



# Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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## Council Acts On Town Plan!

On Tuesday December 7th, 1976, Hunter's Hill Council passed, in an open Council meeting, the version of the Town Plan which it will submit to the State Government. The Town Clerk estimated that the remainder of the paper-work could be completed by the end of the year. This will culminate, the Council hopes, nearly ten years of work on the Town Plan by this and previous councils, the Municipal staff, the State Planning and Environment Commission, Commissioner Dale, and many objectors and contributors, such as the Hunter's Hill Trust. Council will negotiate with the Planning and Environment Commission towards prescription of the Planning Scheme, and will notify each objector as to the result of his or her objection.

The Hunter's Hill Trust feels that Council is to be highly commended for its decision to release to the public the Town Clerk's and Commissioner Dale's Reports, on which many of Council's decisions were based. The Trust has been urging the release of such relevant documents for several years, in view of public interest and concern. Had these documents not been released, the obligatory open meeting for the passing of Council's decisions would have been meaningless (examples: "Pressures for Preservation ... that this matter be noted", "Land Use Table ... that the Town Clerk's comment be adopted"). In the next issue of the JOURNAL, the Trust's Town Planning Subcommittee will report in detail on the results of the Trust's objections. Commissioner Dale's Report covers forty-one pages, the Town Clerk's Report covers one hundred and sixty-seven, the Report of Council's Town Planning Committee is eleven pages of briefly noted decisions; decoding and comparison of the reports will be necessary before the Trust can reach an informed opinion of the Council's decisions.

Some brief comments, however, can be made in the interim. The Trust regrets that only four decisions were discussed in open Council. Council spent forty minutes in the open, after years of planning, in passing its decisions, then spent twenty minutes publicly congratulating each other, the staff, previous aldermen, etc. While we hope that the Planning Scheme is a matter for congratulations, as certainly its completion is, the public would have been better served by more explanation and discussion. Those four matters were:

1. Ald. Baird moved that Council accept Commissioner Dale's recommendation (and that of the consultant town planner) that **Kelly's Bush** be zoned as County Open Space. She quoted the Battler's and Trust's evidence, suggested that the area is an almost unique example of restoration of land partially destroyed by industrial pollution (Smelting Works); there is another Government in State Parliament which claims to be more sympathetic to the environment — we should give

them an opportunity to purchase or swap other land for it; let us test their sincerity.

Ald. Farrant spoke against the motion, stating that this issue was the greatest political football he had ever witnessed, that he has lived in the Municipality for twenty-six years and is proud of the fact that we have achieved part of Kelly's Bush and Clarke's Point; if you take the population and subtract residents of St. Joseph's, Gladesville Hospital, Montefiore Home, etc., you have only about 12,000 people and a third of the land non-ratable. There is no way we could afford Kelly's Bush, no way the State Government will buy it; this is not a feasible concept within the eye of the ordinary man; the segregation of this piece of land will not assist you in any way.

The motion was lost, Ald. Baird, Swain, Quinn voting in favour of zoning Kelly's Bush as County Open Space.

2. Ald. Swain moved that the Commissioner's recommendations ("during the period in which the State Planning Authority is examining the objections a physical survey of the foreshores be carried out with a view to fixing building lines not exceeding those shown on the exhibited planning scheme map and having regard to topography, reclamations and existing development; the Council adopt by resolution a foreshore building line based on the results of the survey and the SPA be requested to show this on the map") be accepted. She stated that this would be a rational approach to preserving the foreshore amenity and trees, that to go against the recommendation of the Commissioner and consultant town planner, and then to reduce the **foreshore building line** from 15 metres to 10 metres is taking a much more rigid attitude than necessary. Hunter's Hill, because it is a peninsula with rocky foreshores and difficult terrain, needs consideration of areas on their own merits. The motion was lost, Alds. Swain and Baird voting in favour of the Commissioner's recommendations.

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'Helensleigh'  
58 Woolwich Road

'Helensleigh' was built of cedar blocks on a stone foundation in 1889 by Frederick Cameroux, Marine Engineer, who bought the land in 1887 from A. T. Weary. He was born in Sydney in 1844, the son of a French Master Mariner of Huguenot descent who had settled in Sydney about 1831. Frederick married Helen Newton in 1870; she had come from Fifeshire as a child with her family in 1852. In about 1885, Cameroux came to Hunter's Hill to take charge of the workshops of Jeanneret in Fern Bay, near where the Pulpit Point Oil tanks now stand. Jeanneret, builder of 'Wybalena', operated the Parramatta Ferry Service. The carpenters who came from France, and did much of the joiner work on 'Wybalena' it is said, built 'Helensleigh'. The Cameroux lived in Ferry Street and then in Alexandra Street until the cedar house in Woolwich Road was completed. The adjacent land comprised all that behind the 'Helensleigh' block, extending from Serpentine Road to Gladstone Avenue and the rocks above Vernon Street. Behind the house and to the east, a tennis court was built, and this was the social centre from the 1890's, until Frederick's death in 1910 (he had become an instructor in Engineering at Sydney Technical College.)

Prior to 1914, "The Rocks" section of land was purchased by Dearman — a connection of the Lavers family, long-time resident of Woolwich Road and known as music teachers, particularly the blind pianist Gordan Lavers. The remaining land remained as more or less virgin bush, until the death of Helen Cameroux in 1928. The property had a little earlier been purchased from her by Jean Octave Mouton, a Rabaul planter, whose wife was Helen Cameroux's niece. The property was sold by Mouton and the balance of the rocks area was built on, probably before 1939.

THE OLD HOUSES OF HUNTER'S HILL nears completion and publication. The Hunter's Hill Trust would like to express its deep appreciation to the many house owners and historical researchers who have given valuable information. Not all of the information received will fit into the book, but the JOURNAL will be able to run an historical column for some time to come. The historical descriptions reprinted below have, in large part, been supplied by the owners of the houses.

Christine Hoheneder, Gunther Rechberger and Christian Seruzier have photographed about two hundred and fifty of the houses in Hunter's Hill. They exhibited "blow-ups" of some of the photographs at the General Meetings and are willing to provide others (at a very moderate cost) on request. The photos on these pages are examples of their work. The etching of Fig Tree House was done by Graham Bryce; prints are available at the Trust Centre.



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### 3. Lane Cove Valley Freeway:

Ald. Swain expressed appreciation of Council's support in pressing for the removal of the County Road Reservation along the Lane Cove River and suggesting instead zoning it Private Open Space.

### 4. Mobil Oil: Ald. Swain

requested that the Town Clerk explain why Council feels the land at Pulpit Point should be zoned 4(c) Industrial Special. The Town Clerk's Report explained that, while residential zoning would make the Mobil installation a non-conforming use and would bring the control of the development within Part IV of the Ordinance where there is provision for limitation of expansion, the Industrial zoning and the limitations applied in the Land Use Table, together with Clause 51, give better control of the situation.

A Statement of Intention is to be included in the Ordinance, as well as provision for the Townscape Advisory Committee and a small Village Precinct. Subdivision sizes appear to have been reduced, but further comment at this stage by the Trust would be premature. Copies of the Town Planning Reports will be available at the Town Hall at printing cost. The Hunter's Hill Trust hopes that members will continue their interest in the Planning Scheme as it may be at least a year before it comes into effect, and even then may depend on State legislation. But at last, the Town Plan has come out of the dark.



'Fig Tree House'  
1 Reiby Road

The history of the property is particularly interesting, in view of its connection with several pioneers of note. The stone cottages, built in 1836, which are still complete and form part of the present house, were convict-built for Mary Reiby to accommodate labour for Figtree Farm ("two cottages for the men"). The property, of 110 acres, took its name from the large Port Jackson Fig beside which the cottages are built.

In 1838, during Mary Reiby's ownership, the property was leased to the noted artist, Joseph Fowles, who described it extensively in his journal of that year.

In 1848 Didier Joubert purchased the entire property from Mrs. Reiby. In adding a stone wing and a paved verandah, he transformed the simple cottages into a charming house. This was the first home of the Joubert family in this district. Didier Joubert occupied the house until St. Malo (now demolished) was completed. It was later occupied by his son Numa, who having taken over the Lane Cover River Ferry Service following the death of his father in 1881, added the timber tower complex. This was built by shipwright Joseph Howard (whose family still lives in Hunter's Hill) and completed in 1895.

In architectural terms, Figtree House may be described as a conglomerate, romantic house, incorporating two stone cottages (1836), stone additions (1849) and a tower complex in timber (1895). Prominently situated beside Fig Tree Bridge, this house has long been a Hunter's Hill landmark, associated through many decades with a ferry service and, when that ceased, with boatsheds and a jetty where the bridge is now.

## 'Croxted' 8 Gale Street

The small piece of land on which the cottage 'Croxted' was built has quite a spirited history in more ways than one. First, it changed hands five times from 1846 to 1882, and throughout its history and that of the house itself, many of its occupants have been connected with the wine and spirit business — perhaps its proximity to the Woolwich Pier Hotel which originally stood opposite, over the road in Gale Street, may have something to do with this — but certainly the number of wine bottles, some in perfect condition, which are crammed under all the four fireplaces, bear testimony to a very gay past!

This small piece of land, 1 rod 2 perches, is part of eleven acres originally granted to Thomas Dyer Edwards on June 6, 1836, by Major General Richard Bourke, Governor of the Colony of N.S.W. Sometime in the next ten years the land passed into the hands of an Englishwoman, Caroline Mary Michel, "spinster, of Dewlish House, Dorset, England", who sold it to Isaac Vincent, "licensed victualler" of 'Mundarlo', N.S.W. on June 6, 1846 for forty pounds. Isaac Vincent died intestate a year later and the land passed into the hands of his son, Demas Vincent, who also died intestate. The next sale showed that it was bought by his son, William Charlacombe Vincent for 100 pounds sterling on January 1, 1882. He sold the land three weeks later on January 23rd to Victoria Louisa Riley (nee Vincent, his brother's widow of Wagga Wagga; Elizabeth Vincent, widow, of 'Rock Cottage', Wagga Wagga; and Joseph Monahan, Wesleyan Minister of Wagga Wagga and later Arncliffe — for 150 pounds sterling.

Ten years later Joseph Monahan, presumably having bought out or outlived the two widows, sold the land to George Fesq, wine and spirit merchant, on September 19th, 1892 for 600 pounds sterling. He was a well-known identity in Hunter's Hill. In 1860 he had built for himself and family a stone house in Hunter Street overlooking Valentia Street Wharf, which he called Veredlaise. This is still standing though nearly covered by undergrowth. George Fesq built three more houses in the area, the first one being 'Croxted' around 1890.

From the turn of the century onwards, the house appears to have acquired a rather seedy reputation, being rented at one time for the sum of ten shillings a week. It is rumoured to have been a brothel at one stage, the sailors and workers at nearby Morts Dock making merry opposite at the Woolwich Pier Hotel and then over the road to 'Croxted' for further merriment. The battered condition of the original front door is said to have been due to their over-enthusiastic visits.

The house was next sold to Archibald Stewart Edwards, "Accountant-Gentleman", who improved the moral tone and the condition of the house and lived there with his family until February, 1932. Subsequent owners have included a medical practitioner, a commercial traveller and a pharmaceutical chemist.



## THE GENERAL MEETING

The General Meeting of the Hunter's Hill Trust was held on December 1st, at the RSL Hall in Alexandra Street. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting in May were read and confirmed, and the Treasurer's Report was passed. The President's Report included the following items:

1. A House Inspection will be held on Sunday, December 12th, of 'Cambridge', 'Oatlands' and 'Glenrock' (enquiries 89-5175 or 89-2240).
2. The republication of THE OLD HOUSES OF HUNTER'S HILL (Part II, as it was) proceeds, albeit slowly because of the wealth of information still being received — see pages 2 and 3 of this issue.
3. The Town Plan will be finalised by Council at an open meeting at 7:30, December 7th — see page 1 of this issue.

The Guest Speaker was Joseph Glascott, Environment Writer for the Sydney Morning Herald. He warned that governments and developers should beware when they cast eyes on historic areas of beauty like Hunter's Hill, as the Hunter's Hill genie has shown that it is not one to be trifled with.

**"It was here that much of the momentum of the historic buildings preservation movement began, in the battle to save St. Malo. Although this campaign was not successful, it set resident action in motion thereafter throughout Australia. In 1968 I was writing articles about Hunter's Hill again, this time about local protest against home unit development. Then into the early 70's the fight to Save Kelly's Bush began a movement that had a profound effect on conservation in the 70's and which has attracted attention overseas. In 1971, as a result of the Kelly's Bush campaign, a Union Green Ban movement was born. Green Bans had a tremendous effect on correcting the excesses of developers at that time. The movement has faded in Sydney, but the legacy goes on with the Newport power station ban in Melbourne and the transport ban on uranium from Mary Kathleen in Queensland. Now, whether we agree or not with the present extension of union bans, we can acknowledge that they had their start here. What I am saying is that Hunter's Hill was in the vanguard of the conservation movement in Australia.**

**"The conservation movement snowballed into general awareness in the last six years. The 1970's is the age when Australians discovered their historic heritage. At the last count there were**

**more than five hundred conservation and environmental groups in Australia including almost two hundred in N.S.W. Now villages welcome historic classification by the National Trust. There have been great advances on the front of preserving historic and architecturally interesting buildings.**

**"The N.S.W. Heritage Bill and the Federal Heritage Commission, when they complete their registers, will give enormous Government backing. Even so, we are still fighting for buildings such as Town's Bond, Miller's Point. It is difficult to know just how far to go in preservation.**

**"The Maritime Services Board is one of the most difficult State instrumentalities to deal with on conservation — it and other departments operate with only their own interests in mind. This is why the State Heritage Act will be so important.**

**"More and more the conservation movement moves towards broader issues, such as uranium mining, saving the forests, and the logical extension is to the concept of a no-growth society. This is probably the most perplexing issue mankind has been faced with, at least I think so. How does the present economic system continue while preserving man's environment? Our society is based on growth and a high rate of consumption of natural resources and continuing development. The Club of Rome raised some very disturbing questions, and a no-growth society seems to be the only way in which they can be answered. While we struggle with this question, many people are hoping that some community, one like Hunter's Hill in the early days of conservation, will find us the answer."**

The Hunter's Hill Trust thanks Mr. Glascott for the stimulus he provided. The JOURNAL will publish letters from its readers on this subject in the next issue. Write to The Editor, The Hunter's Hill Trust JOURNAL, P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill. The General Meeting closed with Christmas festivities and fare provided by the Activities Subcommittee.

### WANTED

Executive/Manager to run the Trust Centre. Elegant surroundings, contact with the art world — location Hunter's Hill Gallery, corner of Ferry and Alexandra Streets. Duties: organise roster for attendance at desk, summarise accounts of items sold, public relations. Suit retired person or stay-at-home parent with small children. Reward: gratitude, praise, public recognition.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name ..... Telephone.....  
Address ..... Postcode .....  
Willing to help with .....  
Type of Membership: Single — \$2.00  
Family — \$4.00  
Pensioner — \$1.00  
Youth — \$1.00

The Hunter's Hill Trust,  
Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110

The Trust Centre  
The Hunter's Hill Gallery