

# Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

Volume XVIII No. 3

NOVEMBER, 1989

ISSN 0310-0111

## **"SPLENDID" NEW ACCOUNT OF AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB**

**Tom Farrell Reviews**

**"THE NEW HISTORY OF HUNTER'S HILL"**

**By Beverley Sherry and Douglass Baglin.**

**"HUNTER'S HILL: AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB".**

Written by Dr. Beverley Sherry with photographs by Douglass Baglin. 134 pp. Hardback.

Designed by Deborah Brash, published by David Ell Press. Printed in Hong Kong.

Recommended retail price \$49.95.

This splendid book is not only the best book ever produced about Hunter's Hill, it is probably the finest ever produced about any Australian suburb, or, for that matter, town or city.

Beverley Sherry's text and Douglass Baglin's photographs give a marvellous feeling about the past and present of what everyone who lives in Hunter's Hill knows is the best place to live in Australia. The appeal of the book will not be limited to the locals. The story of the growth of Hunter's Hill has been told many times, but never more lucidly and with such engrossing detail as Dr. Sherry has assembled. Even to one who has a fair knowledge of local history, she repeatedly presents new and surprising facets of the past, and puts into focus some of the fuzzy bits of local heritage that have been missed by other historians.

She has better qualifications than most of the previous essayists into this field. She had an M.A. from the University of Queensland before she became dedicated to historical research and did a Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr, in the United States, in 1965. She has been teacher, researcher and writer in California and Canberra, and is at present with the University of Sydney's English Studies Research Centre. Perhaps her best qualification for this book is that she and her family have lived in Hunter's Hill since 1977. So here we have a skilled and sensitive writer, completely fascinated with her subject, who is also part of it.

What Beverley Sherry does through her word processor, Douglass Baglin does through his Nikons and Hasselblads. Doug Baglin lived in Sea Street from 1956 until last year and has photographed almost every house, fence, tree and seascape, and many of those who occupy them, in the last 33 years. He has an unmatched library of picture material about Hunter's Hill. This is the 76th book in which his pictures have appeared, and they have never been better reproduced.

Mrs. Sherry's prodigious research has turned up enormous and fascinating quantities of material about life in the Hill through last century, and during the Federation and later periods of expansion.

There are many quotations from contemporary records, like this one from Myee Alvarez, recalling 1915:

"Needless to say, there were *absolutely* no cars. One walked to the Ferry [from Wybalena Road] either to Ferry Street Wharf on the Parramatta River or to Crescent Street on the Lane Cove River and between the two services there was a boat every 1/4 hour to 11.30 p.m. - there was also a small boat at Ferry Street Wharf which met the incoming boat and called at several wharves up the [Tarban] Creek and it was called the *Una* - it saved many people a long walk and it was free. The fare into town was 4d."

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And another quotation, from Nancy Keesing's "Riding the Elephant", illustrating the depression of the thirties:

"In the late thirties Gertrude Scarlett accompanied one of her newly married sons and his wife to look at a house for sale in Hunter's Hill, and put her foot down. 'You can't live here' Scarlett said. 'Just look at all these run-down old empty places, and all the old people about. This is no place for a young couple who hope to have a family.'"

Some of us who bought in Hunter's Hill in the following decade were still able to find run-down old places [at prices we could barely afford], and there are a few of us who bore our newer friends with stories that the 1989 council rates are nearly as high as the original cost of our houses.

Since those penurious days of empty, run-down houses, Hunter's Hill has become a prime piece of real estate targetted by estate agents, developers and people

who wished to be seen in the right environment. Dr. Sherry records the valiant struggle of the Hunter's Hill Trust to preserve the historic character of the Hill streetscapes; the battle against high-rise development; the campaign of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush; the securing of Clarke's Point.

The index – exhaustive and accurate – lists scores of significant houses and a great many past and present residents. For the serious reader and scholar, there are notes, and a bibliography.

The book is in a large format and handles well. The non-Hill resident casually browsing at a book counter will be intrigued by the brilliance of the Baglin photographs and their faithful reproduction by the clever Hong Kong printers. This is a warning that there will be a strong sale outside the Hill, and that locals had better buy early.

Tom Farrell was a member of the Hunter's Hill Trust's First Permanent Committee in 1968.

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# THE BATTLE FOR HUNTER'S HILL

## LEN CONDON REVIEWS A NEW HISTORY OF THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST'S FIRST TWENTY YEARS

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### *"The Vision and The Struggle"*

Written by Prof. Reg Martin and Dr. Richard Temple.

132 pp. Softbound. Published by the Hunter's Hill Trust.

Price \$12.50 inc. delivery/postage from the Trust, P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.

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This unsettling book was written by Reg Martin and Richard Temple who are both founding members of the Hunter's Hill Trust. **The Vision and the Struggle** is a history of the first 20 years of the Trust.

"This minority envisaged the preservation of historic areas, the retention of older buildings, the preservation of harbour foreshores, the acquisition of more open space, creation of better building codes, and the development of a Town Plan to enshrine all these things and recognise the uniqueness of Hunter's Hill."

The book also contains a reprint of the Trust's first published document "Town Planning and Proposed Historic Districts in Hunter's Hill" written in 1969. You may ask why it is useful to reprint a 20 year old document? Well, the Municipality 20 years later has still not finalised a Town Plan and the 1969 material provides a valuable basis for planning and is also a storehouse of locally significant references.

The authors express dismay at the changes that have occurred and confront any complacency that a reader may have. "In 1988 it is not as beautiful or pleasant a place to live in as it was in 1968." "Hunter's Hill was one of Australia's first suburbs. In the 1850's, before it was established as a Municipality in 1861, it was known as the French Village and was a suburb of villas and cottages in wooded allotments. Even today it still has a special character all its own, with a multitude of mature trees."

Many people assume that because they live in Australia's oldest garden suburb, their historic environment is protected. The present environment is threatened. The National Trust is in disarray. The Heritage Council of N.S.W. has disturbingly reversed a major recent decision to protect an historic wharf and Governments are selling off public land.

The book documents the Hunter's Hill Trust's involvement and active concern for the heritage of Hunter's Hill and emphasises how successes can be achieved. The Mobil site is a good example of this.

There has been good reason to struggle: at one point the Council's attitude was that "There is nothing historic in Hunter's Hill". "A series of devastations occurred in the 1960s such as the construction of the freeway which divided the community and the destruction of some of the finest buildings. This includes St. Malo, the first building in Australia on which the National Trust took out a long term lease." Several photos poignantly present these losses.

It is hard to come to terms with what might have been. "It is a sad fact that when Hunter's Hill peninsula was laid out as a Municipality in the middle of last century, provision was made for a 100 foot wide public reserve along all the foreshore line. Regrettably this was whittled away by encroachment and squatting." However the Trust is presently identifying and surveying the remaining pockets of public foreshore land to ensure that the public have access to what remains.

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The book also contains some useful maps including the location of foreshore walks, early estates and houses, and distribution of old buildings. The index makes it possible to use the reference material for both present and future struggles to protect Hunter's Hill. For example there are succinct sections on the value of mangroves, urban consolidation, the case against home units or the case for historic districts.

The authors point to Urban Consolidation and 'Megahouses', especially those destroying the waterfront, as particular threats to the heritage of the Municipality. *"The need for the Hunter's Hill Trust is today as great as ever ... if it turns its back on effective involvement in the political process, then Hunter's Hill as we know it will be lost forever. Something unique and irreplaceable will have been lost forever."*

*Len Condon is an architect, and a member of the current Hunter's Hill Trust Committee.*



Prof. Martin and Dr. Temple illustrate the tragic destruction of Hunter's Hill buildings and streetscapes with this pair of photographs of the same Church Street site. Douglass Baglin's photograph shows "Brynnault", which was demolished in 1965. Reg Martin's photograph shows the unit development which replaced it.



# ASSISTANCE FOR RESTORATION PROJECTS

The Department of Planning is making financial assistance available to individuals and firms to undertake the restoration of heritage buildings or gardens. The restoration project must involve an item of recognised heritage value (for example, a building included in a local or regional environmental plan).

Preference is given to projects which are highly visible to the public such as the replacement of a verandah on a building in a main street location. Low priority is given to new extensions to a heritage building.

Financial assistance can take a number of forms. Firstly, concessional rate loans can be extended to owner-occupiers (at a rate of approximately 10.5% at June

1989), where the owner can demonstrate an ability to service and secure such a loan. Secondly, where the owner is unable to service such a loan, the Department will extend a loan to be repaid (plus C.P.I.) at the eventual sale or disposal of the property.

Assistance, usually in the form of a \$ for \$ grant, is also available to individuals for **studies** of areas, buildings and sites.

Information can be obtained from the Program Co-ordinator, Heritage Branch, 266-7278 or 266-7326, or by writing to Program Co-ordinator, Heritage Branch, Department of Planning, P.O. Box 3927, Sydney 2001.

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## KELLY'S BUSH: THE BRADLEY METHOD TAKES ON THE WEEDS

By Kath Lehany

Probably the most significant work in terms of Kelly's Bush as a bushland reserve is being undertaken by the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers – the ATCF. Regeneration of bushland is a slow and painstaking process but once it is restored it requires minimum maintenance.

The ACTV is contracted by the Department of Planning at minimum rates of remuneration which cover costs of vehicles, equipment etc. The work is done by dedicated volunteers using a method based on the now famous Bradley method.

This system was named after the late Bradley sisters, Eileen and Joan, who lived at Clifton Gardens, adjacent to Ashton Park. Lovers of bushland, they set about working voluntarily to rid Ashton Park of weeds and restore the natural vegetation. From their observations in this work they evolved the now recognised method of bush regeneration.

In brief, the method entails working from the least affected area of bush towards the area of greatest weed infestation. When the first small area becomes strong with natural vegetation, the weeding is extended. Meticulous care and patience are required to avoid treading on any native seedlings, to positively identify plants, and to disturb the soil as little as possible. Disturbance of the soil to a greater degree leaves that section vulnerable to infiltration of weeds.

Eileen and Joan trained groups of regenerators for the National Trust and teams of these trained people undertake tasks for State and Local Government bodies wishing to restore and regenerate bushland areas. In the long term, bushland which has healthy regeneration requires minimum maintenance and is therefore more economic than indiscriminate mowing and maintenance of garden beds, and it preserves our rapidly dwindling and diminishing bushland heritage.

Without this expert work, Kelly's Bush would become just another suburban park.

*Kath Lehany, one of the now famous "Battlers for Kelly's Bush", served on Kelly's Bush's first committee of management.*

By coincidence, the most recent issue of the N.S.W. Newsletter of the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers refers to the work being undertaken in Kelly's Bush:

We are saving some beautiful bushland and cool ferny areas from the encroaching ways of lantana, ochona, privet and wandering jew. Now we've discovered we have boneseed in full flower nearby!

The ACTV welcomes volunteers – their work is carried out in many areas from suburban reserves to tree planing on rural land, to building sections of the Great North Walk. Information may be gained from Prudence Tucker, phone 451-4028.

## IMPORTANT EXHIBITION AT "VIENNA"

A new exhibition on Comrealty's plans to develop Pulpit Point will be presented at "Vienna", in Alexandra Street. The show will include models and artists' impressions, and will indicate public access areas. The exhibition commences on the weekend of November 18th-19th, and will continue over the next four weekends.

## VIENNA: WE'RE IN THE BLACK!

On 2nd August, 1989, after a long struggle, the \$50,000 mortgage to acquire the cottage was paid off. All costs to date including the purchase of *Vienna*, the conservation work, architect's and builders' fees, interest and other expenses have been paid. However, \$15,000 is still needed to help make the cottage work. Display material, filing cabinets, shelving and the like still have to be acquired, but the Committee is determined not to go into the red again. There will be an ongoing programme of events, the next being a Christmas boutique at *Vienna* from **Friday, 1st December to Sunday, 3rd December** where suitable gifts will be for sale.

The Vienna Committee has now turned its full attention to making the cottage interesting and relevant to

its visitors and to the local community. With this end in mind discussion is taking place concerning future displays and use. Since August, in addition to the existing displays on *Vienna* and its inhabitants, there have been displays on conservation and the regional plan for the Parramatta River. Folders on Pulpit Point and Kelly's Bush have been commenced.

You are invited to help, by becoming a "**Friend of Vienna**". For \$5 a year this membership card will give its holder free access to the cottage when open or by arrangement. It will allow the local community to find out in *Vienna* what is going on in Hunter's Hill.

For further information please contact Philip Jenkyn on 817-2677 or 233-1282/work.

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## PARRAMATTA RIVER STUDY

The Department of Planning has produced a revised environmental regional plan for the Parramatta River. The first public exhibition of the draft plan in 1986-87 produced many submissions from government departments, local councils, and interested groups and individuals. The **new and significantly changed** draft plan has taken many of these submissions into account. The draft plan identifies and reserves sites considered suitable for open space. It calls for plans of management to be prepared by councils for foreshore open space. Such plans would overcome the ad hoc planning and development of foreshore parks and waterways which, in the past, have often been developed "with inappropriate facilities".

The report asserts that there is a shortage of all types of boating facilities such as marinas and boat ramps along the river. While the report recognises that these activities have an impact on neighbouring residential areas, it encourages

the development of more boating facilities in industrial and special use zones, and also in foreshore open space.

The substantial wetland areas of the Parramatta River are identified in the draft plan. It makes clearing, leveeing, draining and filling of mapped wetlands subject to council consent and the concurrence of the Director of Planning.

The report makes recommendations regarding the protection and enhancement of each of the approximately two hundred items of environmental heritage it identified. These items it judged as significant in terms of Aboriginal or European settlement history.

A copy of the **Parramatta River Draft Environmental Plan** and the **Design and Management Guidelines** are available for inspection at "*Vienna*" during customary opening hours (Saturdays 2.00-4.00 p.m., Sundays 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.) and at the Hunter's Hill Town Hall (lower floor).

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## THE JUGGERNAUT OF URBAN CONSOLIDATION ON THE MOVE AGAIN

Earlier in 1989, the State Government proposed to allow medium density housing - home units, flats and so-called "town houses" - to be built, even in sites considered grossly inappropriate by the elected Local Councils. These proposals were defeated in the Upper House in August.

The Government has responded with State Environment Planning Policy 28, due to take effect on March 30th. This will still allow townhouses and villas, up to two storeys in height, to be built on all residential land in the Newcastle, Wollongong and Sydney areas. Councils may apply for exemptions until late 1989 for land which has "unique natural scenic value", which contains some "item of environmental heritage" or is considered "environmentally unsuitable" for higher density dwellings.

As noted in the July Journal, this policy of overriding Local Councils' Strategic Environmental Planning is difficult to reconcile with the mandate sought by Nick Greiner, when he promised, if elected, to allow Councils to shape the character of their areas:

Our attitude is precisely that local planning is a function of local government and there is no place for the State Government to over-ride or second-guess the decisions of the community.

It is a leading plank of our Power to the People policy, released some time ago, that local residents and their councils should be able to determine the nature of developments in their areas.

## MOOCOOBOLA

The Trust was part of the Hunter's Hill annual community festival (after an absence last year) through the enthusiasm and hard work of new committee member, Penny Daven. She gathered together a good band of Trust members and supporters to 'man' the stall. Our thanks go to them all.

We displayed and sold Trust publications, featuring in particular the recently published history of our first twenty years entitled "The Vision and the Struggle" by Reg Martin and Richard Temple, and one of only two pre-publication copies of Beverley Sherry's "Hunter's Hill - Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb". Both of these publications aroused considerable interest.

During the official programme we were pleased to publicly launch the Trust history, with the presentation by President Ewan Cheyne-MacPherson of an autographed copy to our retiring Mayor, Alderman Sheila Swain.

Prior to Moocooboola, through the initiative of another new committee member, Barry Swayn, we arranged the distribution, throughout the whole municipality, of a leaflet advertising the above publications, as well as our special 'Heritage of Hunter's Hill'. This and our presence at Moocooboola stimulated a favourable response from both old and new members, whom we are very pleased to welcome.

### NATIONAL TRUST BUSHLAND SURVEY

This survey (see last issue of the Hunter's Hill Trust Journal) is continuing and should be completed within the next few months.

### TRUST MEMBERSHIP 1989-90

**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 \$100.00.

Please post to Hunter's Hill Trust, Box 85,  
Hunter's Hill, 2110.



## ACTIVITIES



*You are invited to*

*THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST*

### Christmas Dinner

*on*

*SUNDAY, 26th NOVEMBER, 1989*

*at 7.30 p.m.*

*HENLEY BOWLING CLUB*

*Crown Street, Henley*

*Cost of Dinner:*

*\$20.00 Member*

*\$25.00 Non-Member*

*Bookings:*

*Ann McNally 817-2035*

*Jenny Lockyer 816-4922*

*General Meeting will precede the Dinner*

*at 6.45 p.m.*

*Guest Speaker:*

*ROD CROCKFORD (A Trust Member):*

*"Early Australian Country Furniture in a Private Collection."*

### BOOK LAUNCH AT TOWN HALL

**"Hunter's Hill: Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb"**, by Beverley Sherry and Douglass Baglin will be launched in the Hunter's Hill Town Hall on:

**SUNDAY, 19th NOVEMBER, 1989**

**11.00 a.m.**

The Launch will be made by distinguished Hunter's Hill author, poet and critic, NANCY KEESING, A.M. (Two of Nancy Keesing's own books, "Gold Fever" [1967] and "Riding the Elephant" [1988] were republished this year in paperback.)

Everyone is invited to this event.

Although the recommended retail price of this book will be \$49.95, it will be made available to people attending the launch for \$43. "Friends of Vienna" and currently financial Members of the Hunter's Hill Trust will be able to purchase it for \$39.95. All books ordered in advance can be collected at the Town Hall, Alexandra Street, during the Launch.

Orders may be made through Peter Pinson [817-2235] and Philip Jenkyn [817-2677].