

From the President's Desk

David Gaunt

Welcome to the first issue of the Trust journal for 2008, and the recognition of a landmark: 40 years of effort to preserve the integrity and heritage of our built and natural environment. I'd like to acknowledge those thousands of members who have fought valiantly to keep the faith in the principles of the Trust's founders: to oppose all inappropriate development and maintain the precious heritage of our area. It's both sad and apposite then, that we acknowledge the passing of two formidable warriors who died late last year, Betty James and Alysoun Ryves. Their magnificent commitments to those principles effectively straddled those 40 years, and they are sorely missed. We thank them and we salute them.

This has been an exceptionally busy few months for the Trust. Three very significant developments: The Priory, The Chalet, and The Village master plan, have all been in the news. You will see elsewhere two submissions which we made re the Chalet and the Village, both of which go to the heart of the problem facing us currently: the reluctance of our Council to take a stand on behalf of heritage in opposition to bad, or over-development.

As far the Priory goes, however, our community is presented with a pleasant prospect. Much to everyone's delight, the Priory was handed over to the Council and kept in public hands in late 2007. Much thought has gone into the best adaptive re-use of this wonderful place, and Council has been commendably energetic in seeking public input for planning. While many of the proposals for future adaptive re-use are both imaginative and worthy, the Trust believes that the best result for the Priory would be to return it to its original use, that of a private residence

Under this scenario, the property would still be owned by the Council, but lease out to an individual or corporation. Under the terms of the lease the lessee would be required to restore the house and gardens in accordance with an agreed conservation plan drawn up by Council (think of the outstanding example of Bronte House). The lessee would be required to maintain the property under a set of guidelines issued with the lease, and obliged to open the property to the public on an agreed number of days.

This seems to us the most realistic proposal for a building which is, essentially, still a house, and which will cost millions to restore and refurbish. We'd love your feedback and ideas about the exciting future of this wonderful property in our midst.

You will also see a new feature in this issue, where again, we'd love your input: Heritage Watch. And keep you own eyes open for example of neglect and decay and potential destruction, which we can then bring to the attention of someone responsible.

Finally, can I commend to your diary a mention of our AGM, on Friday 6th of June (the beginning of the long weekend) in the RSL Hall in Alexandria St. Matthew Baird, former resident and alderman, barrister in environmental law, and long-time member of both Hunters Hill and National Trusts, will be a terrific guest speaker. Refreshments provided: See you there 7pm.



Preserving Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb

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Heritage of Hunters Hill \$29.95 (25% discount to members) Vision and the Struggle \$15.00 (25% discount to members)

AT THE CROSSROADS

Ryde Road Revisited

Hunters Hill Village Submission on Draft DCP/DLEP 2008 29/02/08

Background

The Trust has, like many local residents, taken a keen interest in proposed development for the Village Centre and the Conservation area which extends along the northern side of Gladesville and Ryde Roads. We have taken an active part in the working party processes, information nights and public meetings, and made numerous submissions. We have always viewed the decisions made for this area as being of great significance for the whole municipality.

Current Proposals

Given some of the proposals put forward by Council officers at the Information evening of 18/02/08 and their ramifications for future allowable densities and heights in Hunters Hill, we view it as vital that:

- 1. Council addresses serious community concerns about potential rezoning in the Ryde Rd Conservation Area
- 2. Council addresses concerns about the precedent for the whole Municipality for varying our current constraints such that three and four storey residential development would occur
- 3. Council explains to residents the publicly stated (at the Information meeting) NSW Government "target" of 1200 new dwellings, to be built in stages in our Municipality in line with Government urban consolidation objectives.

To this end, we strongly recommend that a **PUBLIC MEETING** be called to give Councilors, Council officers and residents the opportunity to share honest and open dialogue about an issue which clearly threatens the history, heritage and very fabric of our area.

Specific comments

The Trust's views on the particulars of proposed changes in theses areas have been submitted, in much the same form, on each occasion submissions have been sought. With reference to the current proposals, we would simply note:

Re the Commercial Area

- 1. We would support setbacks on the southern side of Gladesville Road (to three metres)
- 2. Support rezoning of the corner of Ryde and Gladesville Roads to permit mixed use commercial and residential
- 3. Support a 1:1 FSR in the core area
- 4. Support commercial development of two storeys plus setback (or a parking level, if below the level of the southern side of Gladesville Road), not to exceed the existing height of the Hunters Hill Hotel

Re Ryde Road

- 1. The Trust has always supported retention of existing houses and their subdivision pattern in Ryde Road
- 2. The Trust would offer in-principle support to two storeys with attic dormer windows.



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- 3. The Trust commissioned Heritage Consultant Penny Pike's Heritage Impact Statement on the significance of the retention of the houses at 35-39 Ryde Road (a report Council itself relied on in the LEC), which affirmed the contribution these houses make to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area.
- 4. The Trust firmly believes that, over and above their essential historical and heritage significance, these houses offer important "entry level" residential possibility where very little prospect otherwise exists in Hunters Hill
- 5. The Trust reaffirms its support for possible rezoning of RydeRoadtoallowforminorincreaseindensitythroughdual occupancy. This would offer incentives to owner builders without resorting to the risks inherent in amalgamation of blocks
- 6. The Trust believes that before any decision on proposedchanges to existing zoning and Controls is made Council should undertake its own Heritage Impact Statement on the effect of the proposed LEP and DCP on the subject area.
- 7. The Trust believes that Council should seek advice from its own Conservation Advisory Panel as to what it thinks about the impact of the proposed planning changes.
- 8. The Trust believes that it is incumbent on Council to follow the same consultative process which it expects all applicants for DAs to follow. Otherwise, Council's credibility as the custodian of the heritage of Hunter Hill is at risk.

We have not covered other issues of public and private amenity, safety, privacy, traffic, access, garden depth, etc. We would simply reiterate that this is too important a Development to proceed any further without full and fruitful consultation through a **PUBLIC MEETING** for the Hunters Hill community. Too much is at stake to proceed in any other way.

Yours sincerely

David Gaunt President

Hunters Hill Trust

A PUBLIC MEETING

Chris Hartlev

When does one call a Public Meeting? When the local government processes seem so inadequate that it seems the only option. Public concern on the 'just revealed' target of 1200 new dwellings in Hunters Hill was such that the Trust was approached to organize what has become known as the April Fools' Day Meeting.

On the night over 250 people turned up to refresh and remind others of the community's right to contribute and challenge. The speakers were excellent - the National Trust, Penny Pike, Tony Coote and Phil Jenkyn did a tremendous job covering heritage and social issues. Yet It was always going to be a thin line between hearing the breadth of contributions and getting some core inputs heard and agreed. Overall an uneasy compromise was struck - even though there was a lot left unsaid.

A number of resolutions were passed, some of which were a little more than necessary political motherhood. Crucially we were not able to effectively engage on the core issues of sustainable population growth - the 1200. Also the meeting left unresolved the future of the Hunters Hill Hotel, where there are significant and ongoing concerns. And we are stuck with the precedent of what will be significant overdevelopment in a heritage subdivision. For the immediate residents who will be most affected it was a painfully pragmatic compromise. Who wants ten metres of building six metres from their back fence? (Certainly not Mr and Mrs Frank Sartor who are currently objecting to a similar application on their own back fence in Beverly Park, Kogarah

The Council got a wake up call on the night but through its stubborn high-handedness and desire for the easier road, it can still ignore what has been conceded. They will need watching as the notes from some of their recent "information sessions" show - there is no excuse for some of the statements that were made. The Council is council of all of Hunters Hill, not just selected parts of it.

Reassuringly, CAP, when they met after the meeting, was disapproving of the new height parameters. And Council is on the point of joining, perhaps bowing to community concern at last, a coalition of local councils to fight the State Government's new proposed planning laws and density requirements.

Congratulations on being a member of the Hunters Hill Trust. Please encourage others to follow your lead. www.huntershilltrust.org.au. \$25 a year is cheap insurance when it comes to keeping the burghers honest. Also consider standing for Council in September or persuade some other normal, bright, interested people to stand.

THE CHALET A Treasure In Danger

Tony Coote

The danger threatening the future of this wonderful cottage in Yerton Ave, which was home for so many years to Nora Heysen, was highlighted when the Trust hosted a showing of Eugene Schlusser's marvellous film about Nora in November (much of the interview with Nora was shot in and at the Chalet). With wonderful timing, just weeks later the Land and Environment Court upheld a neighbour's appeal against Council's approval of a DA for the site. This was a DA which the Trust opposed vigorously, believing it would fatally impact on (or, as no less eminent an expert than Clive Lucas says "the heritage significance of The Chalet would be severely compromised") the future of one of the most significant sites in Hunters Hill.

This is a submission which all Trust members should consider fully, and support. Not only is Tony Coote's submission a compelling one, but the material of Robert Moore and Clive Lucas offers the most effective testimony in support of the Trust's position that one could ask for. Disturbingly the Applicant has resubmitted the DA unamended, and the CAP Committee was divided in its response

After





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Refore

VALE BETTY JAMES

We were sad to hear late last year of the death of Betty James. She was the inspiration behind the defence of Kelly's Bush, opposing both developers and the NSW government's plans to build on precious remnant bushland. Betty became president of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush, the group of middle-aged women who famously joined with trade unions led by Jack Mundey to impose the world's first Green Ban and ultimately gain a vital local victory.

Betty was born Elizabeth Estelle Woolnough in 1918 and grew up in Adelaide, the youngest of three children. Betty joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in World War II, trained as a radar officer and was stationed on Saddleback Mountain behind Kiama. Here she met Jim James. He went to New Guinea in charge of the 6th Radar Division and they married as soon as the war ended, living in Perth while Jim completed his science degree. Betty became a journalist and published several children's stories, later becoming a member of the Australian Society of



In memory of Betty James, Bush battler (1918-2007). With acknowledgement to SMH, 4.12.07

Authors. The family moved to Hunters Hill in 1953. Always a conservationist, she became politically active when council voted to rezone the open space of Kelly's Bush as residential. The idea to save the bush was born in 1970 at a dinner party in the James' home. Thirteen women became the Battlers, with James as president and Kath Lehany secretary. After James took a telephone from Bob Askin, the premier, saying the government would rezone the bush residential the next day, James retorted: "We'll lie down in front of the bulldozers."

It was a protracted campaign, but Neville Wran's government finally bought the land as a public reserve in 1983. The Jameses moved to Hawks Nest, on Port Stephens, in 1985, where Betty joined a group saving the local koalas and fought to save the Winda Woppa wetlands.

Betty James is survived by her son, Bob, daughters Diana and Wendy, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Jim James died in 2004.

HERITAGE WATCH

Sally Gaunt

Tree SOS

This majestic Ficus at the rear of 2 Yerton Street (The Chalet) is under threat. Although it is on Council's Significant Tree Register, one Councillor pronounced it expendable, if it stood in the way of the proposed development. It may have to make way for a garage or, more probably, a future subdivision of The Chalet's curtilage, which is on the cards given the strange positioning of the proposed house extension.

A Looming Battle?

The state of the magnificent stone wall surrounding Gladesville Hospital does not bode well. The Department of Health is allowing its heritage assets at the site to crumble. Take a walk through the Hospital and you'll be struck with both admiration and dismay.



Gladesville Hospital Wall



Fig Tree