

From the President 40th ANNIVERSARY

Tony Coote

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the Trust, which was formed following a meeting called with 3 day's notice on new year's day 1968 when eleven people met in "the book-lined sitting room of Peter Elkin's house at No 2 North Parade" (The Vision and The Struggle).

Back in 1968 people right across Sydney were coming together to try to stop the destruction of their suburbs as they watched in dismay as fine heritage buildings were pulled down to make way for ugly unit blocks and road widening. The classic example in Hunters Hill is the so-called Lane Cove Expressway, which saw the demolition of a number of fine houses including Mary Reiby's Cottage, St Malo and St Marks Church. The expressway also cut Hunters Hill in two.

Following that first meeting in Peter Elkin's sitting room a public meeting was called for February 7th 1968. Such was the anger in the Municipality towards unit development that between 600 to 800 people turned up to the Town Hall. That night the meeting formally adopted the name The Hunters Hill Trust, 250 people joined up as members and agreed on a number of resolutions to be put to Council. The resolutions sought to preserve the unique character of Hunters Hill, to defer any more home unit building until a Town Plan had been prepared and to set up a Town Planning Committee, which would include representation of the Trust and ratepayers.

Since then, The Trust has been continuously active in its efforts to preserve the character of Hunters Hill. Whilst they have not always borne fruit, much has been accomplished. So please come and join with us on Friday November 21st at the RSL hall to celebrate our achievements at our 40th anniversary dinner. See back page for details and invitation.



First issue of trust journal

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 Peter G. Gee 43 Birkbeck Crescent, Hunter's Hill, 2118 Architect
 Frederick Kirby 35 Duke Street, Henley, 2111 University Administrator
 W. Husterford 10 Vernon Street, Hunter's Hill, 2110 Engineer
 J. V. Smith 24 Huntley's Point Road, Huntley's Point, 2111 Printer
 K. W. Tinsall 51 Huntley's Point Road, Huntley's Point, 2111 Lecturer in Psychology
 N. Wallman 74 Alexandra Street, Hunter's Hill, 2110 Solicitor
 Mr. Wallman, who was chairman, resigned from the committee, and a co-opted member, Mr. John P. Tate, has been chairman since April.
 The committee has co-opted many other residents to its various sub-committees - planning, legal, publicity, etc.

COUNCIL REJECTS PLANS FOR EIGHT-STORY FLATS AT WOOLWICH

\$4m. Scheme for old Sydney Smelting area "emphatically opposed"
 Although Hunter's Hill Council last week rejected a scheme for high rise flat blocks including three at eight storeys at Woolwich, some objectors and ratepayers fear they have not heard the last of the scheme.
 The council was asked by a Melbourne development company to agree to suspension of the present open space zoning at the old Sydney Smelting Company property of 12 acres to allow a \$4-million development scheme which would house 500 people in high and low rise buildings. The site adjoins Weir Park, and has a long frontage to the Parramatta River. Council decided it was "emphatically opposed" to any alteration of the zoning of the land, which has been zoned an open space since 1961.
 The Trust committee decided to compliment the council on its firm attitude and to offer the Trust's support in resisting any effort to have high density building imposed on the site.
 The Melbourne developer, A. V. Jurgens Industries Limited, first approached the State Planning Authority, seeking lifting of the open space zoning. The company then approached the council in May, asking it to recommend suspension of the zoning. The company has circulated a brochure describing the development, which it has named "Vixionium", as a \$4-million investment over four years. Three of the high rise 40 columns were to be eight-storey blocks and the rest two-storey blocks of "town houses".

The first committee
(list should include President Diana Temple)



Preserving Australia's
Oldest Garden Suburb

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PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE:

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

THE CHALET

In the last issue we reported on the progress of the development application for alterations and additions to The Chalet and on the possible threat to a magnificent fig tree in Muirbank Avenue from the proposed new carport for the Chalet.

Since then Hunters Hill Council commissioned and received an independent arborist's report on the impact of the proposal on the fig tree as well as a traffic consultant's report on the impact of the proposed carport on traffic movements in Muirbank Avenue and on the feasibility of its proposed vehicle manoeuvring space.

Just prior to the last Council elections, following a rescission motion against a previous approval, part of the D.A. was approved, once again with the mayor's casting vote. The approval relates to the alterations and additions to the house. The proposed carport was not approved because of its adverse impact on the roots of the fig tree in Muirbank Avenue, the subject of an article by Sally Gaunt in the last journal, and because the manoeuvring spaces proposed do not comply with Australian standards.

This part-approval has come at a cost. A third party appeal lodged by a neighbour with the Land and Environment Court against the validity of Council's original development consent resulted in the consent being declared invalid. This hiccup in the process has involved many hours of Council staff time, Council's own legal costs and the payment of court costs to the neighbour who brought the action.

After the court ruling Council also ran up further additional staff and legal costs in relation to the application together with the costs of the traffic consultant's and arborist's reports it commissioned. These last two costs are particularly intriguing because Council had previously asked for these to be provided by the applicant and which the applicant had argued were not necessary.

As Trust members will know from previous journals, The Trust did not support this development application, nor did Council's Conservation Advisory Panel and nor did two of Australia's most respected heritage architects. The application was not supported by half the Councillors, was the subject of at least two rescission motions and relied on the casting vote of the mayor for its final approval.

The Trust's main concern related to the bulk and scale of the two-storey section of the new work and its proximity to the heritage item, the architectural form of the new work, which was considered unsympathetic to the item and the intrusion of the first floor link into the roof of The Chalet.

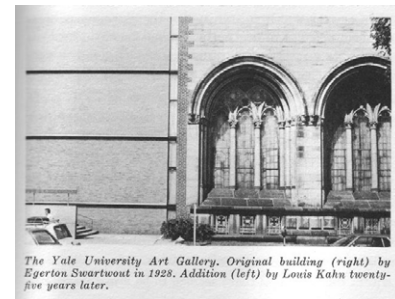
There has been a lack of consensus about the merits of the proposal. The NSW Heritage Council supported it and (eventually) so did Council's own Heritage Advisor, Greg Patch. A major point of contention has been the broader issue of how best to make contemporary alterations and additions to a significant heritage item.

Greg Patch's report supporting the proposal makes interesting reading, although it is sometimes difficult to understand. For example I am somewhat mystified by: "In my opinion the "distortion" of the significance is acceptable in that it brings the place back into what current social norms would deem useful. The degree of obscuration is minimal, as there is more than sufficient documentation generated out of the research and assessment process to inform an understanding of the significance of the place that has hitherto to been largely arcane and abstruse."

However, I think he goes to the heart of the argument when he reports that: "In my view, it is patently obvious that there was no intention to design the additions as "sympathetic and complimentary", but rather as a "foil"- which is a riskier approach, but a valid one, in my view."

It is an approach that is favoured by architects wishing to make their mark but there is no doubt that it is high-risk one. When its potential is to diminish the significance of a State registered heritage item its validity is questionable. And the court affidavits of heritage architects Clive Lucas and Robert More both question the appropriateness of the proposal, particularly in relation to the choice of materials and form.

An early Australian example of this approach (Greg Patch's "foil") is the Federation style additions to Wivenhoe, which is a fine Georgian house built in 1837 and attributed to John Verge. The additions date from the very early 20th century and you can judge for yourself from the photo whether they have been successful in complementing the original building or whether they have created a stylistic mish-mash and undermined the integrity of the original house.



The Yale University Art Gallery. Original building (right) by Egerton Swartwout in 1928. Addition (left) by Louis Kahn twenty-five years later.

An international example of the "foil" approach is Louis Khan's additions to the Yale University Art Gallery, which is a very plain steel, glass and concrete box tacked onto the existing Italian Romanesque palazzo style building.

In his critique of Modernist architecture, From Bauhaus to Our House, Tom Wolfe describes how Louis Khan explained his proposal to the university's questioning and perplexed administrators:

"What do you mean it has nothing to do with the existing building? You don't understand? You don't see it? You don't see the stringcourses? They express the floor lines of the existing building. They reveal the structure. For a quarter of a century, these floors have been hidden behind masonry, completely concealed. Now the structure will be unconcealed. Honest form - beauty, as you choose to call it - can only result from unconcealed structure!"
*Baffled, but somehow intimidated, as if by Cagliostro or a Jacmel hoongan, the Yale administration yielded to the destiny of architecture and took it like a man.*¹

¹ Tom Wolfe - From Bauhaus to Our House pp 63 and 65 (# 2 pics Architecture)

Note: There was an error in the attribution of the article on The Chalet in the last Journal to Tony Coote. It was in fact written by David Gaunt. Also, Haimee Healey, the applicant for the proposal, has written to the Trust informing us, among other things, that she has no intention of subdividing the property. That's certainly good to know.

HERITAGE WATCH

Mark Street stone wall

The character of Mark Street between Mary St and Ryde Road is in the process of rapid change as the new development at the Villa Maria primary school takes shape and the demolition of the Joeys' tennis courts begins for the new the new residential block. A sad reality is that large institutions appear to have dropped the batten when it comes to the pursuit of architectural excellence. Increasingly they are turning to design-construct methods of procurement, which means the dollar takes preference over design. This is certainly the case with the new residential accommodation for the Marist Brothers on the tennis court site on the corner of Mark and Mary Streets, which is a very ordinary building indeed.

The Marist Brothers do get a tick, however, for the restoration of the stone wall on the other side of Mark Street from the Villa Maria Primary School. The photo shows stonemason, Myles Raine at work on the rebuilding of the wall, which had been destabilised by tree roots and was in danger of falling over. The work involved the numbering of each stone prior to taking the wall apart and then replacing the stones in their original positions. You can still see the chalk numbers in the close up photo.

Mary Street stone wall

In Mary Street, not far away from Mark Street is another stone wall, which forms the boundary of the Villa Maria property. This has also recently been repaired.



Mark Street



Mary Street

THE THREE PATRIOTS' WALK

One of The Trust's recent achievements has been the creation of the public walkway along the riverfront of the High School. This was officially opened in May 2001, and was made possible by a Federation Fund grant secured by then Trust president, Gil Wahlquist.

It would appear that Sydney Water has compulsorily acquired a vehicle access across the front of the oval for access to their pump. We have no further information on this but we will be pursuing it to ensure that the work does not adversely impact on public access to the foreshore, that the existing copse of trees at the Mount Street end is retained and that the whole of the pathway through to the Reiby Street steps is included in any upgrade. Council's crushed sandstone path has not stood the test of time and is in a terrible state after only seven years.

THE HUNTERS HILL HOTEL

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the Hunters Hill village, to go shopping at the refurbished IGA and to enjoy a beer at the refurbished Hunters Hill Hotel, up comes news of a new proposal. This was outlined to a group of invited locals as part of the softening-up process at a meeting called by the developer on 2 October. In a nutshell the new proposal includes the following:

- A two-storey supermarket
- A 140 person function centre on top of the existing hotel
- A three-storey underground carpark, which includes access to one storey off Joubert St.
- Shop-top housing for the former bank buildings now owned by the hotel

The pub maintains that original DA which was focusing on shops with shop/top housing is not economically viable and that the sustainability of their investment requires an 'Anchor' tenant (eg one of the major supermarkets) to attract lessees. The proposal also presumes that the developers will purchase Mrs Tompkins' heritage listed house at some time in the near future. No DA has been submitted as yet, but The Trust will continue to keep a watching brief on developments.

40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner

Friday 21st November 7pm onwards
at the RSL Hall, Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill.

Our guest speaker is **John Neish**,
recently appointed Director of the National Trust,
who will join us after opening
the Vienna Cottage Christmas Boutique,
and
Alice Oppen will speak about the Trust's history.

Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served from 7pm
and will be followed by a 2 course buffet dinner.

The cost is \$60 each.

Please RSVP by phoning
Brigid on 9816 3168 or Maureen on 9879 5051

