of the items listed under clause 19 be referred to this Committee, which is now known as the Environmental Heritage Advisory Committee. In fact, more recently, Council has resolved to refer to the Committee other items which may have an impact on the significance of heritage items.

It is the broadening of the functions and composition of this Committee, the undertaking of the Heritage Study by Meredith Walker and Associates, and the appointment of Ms. Penelope Pike as Heritage Consultant that has helped us articulate more precisely what we mean by the heritage of Hunters Hill.

Hunters Hill is not a collection of quaint, pretty, old-fashioned houses on a pretty peninsula. It is the character of the whole neighbourhood which is its history. And history is what was, not what we think it was, or would like it to have been. Actually, most buildings in the Municipality were constructed between 1919 and 1961. However, the character of the area does result largely from those houses built between 1860 and 1920. Many of these were large villa estates whose subsequent subdivisions have led to a wide range in the size and shape of allotments, a variety of building lines and a wide range of house styles.

The texture of the Municipality is also derived from the forms of the buildings, with pitched roofs, chimneys, gables, verandahs, relatively little fenestration and their stone walls and timber fences. The scale is domestic, and the colours soft – greys, and pinks and greens. And the suburb is heavily treed both in the gardens and the streets and there are large areas of bushland.

This is the heritage of which we are guardians. The first large threat to the maintenance of the integrity of our suburb came with the opening of the Gladesville Bridge in 1966. At this stage cars had become a conventional necessity to most families so our suburb came within striking distance of the Central Business District. Developers moved in and one saw almost immediately the destruction of practically a complete streetscape in Church Street. So was born the Hunters Hill Trust and under the careful tutelage of the late David Saunders, they proceeded to press Council to institute protective devices for the suburb.

As a result, we have managed to preserve much of the character and charm of Hunters Hill. But that leads to a paradox. The more we preserve the character and charm of the Municipality, the more attractive it becomes and so the more expensive the land becomes. And this tends to force out the less affluent who through neglect, ignorance or lack of money, have done more to preserve the past than those who move in and love the place to death.

They love the treed look – as long as their view is not blocked by a tree, or the leaves litter the porch. They love their old-fashioned cottage – as long as they can have a large entertainment area, family room, rumpus room, music room, study, studio and parent's retreat. They love

Continued on next page

the space around the house – as long as they can squeeze in a tennis court and swimming pool, thus compressing their additions into a bulky, overwhelming extension on the back, side or top of their house. They love the narrow winding streets – as long as they can have a four or five car garage to which they can have access through a break in their stone wall – which they dearly love.

Philip Venning, the Secretary of the Society for Preservation of Ancient Buildings in the United Kingdom, had this to say in a recent article:

*"In Britain tens of thousands of wonderful traditional buildings have been permanently ruined in the last twenty years. Not by property developers, road builders, or any of the other enemies of the architectural heritage, but by people who sincerely believe they are its friends. They have poured love, commitment, hours of time and much too much money, into restoring their treasured old houses; and the tragedy is that in many cases the result has been a travesty. Houses that have taken hundreds of years to evolve a unique character have been so drastically over-restored that they end up at best indistinguishable from a modern replica, at worst something so bogus that it makes you want to cry."* (Historic Environment, Vol.6 No.3, 1988)

This is why today we have invited you – the planners, architects and property salesmen of Hunters Hill – to this launch. We believe that you hold the future of this suburb

in your hands. You are the people who have the greatest opportunity for advising property owners and potential owners of the best way to maintain the integrity of Hunters Hill. It not only makes sense financially of course, it also acknowledges that we all have responsibility to respect the history of Hunters Hill. That we are custodians of a great heritage – the first true suburb in Australia. If we acknowledge that responsibility then perhaps the requirements of our planning department may not seem so tedious and irksome.

I should now like to thank Meredith and her associates for the many hours of meticulous and dedicated work they put into the preparation of this report; to our Town Planner, Mr. Ken Litting for his cheerful acceptance of the extra burdens that resulted from Council's adoption of our new direction; to Ms. Penny Pike for her great contribution as our Heritage Consultant, and to the members of our Environmental Heritage Advisory Committee, who sit here in our Council Chamber, sometimes until the early hours of the morning, helping us to reconcile the needs of the applicant with the needs of the community.

Together I believe we can make conservation history in Hunters Hill.

(Copies of the Heritage Study (1984) are available from Hunters Hill Council for \$20 each.)

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## PULPIT POINT UPDATE

Residents of Hunters Hill are fortunate in having regular ferry services to the city. The 8.05 a.m. from Gladesville Wharf offers the opportunity of viewing Pulpit Point, stripped for action and looking much like the surrounds of Abu Simbel. The Council is hoping to avoid a flood of similar proportions by diverting and channelling the energies of the 'New Villagers' with its Development Control Plan No.4. We are at this stage of redevelopment, following the amicable resolution of the rezoning into three roughly equal parts – single housing on the ridge, attached houses and apartments below the cliff and open space around the harbourside perimeter. There will be less than 130 houses in all, allowed under the new LEP No.11.

What are the aims and objectives of the controls under DCP No.4? The first and most important is to control the development of the subject land to ensure that it is compatible with the established character of Hunters Hill, distinguished by free standing houses set in their own gardens and dominated by trees. Other important controls are:

- ☆ Two storey height limit above original ground level.
- ☆ Introduction of building height planes at 30° and 45° to further control height and let in the sun.
- ☆ Compatible bulk of structures with existing buildings in Hunters Hill. This will help to bridge the gap between money and taste when it comes to living in the biggest and the best.

- ☆ Use of materials such as sandstone, Federation brick, slate and terracotta.
- ☆ Tree cover is to be established to existing height along the ridge line.
- ☆ Parramatta River design guidelines are to be incorporated into the landscape design.
- ☆ A landscape master plan will need to be approved by Council before any building is started.
- ☆ No development of the marked bushland area.
- ☆ All carparking is to be underground or in buildings.
- ☆ There is to be an 8 metre wide view axis from Fern Road to the Harbour Bridge.

Finally there are tight restrictions on building over any contaminated areas.

The Hunters Hill Trust is keeping in touch with the Council and the developer – Comrealty – during this next phase of development. The magnitude of the cleaning up of the waste areas has slowed down the project. However, thought is now being given to the designing of all buildings on the site. The relationships between the dwellings are complex and careful attention to this problem now would shorten the overall construction time. This could be an opportunity for the architecture of Hunters Hill to improve and not rely on past glory alone. Let's hope Sir Londish wants to leave something of real value to his grandchildren, and so provide Sydney with a foreshore development that will stand the test of time and complement the heritage of Hunters Hill.

# FROM THE HERITAGE CONSULTANT

As mentioned by Mayor Sheila Swain, the Hunters Hill Heritage Study undertaken by Meredith Walker and Associates in 1983/84 has now been published and is available from the Council for \$20. For anyone interested in the developmental history of Hunters Hill – the history of its built form, rather than its social history, this is a purchase well worth making. The Study includes selected subdivision plans, a map of all the early wharves in the Municipality, and subdivision maps of each historical period. These maps were compiled from Meredith's search of all the Hunters Hill subdivision maps at the Mitchell Library and at the State Archives Office.

Full size copies of the maps published in the Study, together with the Water Board plans of the 1920-1930s (showing the outline of each house on its block) are now hanging in a vertiplan cabinet at Council's Health and Building counter and are available for reference by anyone wishing to search their own land or any other land in the Municipality.

To coincide with the launching of the Heritage Study, Ryde Library, in conjunction with Hunters Hill Council, published a bibliography of books on conservation. This is available free of charge at the Council Office, and most of the books are available at or through the Gladesville Branch Library. There was an exhibition of these books at the Gladesville Library in the two months leading up to Christmas.

Have you seen the excellent little brochure of self guided historic and bushland walks put out by Ryde

Library? These are also now available at the Council Office.

Recently Council added to its schedule of heritage items a small timber cottage, two large fig trees, and many of the stone walls in the Municipality. All these stone walls are shown on a map hanging in the vertiplan cabinet.

Does anyone have any photographs of buildings, or street scenes of Hunters Hill ten or more years old? If you could find time to search through the family albums I would be most grateful. They don't have to be photographs specifically of buildings. Quite often the family is grouped in front of the fence, or on the front verandah, and there in the background are all the details of roof material, chimney, verandah supports and valance, fence, hedge necessary for an accurate restoration. This documentary evidence is of inestimable value in retaining and recovering the rich heritage of Hunters Hill. Please let me know if you have any such photographs. With permission, Council would copy and return any that would be useful for its records on the evolution of the built form of Hunters Hill.

Have you seen the early photograph of Alexandra Street lent by Adrienne Ryan for the Heritage Exhibition, and still on display in Council's foyer? Alexandra Street then boasted an avenue of silky oaks, and a regiment of high timber picket fences.

PENELOPE PIKE, Heritage Consultant  
Hunters Hill Council

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## KELLY'S BUSH

The N.S.W. Local Government and Planning Minister, Mr. David Hay, launched Stage 2 of the regeneration programme for Kelly's Bush on Wednesday, 11th January. Work will also include the construction of the Alfred Street entry, steps and paths. \$100,000 has been allocated for this purpose.

Representatives of the Hunters Hill Council, Department of Planning, Travis and Partners, Regal Landscapes, Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (Ms. Prudence Tucker), The Battlers for Kelly's Bush (Mrs. Trudi Kallir), Hunters Hill Trust (Sam Sheffer) and the Historical Society (John Merrington) were in attendance.

The Trust applauds the work done by Prudence Tucker and her organisation. It would be an advantage to the Trust and Hunters Hill if some of its members were able to learn the Bradley method of bush regeneration from them.

It remains to be seen who will maintain Kelly's Bush when the State Government has completed its work.

### Historical Note

The name, Kelly's Bush, dates from 1892, when Mr. T. H. Kelly founded the Sydney Smelting Co. on two acres of waterfront land with ten acres as 'open space'.

In 1956, seven acres of this 'open space' was purchased by the Hunters Hill Council and Cumberland County Council, becoming Weil Park. With the removal of the Smelting Co. in June 1967, the whole twelve acres became the focus of a development scheme and ensuing battle between the developers, varying levels of Government, local citizens and wider supporters. This culminated in September 1970 in the formation of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush, who gained strong Trade Union 'Green-Ban' support, in the middle of 1971. Three years later, the weight of local and wider opposition resulted in the developers' agreement to sell the land to Hunters Hill Council.

In 1977, the State Government confirmed that there would be no development at Kelly's Bush and finally, on the 4th September, 1983 (13 years of protest and conflict) that Kelly's Bush would be assigned for permanent public access.

1988 has seen the initial repair, restoration and regeneration in Stages 1 and 2, and hopefully, by the centenary of Kelly's Bush in 1992, the work will be finished.



## OBITUARY: WOOLWICH PUBLIC SCHOOL 1892-1989



At 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 31st, 1989, pupils left Woolwich P.S. for the last time. Terminating Principal Fran McSullea ceremonially gave each one a school badge as a memento of his/her association with the school. State Education Minister Dr. Terry Metherell's stated determination to close the school at the end of the year had become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* of July 8th, 1988, the Deputy Director of Education, Mr. Brian Gillett, was quoted as assuring parents that schools would not close unless parents agreed. He pledged that the Department would consult widely with parents and teachers before taking such drastic action. Woolwich School parents were therefore shocked to read in a local newspaper, three months later, that their school would be closed. Peter Pinson, President of the Woolwich Parents' and Citizens' Association, described this as "consultation by press release".

Senior Departmental officers conceded that the closure had no educational justification. The fifteen school sites were to be sold, and the proceeds used to build schools in developing areas in the west. The *Northern Herald* estimated that the eight northern suburbs sites might realize between \$51.3 and \$60.3 million, suggesting about \$8 million for the Woolwich site.

Speaking on October 31st, 1988, at a meeting of representatives of the fifteen schools targeted for closure, the previous Labor Minister for Education, Mr. Rodney Cavalier, described the closures as unnecessary. The schools which were supposed to be funded by the sales had already been planned in his time as Minister, he said, and would have been funded from "general taxation income".

Parents of the school were dismayed that the closures would deny the opportunity of choice – between small and

large schools. Mrs. Alysoun Ryves described Woolwich as providing a "friendly family type of environment".

Woolwich parents had long campaigned for, and welcomed, Dr. Metherell's decision to relax school admission boundaries. Previously, the school had been required to reject enrolments from children who lived "out of area". Unfortunately this change, coming roughly simultaneously with the closure direction, did not have the opportunity to allow school enrolments to rise.

Parents pointed to additional pupils anticipated through the Pulpit Point development, and from Cockatoo Island, assuming it is residentially developed. Together, these estates would produce more children than Hunters Hill P.S. could hope to cope with. A Departmental Inspector said – off the record – that if and when these developments occurred, second storeys would be built on Hunters Hill classrooms. Playground use could be rostered.

On returning from his European visit over the Christmas recess, Dr. Metherell said that 1989 would be a year of greater consultation. Other small schools fearing closure hope this is true. For Woolwich, it is too late.

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The main building of Woolwich Public School was built in 1892. Its entrance surround is stone. Its walls are brick with passages of stone ornamentation. It has verandahs on two sides. After its closure, Mrs. McSullea discovered an architectural novelty: the verandah railings were designed to be raised and be temporarily removed, presumably to allow theatrical or musical performances to be performed using the verandah as a stage, with spectators sitting below.

The school's archives are to be stored at Hunters Hill Primary School, where they would be available for historical research.

## TRAFFIC PROBLEMS WEST OF THE OVERPASS

The roads of the Municipality west of the Overpass are suffering the traffic problems of speed and increased volume common to most inner-city suburbs. The major cause has been the vast increase in vehicle numbers throughout Sydney in recent years. This great pressure on our roads has been exacerbated in Hunters Hill by the bottleneck caused by the Gladesville Bridge. Recent price hikes in the Harbour Bridge toll have caused further increases in the volume of through traffic using the roads in the Municipality to gain access to the Gladesville Bridge.

These factors have led to far more traffic using Pittwater and Ryde Roads. Council policy is to channel through traffic onto these main roads so as to protect the amenity of residential streets. Unfortunately, the Overpass is a major traffic blockage that immediately causes pressure on local roads as drivers attempt short cuts by filtering through residential streets.

The Boronia Park area was identified in several reports as bearing the brunt of this through traffic. The problems of traffic volume and speed led to the institution of the Local Area Traffic Management Scheme. Its combination of speed humps, thresholds and roundabouts has already been successful in solving the major traffic problems of that area.

More recently the streets around St. Joseph's College have suffered an increase in through traffic. Council has decided on several measures to remedy that problem including realignment of the Mary Street/Ryde Road intersection, changes to the Stop signs in Mark Street and construction of traffic control devices in the area.

The other area of traffic congestion in the Municipality concerns the streets adjacent to the Gladesville Shopping Centre. Those residential streets have suffered high volumes of traffic, heavy parking and the intrusion of large service trucks for many years. Those problems would be intolerable when the shopping centre development occurs. In consultation with the residents, Council has planned several measures including road closures and traffic control devices to go ahead when the Flagstaff development gets underway.

There are many other traffic issues that have concerned Council recently. Egress from the Bonnefin Road area remains a problem but it appears that Council is powerless to remedy the problem alone. Approaches to the Minister for Transport have as yet proved fruitless. The need for traffic control devices in Mark Street to protect school students has been recognised and they have been budgeted for in 1989. Finally, work at Manning Road and Victoria Road intersection is planned for this year.

In all deliberations on traffic matters Council is limited by at least two considerations. First is that there are more traffic facilities needed in Hunters Hill than Council is financially able to cope with in the short term. Compromises are forced on us by rigid financial constraints. Second is that traffic problems are not solved by simply shifting them from one street to the next. These two considerations cannot be denied. Unfortunately, at times, they lead to decisions that disappoint residents. It is important to note, however, that residents always have access to the Public Transport and Traffic Advisory

Committee via citizen representatives or to individual aldermen who are always willing to hear your concerns and raise them in Council.

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

February 12, 1989

*(An account of the traffic problems on the Hunters Hill peninsula appeared in our previous issue).*

## HUNTERS HILL PRINT

A new print of splendid watercolours of Hunters Hill is now available for purchase. This colour print features a number of significant buildings including the Garibaldi, St. Claire, Vienna Cottage, Figtree House and Villa Maria Church.

Each print of this limited edition is numbered and signed by the artist, Ulf Kaiser.

These watercolours have attracted enthusiastic acclaim. Ken Done described Ulf Kaiser as having "a great deal of talent. In this print of Hunters Hill he brings to the watercolours the soul and spirit of the buildings and their surroundings". Phillip Adams said "I am lost in admiration for his skill".

All proceeds go to the Vienna Cottage Appeal.

This collector's item is available for inspection and purchase at Vienna Cottage, 38 Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sundays, or by order at 816 2255. Cost \$50.

Prints are also available at Final Finish Framing, 1a Ryde Road, Hunters Hill (816 2304), where framing can be arranged for a special price.

## CITIZEN OF THE YEAR PHILIP JENKYN

The Hunters Hill Trust committee, members and supporters all warmly congratulate fellow member, Philip Jenkyn on being named Hunters Hill Council Citizen of the Year. Philip has been a strong supporter of the Trust's principles in all his work in and for the community and during his years on Council. We are delighted to join this public acknowledgement of his long-standing and enthusiastic public commitment and service.

# ACTIVITIES

## HUNTERS HILL TRUST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held in Hunters Hill Town Hall on Wednesday evening, 3rd May 1989 at 7.45 p.m. A revised Constitution will be presented to the meeting for approval. Changes proposed include removal of Clause 12, restricting eligibility of Trust Committee membership to residents or ratepayers of the Municipality.

Nominations for all positions on the Committee should reach the Secretary two weeks before the meeting.

The proceedings will include a guest speaker and supper.

## MORE EXCITING HAPPENINGS FOR 'VIENNA'

18th – 19th MARCH, 1989 – 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**MINIATURE QUILT EXHIBITION**  
by the Hunters Hill Quilters at Vienna Cottage, 38 Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill.  
Admission: \$3.00 at the door.

**SUNDAY, 28th MAY, 1989 – To celebrate the First Anniversary of the Opening of 'Vienna'**

### ROOMS ON VIEW

A fascinating 'room crawl' across the peninsula – in these interiors you will find much to charm the eye and stimulate the imagination.

For Tickets at \$10 each contact Pam Chippendall, 2 Aspinall Place, Woolwich, 2110 (816 5870).



## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members, present and prospective, are reminded that the annual subscription falls due on March 1st each year. Renewal/Membership forms are included in this copy of the Journal and we would appreciate an early reply.

### GRADES:

Single	\$5.00	Family	\$ 10.00
Pensioners/Students	\$1.00	Life	\$100.00

## GENERAL MEETING AND CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Hunters Hill Trust celebrated the end of its twentieth year with a Christmas Lunch in the function area of the Woolwich Pier Hotel on Sunday, 20th November. Fifty members and friends attended the lunch which was preceded by a General Meeting.

The Trust would like to thank the Management of the Woolwich Pier Hotel for its assistance in arranging this function in such pleasant surroundings and for their support.

## FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION

### *"Hunter's Hill: Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb"*

This history, prepared with financial assistance from the Hunters Hill Council as a Bicentennial Project, will be published in mid-1989 by the David Ell Press.

The work of two well-known Trust members, it is written by Dr. Beverley Sherry and is richly illustrated with colour photographs by Douglass Baglin.

The recommended retail price will be \$49.95. HOWEVER, this book will be offered to TRUST MEMBERS at a SPECIAL PRICE of \$39.95 – a saving of \$10. More information in the next Journal.