

Hunters Hill Trust Journal

November 2011 ISN 0310-11 Volume 49, Number 2

THE GARIBALDI HOTEL

A rare 1861 architectural work in Hunters Hill - a 150 year celebration



It was an eventful year - 1861. The Hunters Hill Council had finally formed, construction of the landmark, two-storey sandstone building on the corner of Alexandra and Ferry Streets had commenced and, important to Italians around the world, early successes of the Risorgimento helped liberate parts of their country from foreign occupation.

John Cuneo (b. Genoa 1825), purchased the corner allotment in 1861 immediately after he sold his city business – a grocery shop at the eastern end of Erskine Street, located close to where the Parramatta River ferries loaded passengers and goods – and where he would have come into contact with Hunter's Hill residents, including those Italians who settled in 1855 near the Marist Fathers in Villa Maria. In 1858, Didier Joubert, the most influential of all local land and property investors, had helped the Marist Fathers select a city warehouse in Erskine Street.

A rapid sequence of events involving John Cuneo, which followed the declaration of Hunters Hill as a municipality in March 1861, suggest an eagerness to establish a home at what was to become its village core. In

the same month he offered for auction a large consignment of sculpture imported from Italy - the advertised list an intriguing document of the availability of classical taste in colonial Sydney. Apparently the sale proved successful for, on 30 April 1861, he applied for naturalisation as 'he had by his industry gained a small competence, and has a young family and wishes to purchase a piece of ground to improve upon it and extend his business'. References came from his city neighbours, a butcher and two publicans.

Just three months later, Hunters Hill's first Assessment Rate Book valued his 'store and house' at 35 pounds. He made a room available for Council meetings, with front page advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald notifying dates and purpose – for example, on 23rd January 1862, electors met at 'Cunio's new building' to nominate new candidates. The transition to a 'Garibaldi Hotel' was more or less assured when residents were called to a public meeting initiated by William Wright, H.C. Brookes, W. Cook, F. Bellingham, familiar names in our earliest local records at the Post Office, to consider 'the desirability of allowing a licensed

public house to be established in the neighbourhood'.

Why did Cuneo choose a distinctive niche and white marble female figure, Hebe, for his boldly scaled and sited two storey building of otherwise plain design? Hugging the corner alignment, it speaks of public accessibility - a functional building - as well as one to accommodate a family, while the decorative niche and sculpture may have been a gesture to underline his Italian origins, or a witty reference to his successful auction.

The skilled workmanship of the decorative column detail of the niche itself appears exceptional. Balmain, an older and more densely populated suburb, for instance, lacked any such architectural ornament at the time, nor did such architectural conceits become de rigueur on city buildings until much later, if we think of the Colonial Secretary's building of 1879 at the uptown end of Bridge Street, and later the nearby Lands Department and Education Department buildings.

In 1861 only one other two-storey building existed - 200 metres away - Didier Joubert's mansion *Passy* (1855) - to see to, and be seen from, the city - set in grounds of seven acres that included an orchard and vineyard. A few years before, with the French Consul as tenant, *Passy* and its occupant were referred to in almost every published report concerning Hunters Hill, carefully aimed at prospective buyers. All other two-storey marine villas of the 1856-1860 period sat well below the ridge line, built into sloping sites overlooking Lane Cove or Parramatta River, following recommendations laid down in contemporary English design books.

Without hesitation Cuneo put his hotel into action for New Years Day and Easter regattas, competing with popular resorts like Manly Beach or Watsons Bay. For Easter 1863 his offerings included not just fine wines and luncheons but amusements like the greasy pole, sack jumping and wheelbarrow races. Celebrations proved excessive, causing Council to

Continued on page 2



*Preserving Australia's
Oldest Garden Suburb*

Hunters Hill Trust Contacts

President	Robyn Christie rjmchristie@gmail.com
Secretary	David Gaunt david@gleebooks.com.au
Journal	Tony Coote tony@tonycootearchitect.com
Address	PO Box 85 Hunters Hill 2110
Website	www.huntershilltrust.org.au
Contact	Kate Russell humanly@zeta.org.au

Publications Available

Heritage of Hunters Hill \$15
The Vision and the Struggle \$15
 Members discount 25%

MEMBERSHIP

The Trust anyone interested in preserving the unique character of Hunters Hill to become a member.

Single membership \$20
Family membership \$40
 Contact the secretary to join

The Garibaldi Hotel – from page 1

castigate Cuneo for serving liquor beyond allotted times and encouraging raucous behaviour. These early descriptions of life surrounding the Hotel provide colour to our impressions of local records.

The immediate surroundings of the Garibaldi Hotel may have been bushland, but there was access to a public ferry wharf on scenic Parramatta River built seven years before. Visitors would have passed the four prefabricated timber houses Bordier built, two either side of Ferry Street, and there was a cottage, perhaps two, where Carey Cottage stands.

There had been a building boom of sorts from 1856 to 1860 but local speculators were left holding properties that failed to sell. As they, and the new Council, encouraged new subdivisions to boost population growth - schools and a chapel were already available - a 'pub' must have been deemed essential, to attract working class buyers to small allotments like those on offer along Alexandra and Madeleine Streets marked in the 1861 Joubert Subdivision. If we look at the context, for instance on May 22, 1861 a week after Cuneo finalised his purchase of the Garibaldi site the Herald carried this advertisement 'Hunters Hill, Marine Villas, four, five, nine and twelve rooms with gardens and grounds for sale or to be let...Jules Joubert' presumably acting for various vendors. By September 1862 Didier Joubert had all except his Figtree Farm properties for sale.

The first of two additions to the Garibaldi – note visible seams the sandstone wall facing east – may have been as early as 1863, the other in the 1870s when John Cuneo became an alderman, along with the Milanese Angelo Tornaghi, who lived in Madeleine Street. The names of Italian workmen employed on municipal works appear in Council accounts of the time when they were possibly accommodated by Cuneo in upstairs rooms or attics, or in the weatherboard building to the west shown in photographs with a sign saying 'Billiard Room' (date uncertain).

John Cuneo's patriotism did not wane, he managed to persuade his Manchester - born wife Jane to name their third son Garibaldi, and their seventh Joseph Mazzini, honouring another northern Italian patriot. In the next generation their son Tom Cuneo named one son Joseph Mazzini and another Garibaldi Minotti, Jim for short.

Attention to Giuseppe Garibaldi in newspapers of the late 1850s and early 1860s was intense. Columns lifted from the London press kept readers informed...and songs, theatre pieces, music compositions etc took his name, which was also found around various goldfields - Garibaldi gullies, Garibaldi mines, Garibaldi creeks. Items from the Cuneo collections put on exhibition included family photographs, pieces of sculpture, an alabaster bust of Garibaldi

and figure of a young girl and a restored white marble group of the Three Graces.

A listing of properties in John Cuneo's estate indicates that he was an astute investor, bequeathing many properties to his offspring, providing a model perhaps for retaining a family's sense of place. There are only two photographs of him, a portrait taken late in life another showing him the doorway of the Garibaldi Hotel amongst family and associates.

Roslyn Maguire, historian

A version of this paper was presented at the opening of an exhibition in the Hunters Hill Museum to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Garibaldi Hotel building, and the continued connection of members of his family. The exhibition was curated by Roslyn Maguire

The development at Barangaroo



THE HUNTERS HILL TRUST'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGM PART 1

This year's AGM was held at the Fairland Hall on Wednesday 22 June – the night of the Winter solstice. The combination of a change of venue from the RSL hall, which wasn't available, a move away from Friday and the shortest day of the year, no doubt contributed to the low turn-out of members. Those who did attend were rewarded with a terrific presentation from our guest speaker, Kirsty Ruddock.

Kirsty is Principal Solicitor at the Environmental Defender's Office – the EDO. The EDO is a not-for-profit community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law. They help individuals and community groups who are working to protect both the natural and the built environment. She has been involved with the EDO in the fight to save Catherine Hill Bay and more recently in the case brought by Australians for Sustainable Development against Lend Lease, the Barangaroo Development Authority and the Minister for Planning.

Her talk was a real shot in the arm for all of us involved in the endless and often

fruitless struggle to prevent inappropriate development and it was terrific to see that there are enthusiastic campaigners from another generation out there doing great things.

The talk was preceded by the usual business of the AGM – the outgoing president’s report, the treasurer’s report and the election of office bearers. The following were elected unopposed:

President: Robyn Christie
Secretary: David Gaunt
Treasurer: Chris Hartley
Vice- President: Tony Coote
Committee: Brigid Dowsett, Maureen Flowers, Kate Russell, Alister Sharp and Peter Stockdale

Outgoing President’s Report

Many thanks to the outgoing committee and in particular Sally Gaunt, who, after 12 years service has decided not to stand for re-election this year. Over the years Sal has contributed enormously to the work of The Trust. She has been the editor of the Journal, represented The Trust on Council committees, organised the annual river cruises and has been a lively and enthusiastic member of the committee. She came to The Trust through her involvement with bush regeneration and she will continue with this work. So her contribution to Hunters Hill will not stop. On behalf of The Trust - Thank you Sally.

Sally’s concern for Hunters Hill’s natural environment was sparked by the example of the Battlers for Kelly’s Bush, who this year celebrate the 40th anniversary of that famous campaign. One of the original battlers and long time Trust member, Trude Kallir, got an OAM in the Queens Birthday honours this year. Trude is not very well, which is why she is not here tonight. We send her our best wishes.

Speaking of honours, Sally’s husband and Trust Secretary, David Gaunt was included in this year’s Australia Day Honours, as was Alice Oppen. Both are former presidents of The Trust. Congratulations Alice and Dave.

Over the last year the Trust Committee has worked hard, as usual, to try to preserve the character of Hunters Hill. As well as meeting on a monthly basis, we have continued to maintain our presence in the Municipality through the publication of our journal, the organisation of annual river cruises, the maintenance of our website and having representatives on committees at Hunters Hill Council and a

number of organisations involved in conservation, heritage and sustainability. The Trust’s concern about maintaining the heritage and character of Hunters Hill naturally leads to a concern about the amount of stuff we consume, the size of our houses and the need for sustainable development.

Unfortunately there is no evidence to show that Hunters Hill has embraced sustainability. Perfectly useful houses are being demolished and their replacements are getting bigger and bigger. The holes dug into our sandstone bedrock for the required 5 car garages are getting deeper and deeper. As well, the time taken to build these mega-structures is getting longer and longer – years in some instances. The disruption of our streets caused by cranes, earth moving equipment, trucks and tradie’s utes seems never-ending.

Some of our main concerns recently have included developments around the Hunters Hill shops – the so-called Hunters Hill Village. These include:

The continuing saga of the redevelopment of the Hotel site, which ended up in the Land and Environment Court. The Trust gave evidence about how the development, among other things, failed to maintain the two-storey scale of the area – to no avail unfortunately.

In the wash-up, some minor amendments were made. These included an increased setback from Pam Tomkins’ house at 62 Ryde Road. Incidentally, long-time Trust member Pam Tompkins has refused to bow to pressure put from the Pub to sell or to allow them to tunnel under her property.

The Pub is also involved with the redevelopment of 58 and 60 Gladesville Road, where the two banks used to be. This is currently before the court because Council rejected a proposal that was a massive overdevelopment of the site.

As well as these proposals, there is the development now under construction next to Burt’s pharmacy and at least two more works are in the pipeline. One involves the possible demolition of two heritage listed houses and the other the complete

redevelopment of Mapledoram’s Corner back beyond the butchers.

Judging from the quality of these proposals it’s become clear that it will be impossible to preserve the existing character of The Village centre and also the character of the heritage subdivision of Ryde Road. All this represents an enormous challenge for The Trust and all those interested in preserving the character of Hunters Hill.

Some of our other concerns include: *The extension of the soccer fields at Tarban Creek Reserve. This eats into space reserved originally for passive recreation and causes parking, traffic and other problems.*



Art installation along the 3 Patriots Walk

The construction of the security fence at Hunters Hill High – this project is currently stopped and Council is awaiting a response from the Department about the fact that the fence does not comply with Council’s fence policy and is an ugly addition to the foreshores of the Lane Cove River.

The Hunters Hill Rugby Club’s proposals for a so-called community facility at Boronia Park. Right now we are having trouble finding out the current status of this project.

In addition to The Trust’s efforts in responding to developments as they come to hand, we have begun work on a more pro-active educational project. Following a submission prepared by Kate Russell we received a small grant from Hunters Hill Council to prepare a pamphlet on Appropriate Design in Hunters Hill.

The idea is to raise awareness of the particular and varied character Hunters

Hill and what principles might govern an appropriate response to these. In the first instance we will be presenting a series of "case studies", which will be published on the web. Later these will be made into a booklet, which should be available through Council and estate agents.

This year I haven't nominated for the presidency. After 7 terms, which is only 3 short of Bob Menzies' ten terms, it's definitely time for someone else to have a go.

Tony Coote

AGM PART 2



Bulldozers in Kuringai – Alan Miller photo

Some time after the conclusion of the AGM it was pointed out that there was not a quorum (20 members) at the meeting so that the election of the office bearers was not legitimate. Rather than seeing this as a negative we decided to have another meeting and then show the film *State of Siege*. This time we achieved a quorum and we were able to ratify the work of the previous meeting before showing the film. *State of Siege* is a terrific agitprop documentary by Dennis Grosvenor, which focuses on the destruction of parts of Kuringai for multi unit housing as a result of the infamous part 3A planning legislation brought in by the NSW Government and what happens when the state removes planning powers from a local council.

The film starts with images of the demolition of a fine old house right next door to where Dennis lives in Roseville and moves on to horrendous images of what is happening in Kuringai. It also documents the corrupt history of late 20th century development in NSW including some wonderful old footage of 1970s battles involving the BLF and the Battlers for Kelly's Bush. It is the sad and sorry tale of the corruption of the planning process and the loss of historic houses, bushland and community itself to the developer's wrecking ball. It also shows the powerlessness of local councils and individuals to prevent the march of development. Despite all the gloom it is a

film that should have a much wider distribution so that more people can be activated to step up to save their neighbourhoods.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESKTOP – Robyn Christie

My dog takes me for a walk about three times a week. I call it our house patrol. It is to spot anything we should know about that smacks of changes to the dwindling, precious built fabric of Hunters Hill. Last week we stopped outside 11 Madeline Street.



Long invisible to the passerby because of a thick grove in front, the house has been vacant and wonderfully unaltered for some time. A For Sale sign had recently appeared and I enquired of someone who appeared to be doing work on the house whether they were family. Leticia Montgomery had grown up in the house and had many happy memories of living there. She explained regretfully that they were now selling the house but were hoping to find a purchaser who would respect and dutifully restore its fragile character.

While it is surely hoped that such a person is found, they are scarce on the ground. Citing the need to update, many think that the careful layering of history and fabric is to be eradicated, and restoration becomes destruction. Special qualities of place need a sensibility that reads them, a lightness of touch that allows them to stay intact, and a humbleness of spirit that breathes new life gently back into the historic core. We have a responsibility to respect and pass on to the future.

Hopefully a purchaser of the right ilk will be found, a person who will want to keep this gentle, polite and modest cottage and

bring it back to life in a special street in Hunters Hill.

Writing my first epistle as President of the Trust, I am somewhat in awe of both the title, but more importantly my predecessors in the role. Our immediate past President, Tony Coote, will be a very hard act to follow. Indeed, except in chronological terms, I cannot attempt to do so. Tony has given fulsomely, tirelessly and brilliantly to the role for two, four year terms. We cannot thank him enough for the time he has devoted to a community organisation formed back in 1968 to

protect a living environment, the garden suburb of Hunters Hill. As an architect, Tony sees the special character of the suburb clearly, writes eloquently and frequently about the details that need retaining, and acts continuously to promote and protect it. Having served as President, he continues his long standing role as the Trust's representative on the Council's Conservation Advisory Panel and has kindly

volunteered to take over as editor of the Trust's journal.

Let me also endorse Tony's thank-you at the AGM to our previous journal editor, Sally Gaunt who stepped down from the Committee in June. In addition to undertaking the exacting task of the journal, Sally meticulously organised all of the Trust's boat bookings. Much of the Committee's work is about public relations, and Sally has managed the AGMs, Christmas Parties and heaps of other occasions with an eye on detail and continuous participation that will be difficult to replace. As a small band of workers who have other lives, I am continually amazed at how much members of the Committee are able to give to the organisation. Thank you again to both Tony and Sally.

Hunters Hill's new LEP and The Gladesville Hospital master plan

Two items that are new on the agenda for the Executive are the Gladesville Hospital community workshops and the draft LEP consultations held with Hunters Hill Council. The Gladesville Hospital workshops were held in the week beginning 19 September. They reassured participants that there was no hidden agenda and that maximising financial returns through residential sell-offs was

not on the white board. Personally they seemed to be sensitive to the unique qualities of the site that needed retaining, but the time frame appeared far too short to enable a well-considered solution. We await their response (or otherwise) to the community's input.

Returning to the LEP. State government has drafted a pro forma (Standard Instrument) LEP that each local council is progressively substituting for their personalised statutory regulations. The irony that a local environment plan could be anything but locally scripted does not seem to have dawned on state planners! Needless to say there are optional, as well as mandatory, clauses and opportunities to add local content to standard clauses, but there appear to be real issues ahead.

The first is that there is no provision in the new standard instrument for the formation of a heritage advisory panel (currently the Conservation Advisory Panel). Its formation, as well as composition, will be fully dependent on provisions in a new DCP. While Heritage Items, Schedule 6 of the current LEP, will become Schedule 5 (Environmental Heritage) of the new instrument, Contributory Items, now Schedule 7, will cease to be part of it. This will entail a great deal of homework in terms of raising the banner on a number of items that are flagged as potential additional heritage items to make certain they are not excluded from the protection of statutory heritage listing. It is hoped, on the other hand, that the eclipsed contributory items will form part of a new DCP and that Council invests the time and money in extending this category across the whole Conservation Area. The anomaly of its exclusion from the Conservation Area in Hunters Hill to date has allowed many items that really do contribute to the special qualities of place, to be replaced by items that are completely disrespectful of place!

Changes to LEP 19 will occur without substantial changes to the LEPs governing the Hunters Hill Village and Gladesville. It is clear from the judgment over 58-60 Gladesville Road that potential discrepancies between the LEPs and DCPs for these areas need greater clarification, but it will be some years before the redrafting of elements within Council's DCPs can be addressed. While tidying up and co-ordinating the local planning regulations is ultimately to be applauded, the issues are not just consistency of policy but also consistency of process.

Let me end on a victory. The judgment for 58-60 Gladesville Road was handed down

in the Land and Environment Court at the beginning of August. The Trust had appeared at the hearing in May earlier this year. The Commissioner of the Court, Annelise Tuor, found in favour of Council and the appeal was dismissed. An insightful and important note in the judgment will hopefully add ammunition to our arguments against the far too numerous development applications that are potentially leering at the overpass. It states:

Extensions to the Hunters Hill Hotel were approved under existing use rights enjoyed by the hotel prior to the gazettal of the Village LEP and the adoption of DCP 27... The Hunters Hill Hotel does not exemplify the form of building sought by the planning controls. It will be the dominant building in the village located on prominent corner site. Other buildings in the Village should be subservient to the Hunters Hill Hotel and mitigate between its height and the height of existing buildings, particularly the single storey heritage cottages.

Robyn Christie

Photo of 11 Madeline St courtesy of Century 21 Maureen Smith Real Estate

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE FOR KELLY'S BUSH

This year is the 40th anniversary of the implementation in 1971 of the world's first Green Ban, which prevented the

property developers, AV Jennings, from bulldozing a patch of remnant bushland on Sydney Harbour and building 500 home units in a number of eight storey towers. The occasion was marked by a ceremonial tree planting, the unveiling of two plaques, the presentation of certificates and speeches from the participants and the mayor.

The green ban was the result of the tireless work of 13 women - The Battlers for Kelly's Bush. They are Jo Bell, Joan Croll, Kathleen Chubb, Christena Dawson, Mary Farrell, Marjorie Fitzgerald, Miriam Hamilton, Betty James, Trude Kallir, Kath Lehany, Monica Sheehan, Margaret Stobo, and Judith Taplin.

Five of the six remaining Battlers, Joan Croll, Christena Dawson, Miriam Hamilton, Kath Lehany and Monica Sheehan were given certificates from the National Trust and Sally Stobo accepted a certificate on behalf of her late aunt, Margaret Stobo. Trude Kallir is in a nursing home and was not able to attend.

These "Hunters Hill housewives" had fought the AV Jennings proposal for almost two years without any success, getting nowhere with either the Askin State government or Hunters Hill Council. Finally, on the suggestion of a local union organiser and future



minister in the Wran government, Rodney Cavalier, they approached the Builders Labourers' Federation to see if they could do anything to help and a meeting was arranged.

In the booklet *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush*, Jack Munday describes the meeting between a delegation from the Battlers and the BLF, "The Battlers made an impression. They were very passionate about their cause and highlighted the fact that this was the last bit of bush on those reaches of the Parramatta River. After the visitors had departed, the Executive discussed their cause. Some opined that since Builders Labourers couldn't afford to live in Hunters Hill, and none of us lived there, we should not become involved. Others argued that, if we were to be consistent, we should apply the same criteria, regardless of the wealth of an area. It was a question of the quality of life."

The BLF said they would support the Battlers on the proviso that they call a public meeting to determine that they enjoyed widespread support and that "it was not just a handful of residents concerned for their immediate amenity". Subsequently "over 500 people met and formally requested our union to impose a ban on work."

In the same way that there were concerns within the BLF about being associated with a bunch of silvertails from Hunters Hill, there were concerns in Hunters Hill about being associated with a bunch of communist unionists. Monica Sheehan said the issue split the community. In *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush*, Christena Dawson writes: "We found that after we had enlisted the help of the unions, there were people in the community who were horrified at this action. Prince Edward Parade became known as 'Red Square'."

The proposed development of Kelly's Bush was just one of a number of major developments mooted at this time, which were the catalyst for the formation of the Trust in 1968. However, any association with the BLF was bound to cause a few feathers to be ruffled amongst some of the Trust's membership. In *The Vision and the Struggle, An Account of the Hunters Hill Trust's First Twenty Years*, Reg Martin and Richard Temple write: "The fight for Kelly's Bush was another instance in which great concern was expressed by some members of the Trust when the Committee was

prepared to associate itself with what they saw as political forces."

Kelly's Bush had been designated as Public Open Space of County significance in the County of Cumberland Plan and Hunters Hill Council had bought some of the Sydney Smelting Company land in 1956 to create Weil Park. Martin and Temple write: "However, the 1969 Liberal State Government had dismissed the claim of County significance and let it be known through the SPA (State Planning Authority) that it could only find \$126,000 towards acquiring the derelict 5.6 acres of the former Sydney Smelting Company site itself for conversion to a harbourside reserve. The remainder of the value put on the whole area would have to be found by Hunters Hill Council, if the whole area were to be kept for open space."

"The 1969 Council was again divided, the majority believing that some development of Kelly's Bush was inevitable and desirable. Despite this setback The Trust maintained that the whole of Kelly's Bush should become parkland and the fight should go on, castigated the five aldermen who supported the alienation of the bush and declared that this action "weakened the whole case for the preservation of the district."

However, Martin and Temple go on to state that The Trust "was never able to take the decisive political action" to ensure the preservation of Kelly's Bush as open space, and that "a group of dedicated local women formed a group calling itself *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush*".

The Battlers "in all their activities were strongly supported by The Trust. This was not without its problems however, for some members of the Trust Committee were so concerned at the Trust allying itself with what they perceived as a 'political' (i.e. left-wing) organization, that they attempted to prevent the Trust from joining the Battlers in a Town Hall meeting in June 1971 to protest against the threatened subdivision. The joint Battlers/Trust meeting was attended by more than 400 residents, who resolved to ask the Minister for Local Government to re-open the question of the Bush's future".

The issue was finally resolved when the Wran Government purchased the land in 1983 and, despite The Trust's

objections, handed it over to Hunters Hill Council.

In 1989, when *The Vision and the Struggle* was published, Martin and Temple comment: "It is interesting how Council officers and former aldermen, who at the time were either all for compromise or quite opposed to the Trust's views (with very few actively supporting either the Trust or the Battlers), are now proudly asserting the value of such a recreational area in the municipality."

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Tony Coote

NEWS UPDATE

To get more detail of all aspects of the Trust's work, visit our website. The Trust has input into some of what happens in Hunters Hill through our membership of Hunters Hill Council's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP), through submissions made in response to various proposals and through our input to hearings of the Land and Environment Court. The Trust also receives queries and submissions from its members regarding problems with developments in their backyards.

40 PLAQUES

Trust members Gil Walquist and Beverley Sherry have been heavily involved in the project to install 40 bronze plaques in the footpaths on the peninsula. Gil and Bev were ably assisted by Phil Jenkyn and Patti Mackenzie. The plaques are a project of the Historical Society of Hunters Hill and the Hunters Hill Council. The plaques identify the special nature of Hunters Hill, drawing attention to some of the outstanding heritage-listed sites in the area.

FERRY TRIP

Once again, the Trust sponsored a ferry trip around the foreshores of Hunters Hill. Around 50 people boarded the Rosman Ferries boat Lithgow at the Alexandra Street wharf on Sunday 30 October for a trip up the Lane Cove River and then up Tarban Creek, which included a short detour into the Woolwich Dock. Thanks to Phil Jenkyn, Graham Percival and Tony Coote.

ROBYN CHRISTIE GRADUATES IN ARCHITECTURE

Congratulations to our president Robyn Christie who this year completed her architecture degree. This is a fantastic achievement for a mature age student who managed to juggle a wide range of activities and responsibilities at the same time as undertaking the massive task of learning new technical skills and completing the rigorous program of assignments and examinations demanded by an architecture degree course.



BUILDING IN HUNTERS HILL - CASE STUDIES

The first of the case studies referred to in the AGM report is now on the website.

Case Study #1 is about front gardens and fences. The most important contribution to the streetscape and character of Hunters Hill is the front fence and garden.

Throughout the Municipality, the character of each street is quite varied as is the nature of the front gardens of houses. Check out further examples on the website. Other case studies will look at new houses and alterations and additions to existing houses.

HUNTERS HILL HIGH FENCE

Since work stopped some months ago, Council has been in consultation with the Education Department in an attempt to have the fence revised to lessen its impact. No news yet.

MORE FENCE PROBLEMS

The Trust has been pursuing a number of cases of recently-built front fences that do not comply with Council's guidelines. In one case the 1800 high fence was reduced to 1200 high on an order from Council. Another case is ongoing, with a Section 96 submitted by the owners in order to gain approval after the fact.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE HUNTERS HILL VILLAGE

Hunters Hill Hotel

Work will presumably begin when enough units have been sold off the plan to finance construction. The failure to sell units at a premium price was one of the

reasons the previous scheme did not get out of the ground.

1 and 3 Ryde Road

The owners of numbers 1 and 3 Ryde Road (the two-heritage listed timber cottages) have employed a planner to talk to Council about possible developments that would retain the cottages.

58-60 Ryde Road

The Hotel owners' proposal for the redevelopment of 58-60 Ryde Road (the old banks sites) ended up in the Land and Environment Court to court as a deemed refusal after 40 days had elapsed. As Robyn Christie noted in her report, the Court did not support the developer's appeal. The developer is currently involved in discussions with Council about amendments to the scheme.

Mapledorams Corner

There is a proposal for a massive redevelopment of Mapledorams Corner, which the developers have taken to court on the basis that it was a deemed refusal because Council did not assess it within forty days.

25-27 Ryde Road

Similarly the development for units at 25-27 Ryde Road will also be determined in the court. The Trust has made submissions opposing both these developments and will attend the court to advise the assessor of our views.

OTHER WATCHING BRIEFS

The Trust is keeping a watching brief on a number of other developments, including - proposed changes to the Riverside Reserve at Tarban Creek and the proposal put from the Hunters Hill Rugby Club for a "community facility" in Boronia Park

trees whose trunks punctuate their appearance from the street in just the same way that we used to draw the elevations of our student projects 50 years ago.



Aalto's Studio

What struck me about Aalto's house (1936) and studio (1955) was how well they sat in the landscape, their simple detailing, their restrained use of colour and materials and how modest and appropriate the spaces were.



Aalto's house interior

Like his houses, Aalto's furniture designs have also stood the test of time and Artek, the company Aalto set up, is still manufacturing many pieces. The furniture is also spare, modest and finely crafted, you can see them at www.aalto.com/aalto-furniture.

The return of featurism

Alvar Aalto's house and the houses in its vicinity are in stark contrast to the grossness of so much of what is being built these days, particularly in Hunters Hill.

This year marks to 50th anniversary of the publication of Robin Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness*. In it he rails against *featurism*, which he describes as "not simply a decorative technique; it starts in concepts and extends upwards through the parts to the numerous trimmings. It may be defined as the subordination of the essential whole and the accentuation of selected separate features."

MUSINGS

An occasional column

Alvar Aalto

On a recent trip to Germany we stopped over in Helsinki and made a pilgrimage to Alvar Aalto's house and studio, which are both museums and open to the public.

The short tram ride from the centre of Helsinki takes you into the wooded suburbs where Aalto lived and worked. I felt I'd walked right into the pages of the RIBA Journal of 1961, my first year at the architecture faculty of Sydney. The houses are set among pine and birch



Drawing by Robin Boyd

Looking around the latest creations of the project builders (and some architects) in Hunters Hill, it is clear that featurism is alive and well. The feature sandstone-veneered wall and column has made a most unwelcome return to the neighbourhood.

As well, many new houses are gratuitously complex in form, which is a feature in itself. They also feature a multitude of different materials and gratuitous bigness. Bigness is definitely a feature because it has nothing to do with the way a house functions, nothing to do with homeliness and nothing to do with energy efficiency.

The bigger the room, the more materials are used to build it, the more space it takes up on the ground and the more energy is used to heat and cool it, to say nothing of the environmental impact of the latest fashion in Hunters Hill, which is to chop out hundreds of cubic metres of sandstone bedrock for a multi-car garage.

Alvar Aalto's houses were built when the word "sustainable" wasn't part of the architect's lexicon. Yet simply because of their modesty in size and use of materials they would outperform the majority of new houses built in Australia today.

Infill in Porvoo and Frankfurt

As a tourist I mostly gravitate to the old quarters of cities and hunt out the ancient buildings to wander around in. It's rare that anything built in the last 100 years grabs my imagination. Of course there are some major exceptions such as Norman Foster's Reichstag renovation or Hiroshi Hara's Kyoto railway station.



Kyoto Station



Porvoo Old Town

Outside of Helsinki is the small town of Porvoo, which is famed for its Old Town (Gamla Stan in Swedish – the language of many parts of Finland) and which is a proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It has many old timber framed houses and shops with a street pattern dating back to mediaeval times. It was almost demolished in the 19th century by a new urban plan for the city (sounds familiar) but the plan was cancelled due to popular resistance headed by a local count. The houses are painted in a variety of colours, with a deep red used in the warehouses along the river the dominant hue.



Porvoo new housing

A new housing estate designed by Tuomas Siitonen, on the opposite side of the river, picks up on the elements of the old town but with a clearly contemporary take, making for a very

successful, sympathetic and appropriate development.

The Altstadt or old city in Frankfurt is one of those tourist places that exist within the confines of a much larger modern city but it has some of the most interesting modern infill buildings I have seen. Much of urban fabric of the Altstadt was rebuilt after WW2 as reconstructions of the original buildings.

The more recent buildings have picked up on the scale, form and subdivision pattern of the original and reinterpreted it in a wonderfully inventive and striking way.



Frankfurt Altstadt infill development

It would have taken a brave planning officer to have signed off on these buildings but I'm really glad she did.

Tony Coote



CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year's Christmas Cocktail party will be held at the heritage-listed home of Sean and Beverley Sherry, which they have kindly agreed to open to The Trust for the evening.

When: Wednesday 7 December, 6.30pm

Where: 22 Woolwich Road

Cost: \$45 per person

RSVP with cheque to The Secretary, PO Box 85, Hunters Hill, 2110

Bank transfer (please include your name)
Westpac, Gladesville –
BSB 032185 - Acct No. 500410