



Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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TRASH OR TREASURE SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORES

Representatives of the Hunter's Hill Trust attended a meeting of organisations such as ours, with a strong interest in the conservation of Sydney Harbour, on February 14th. The meeting was held at the suggestion of the Total Environment Centre, and served the double purpose of informing each group about endangered or deplorable areas around the Harbour, and of engendering unanimity of purpose in those wishing to construct an over-all plan for Harbour use and preservation to present to the authorities who decide the fates of separate areas in a piecemeal fashion.

Vincent Serventy, naturalist and Hunter's Hill resident, foreshadowed discussion by writing (SMH, 14/2):

We know that the waters of the Harbour are so polluted that it is dangerous to eat oysters and mussels from them and it is illegal to gather them.

We know that with the approval of the Maritime Services Board many owners of harbourside property have been allowed to fill in sections of their waterfront so obtaining public land almost for nothing.

We know that the Sydney Harbour National Park, so proudly proclaimed in the 1960's, is still bogged down with red tape and some of the most important sections, such as Bantry Bay, are not to be included.

We know that public access to the foreshores of Sydney Harbour is limited and, even where it is legally available, lack of publicity and interference by home owners has made it difficult for the public to take advantage of it.

We know that many suburbs have few foreshore parks.

The Hunter's Hill Trust stated in the JOURNAL (Vol. V, No.1), that the Maritime Services Board had been selling land — over 150 segments in Hunter's Hill alone. At about the time of the next election, the Maritime Services Board was instructed to cease this practice. They do not, however, give out information to the public as to what they do.

see inside...

HOUSE INSPECTION APRIL 1
RESTORATION AND RENOVATION
CLEAN AIR CAMPAIGN

The Hunter's Hill Trust holds picnics on foreshore reserves and distributes a map showing areas open to the public. It is all too true that residents "garden" beyond their boundaries, thus disguising where the park begins.

Hunter's Hill Council has shown an interest in acquiring foreshore land as it becomes available, and it is to be hoped that this will have as high a priority in their spending as does the sports pavilion in Boronia Park.

Endangered portions of Hunter's Hill's waterfront are:

the Lane Cove River mangrove area (should a future government proceed with the expressway)

Kelly's Bush (the lower reserve would be adversely affected by building above it)

Pulpit Point (with its danger of oil spills or worse)

Army land (which is subject to Army decisions on use of Morts Dock).

In addition, it is probable that the entire length of foreshore is affected by the run-off pesticides used for gardening, including Council's poisoning of weeds along gutters; seepage from sewers after heavy rain; and the wash and slick from boats.

To solve these problems — or at least make sure they do not get worse — requires over-all planning and co-ordination between the Army, oil companies, several ministries and statutory bodies of the State Government, and local councils.

With this co-ordination and consultative role in view, the representatives of groups such as the Hunter's Hill Trust elected a steering committee. The steering committee will consider what sort of organisation might be formed which could present a comprehensive plan (made up of information gathered from experts and from local knowledge) to the relevant governments, of what should be done with Sydney's harbour foreshores.

(For further information contact Alice Oppen, member of the Steering Committee for Sydney Harbour Protection.)

(continued, p.3)

RESTORATION AND RENOVATION

Roofing materials

In a previous issue of the JOURNAL (Vol. VII, No. 2), the first in a series of articles outlined the aspects of the streetscape which determine the character of Hunter's Hill. The significance of the outline or profile of a building in terms of its contribution to the "atmosphere" of the townscape was described, and this issue focuses on the roof.

To maintain visual consistency, it is necessary to follow through with the detailed components such as material, colour and texture of the roof and fascias, walls and windows. It is worth looking closely at the visual components of one of these. Slate roofing, for example, was commonly used in the period covering the construction of most old houses in Hunter's Hill.

The visual components of slate roofing are:

1. Dark grey colour
2. Matt finish, not glossy
3. Various laying patterns
4. Basically flat texture
5. Reasonably steep pitches.

Several attempts have been made locally in renovating old houses by re-roofing with grey coloured roof tiles. These attempts have failed usually as they have not satisfied perhaps two of the five criteria (colour and pitch).

It is possible to obtain slate-coloured, unglazed (matt finish), simple profiled concrete tiles which satisfy the colour, finish, pitch and partly the texture requirements.

Better again is to use asbesto cement pre-coloured shingles, which are the modern equivalent of slates. These can be used to almost totally satisfy the visual components of the old slate roofs.

The best and most obvious answer, of course, is to re-roof with slate. Slates can be bought new, but they can also be bought second-hand from old places being demolished and from second-hand building materials dealers. Usually only sound slates are obtainable in this way, because any cracked slates break during removal from the original roof.

Additionally, other visually important elements can be obtained in second-hand yards, for example, chimney pots. It is therefore possible to renovate or restore an old home and at the same time maintain the significant characteristics of the original roof.

Other roofing materials such as corrugated iron, shingles, terracotta tiles, bitumen similarly have significant characteristics which contribute to the public recognition of the usual particular style of architecture.

One common feature with these older materials is the pitch (or steepness) of the roof. This came about basically from the interwoven causes: the popular style of the time (which was basically European) and which had the necessity to shed snow, and the constraints of the materials themselves which necessitated steepness to get rainwater quickly off the roof to avoid its being blown under the joints in the roofing.

It is the availability today of long sheet materials such as Kliplok which overcomes this problem and permits the "flat" metal roofs on modern buildings.



(Bayfield, 3 Woolwich Road) Slate and corrugated iron were typical roof finishes. Chimneys and chimney pots contributed significantly to roof profiles.

Once the basic profile and texture of the roof has been achieved, the next characteristic to concentrate on, if the building has been painted, is colour.

The popular colours typical of each historic period for external walls and trim are very comprehensively shown in "Restoring Old Australian Houses and Buildings: An Architectural Guide" by Howard Tanner and Philip Cox. These colour charts also demonstrate the colours used internally, room by room.

Next in importance is the solid to void ratio, which is simply the basic pattern which windows, doors and verandahs have on the total wall of a building. The simplest example of this is probably with windows. Most old buildings have vertically rectangular, instead of horizontally rectangular windows (which are common on modern homes). This was due primarily to the problems that were experienced at the time with wide spans in the walling. Additionally, vertical shutters contributed to the visual emphasis on verticality in the windows of many styles of old buildings.

This general pattern of doors, windows, shutters, etc., is an important ingredient in maintaining the visually recognisable style of a building. This will be described in more detail in the next Trust JOURNAL.



(28 Ferry Street) Curved corrugated iron for bullnose verandahs, as well as other curved profiles, is still available in Sydney from tankmakers.

The Australian Conservation Foundation conducted a cruise around the foreshores on February 25th. The cruise was exhaustive, lasting for six and a half hours, extending from the Heads to Homebush Bay. Members of conservation organisations spoke about their areas at risk while the areas were in view, and several major points emerged.

1. The proposed Sydney Harbour National Park will take in areas predominantly northeast of the Harbour Bridge. These lands are relatively unspoilt because they were reserved for military use. Sadly, Bantry Bay has not been included. Considerable expense and manpower will be required of the National Parks and Wildlife Service to maintain these areas so that they are not harmed by people using them.
2. The foreshore southwest of the Bridge appears to have been used predominantly by industry and rubbish-dumpers. Little greenery has survived, and the local committee is having a very difficult struggle to get the Government, bordering industries and mushrooming density developments to commit land for greenery.
3. The National Trust is having some success with its attempts, now several years old, to persuade occupiers of waterfront land to screen their buildings with treescaping. The National Trust will eventually contact all occupiers along the southern eyesore stretch — the 'before' and 'after' examples were markedly different.

Many residents of Hunter's Hill travel by ferry, many drive over bridges. The entire Harbour is our environment, and it is to be hoped that co-operation between harbour groups will bring an awareness of its importance and its magnificence both to the people who decide its fate and to the people who rubbish its foreshores with the detritus of man.

In Memoriam

The Hunter's Hill Trust wishes to record its regret at the demolition of a stone wall which had been recognised by the National Estate, the National Trust and the Hunter's Hill Trust as a valuable scenic part of local heritage. The stone wall, late of 46 Woolwich Road, has been replaced by cement blocks. Unfortunately, this inexplicable change was not reported to the Trust until after the event, when even the Heritage Council could not put Humpty's wall back together again.

In Future

The Hunter's Hill Trust hopes to produce a pamphlet describing the features of houses, landscape (and walls) which are essential in the preservation of historic properties. This information will be distributed through such avenues as real estate agents and Hunter's Hill Council, in an effort to interest new owners in features which contribute to the atmosphere of Hunter's Hill (see Restoration and Renovation, p.1).

Clean Air Campaign

The Total Environment Centre has written to the Trust inviting us and individual Trust members to join a campaign for clean air in Sydney.

A recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald stated that, while the World Health Organisation has recommended 6 parts per hundred million as the goal for air quality, Sydney has 25 to 30 parts per hundred million as a typical annual maximum (Tokyo has 39 pphm, Los Angeles has 38-40 pphm). Sydney's one million motor vehicles emit 158 tonnes of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere. Air pollution has thus become a major threat to the health, not just of infants and the elderly (affected by 15-25 pphm), but to normal, healthy adults.

Motor vehicle and oil companies and the NRMA have been pressing State and Federal governments to weaken air pollution restraints. Under the Clean Air Act the NSW Government regulates polluting emissions from motor vehicles and industry. At present Federal design rules support the State motor vehicle regulations.

While measures introduced in Tokyo and Los Angeles have resulted in falling pollution levels, Sydney's levels are rising. In February, the Australian Transport Advisory Council deferred for a month the question of introducing more stringent vehicle exhaust emission controls, a partial victory for motor interests.

The Hunter's Hill Trust has written to the State and Federal Ministers who will meet to decide the fate of future controls, and again urges long-term planning to preserve or restore what we have left of the environment. Perhaps all meetings which decide the fate of pollution controls should take place on a median strip in Victoria Road.

In Los Angeles, schools instruct children not to run on high-pollution days, because the children might breathe too deeply.

NOISE ABATEMENT, or Identifying Flying Objects

A letter from the Sydney Airport Noise Abatement Committee has been forwarded to the Trust by Council, and members may be interested in some of its details:

"As you would be aware, Hunter's Hill lies underneath the flight path used by aircraft approaching Sydney Airport to land on the northern end of the north south runway. Aircraft overlying the area would be approximately 445 metres above ground level.

"The 'Curfew' at Sydney applies between the hours 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Contrary to what is often thought to be the case the curfew has never been intended to apply to turbo propeller or piston engine propeller driven aircraft. The curfew is designed to prohibit jet operations at the airport within these hours unless a situation occurs where there is an operational safety factor involved. Aircraft landings and departures during curfew are favoured over Botany Bay. There were relatively few occasions during the four monthly period when aircraft either landed or departed over Hunter's Hill during curfew.

"Specific details of aircraft noise nuisance would help considerably in any future investigations.

TRUST ACTIVITIES

HOUSE INSPECTION

April 1st, 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. — Tickets 89 2035
Three cottages in Bateman's Road — One Joubert house

The area around Bateman's Road was settled long before residential development began in the mid 19th century on the peninsula of Hunter's Hill. Land grants had been taken up as early as 1795, and by the early 1840's tracts of land had been developed as orchards, dairies, vineyards and farmlands. Some of the stone cottages in the area still have the appearance of early farmhouses, in particular, Surrey (24 Bateman's Road) and 31 Mars Street. The plan of these cottages was generally four rooms with a central hall and a verandah on at least three sides. If more rooms were required, the verandah form was extended or timber additions built on at the back.

(related by Jim Reeves)

My grandfather, John Reeves, had the first dairy. Although he lived in Bateman's Road, he leased (from a Miss Isler) an area bordered by Sunnyside, Hillcrest and Isler Streets — then known as Isler Park — to graze and keep his herd of cattle. This area was studded with beautiful big trees and had good grass. Later it was sold, and the dairy was relocated in Bateman's Road. Then, Bateman's Road was only as wide as a lane and was deeply rutted by the many carts using it. The house on the corner of Bateman's Road and Victoria Road (then the Great North Road) belonged to the local midwife, Nurse Jones (later Mrs. Brett), and many locals first saw the light of day there. In 1916, when Council decided to make a road, there wasn't enough width for a footpath on the right hand side, and my grandfather donated eight feet of his land to ensure that a footpath would be available. He had already built four stone houses on that side, but apart from the midwife's house on the corner, there were only two other houses, all the rest was paddocks as far as Venus Street. On the opposite side there were a number of houses.

Bateman's Road going down to the little bridge was very rocky and extremely steep. On our milk run, we would walk our horses and carts down, as we were always concerned that there could be an accident.

52 Bateman's Road was originally part of a land grant of sixty acres given to James Devlin on 30th May, 1844 (a grant supposedly given for his services as a notary). It is possible, however, that a small farmhouse existed on the site at that time and that this farmhouse was incorporated into the later cottage. Differences in style of stone and building are evident; only part of the right hand side of the building and the double gables are cut blocks of sandstone, the rest of the exterior is rough rubble walling. On the left hand side of the cottage an earlier doorway is evident in the rubble walling where a window was placed at a later date. The present verandah is a replacement, but three sides of the cottage were originally covered with verandahs (the original post holes are still evident). Wooden shingles were exposed on the left side of the roof when corrugated iron was removed, and roof rafters were found to be pieces of tree trunks, not cut timber. For these reasons, it is highly probable that part of the present cottage dates back before the 1840's.

Further information on this and the other houses open for inspection will be provided on April 1st. Tea will be served at Warrawillah, which will also be open for viewing. The Hunter's Hill Trust wishes to thank the owners of these houses for so generously allowing us to enjoy their atmosphere and learn of their history.

Don't be an April fool — come to the House Inspection

Raffle

A photograph of the old Figtree Bridge, restored and mounted, is being raffled by the Trust. The ticket will be drawn at the close of the House Inspection, where the photograph will be on display, on April 1st, at 3 p.m. at Warrawillah. Tickets are 40 cents. Members willing to sell books of tickets may ring Anne McNally, at 89 2035.

Old Photographs

Later this year, the Hunter's Hill Trust will hold an exhibition of early photographs at the Hunter's Hill Gallery. Douglass Baglin is an expert at restoring and dating old photographs, and the Trust would be interested in having reproductions made, to build up a comprehensive picture of Hunter's Hill as it appeared at various times.

Please contact Joan Croll (89 1692) if you can lend photographs.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership:	1979-80
Single	\$ 5.00
Family	10.00
Pensioner	1.00
Student	1.00
Life Member	75.00

Due March 1

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

The Trust Centre
The Hunter's Hill Gallery