



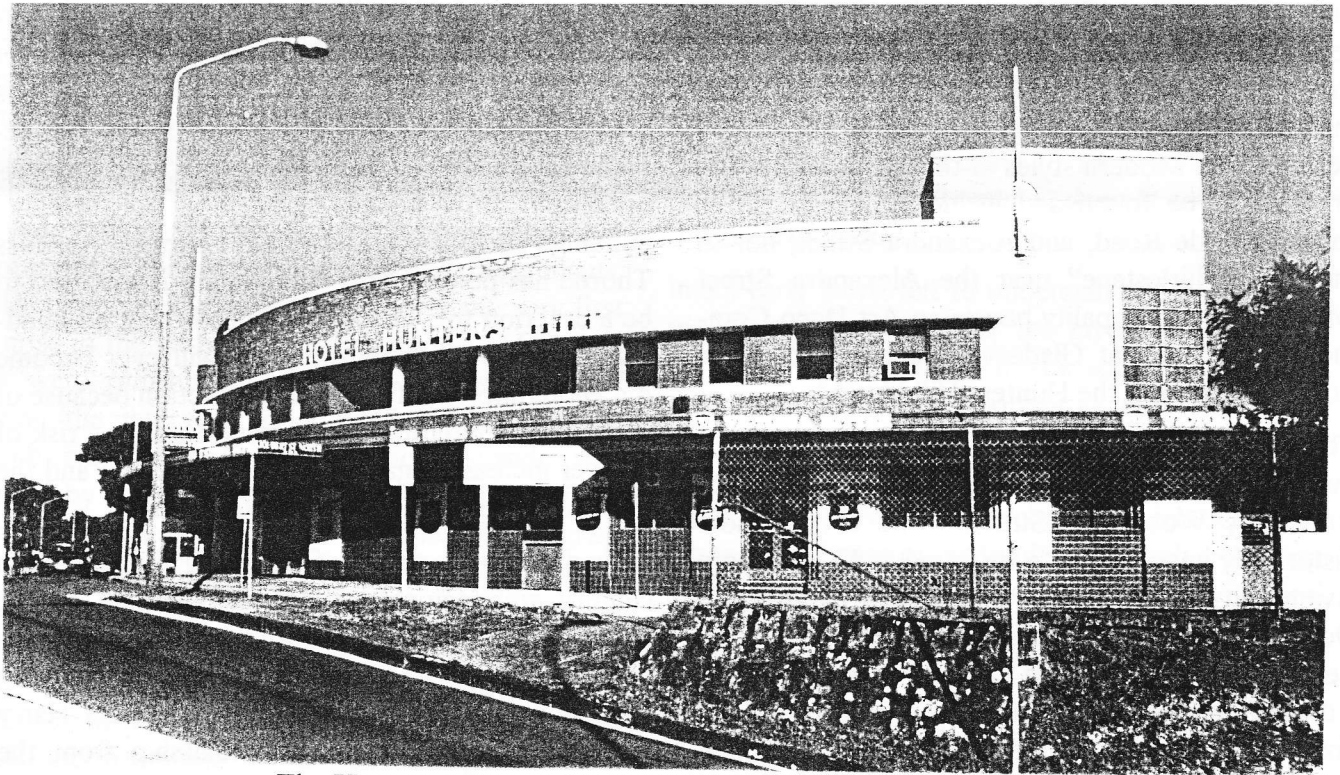
THE HUNTER'S HILL TRUST JOURNAL

PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB

Volume XXVII No.1

MARCH, 1998

ISSN 0310-0111



The Hunters Hill Hotel - representing the twentieth century

Twentieth Century Heritage

Roy Lumby

- from an address given to the Hunters Hill Trust

Hunters Hill was initially occupied in 1835 and became one of Sydney's earliest municipalities. Many of the early houses in the locality were of stone, and, to quote Frances Pollon: ".... Soon these gracious houses made Hunters Hill a showplace, and the bushland setting, coupled with harbour views, gave it a reputation that has never been lost." It is a fortunate place in that its early character is still evoked in certain localities. However, Hunters Hill is marked by a diverse range of building styles, of which the sandstone dwellings of the nineteenth century play a relatively small part, even if these are most typically "Hunters Hill" in the same way that Federation ar-

chitecture is "Mosman". Buildings and styles tell about the ways the municipality developed, the subdivision of early holdings and the aspirations and affluence of the people who came to live here. There are few if any of the grand Italianate houses which were so much a feature of the boom period of the 1870s and 1880s, but there are two attached terrace-like dwellings in Woolwich Road from about this time. The municipality contains numbers of Federation era houses and even a post office which mark the end of the depression of the 1890s and the start of the twentieth century.

In fact, the twentieth century is very well represented in Hunters Hill, as might be expected given its duration and population increases. There is a smattering of Arts and Crafts houses from around the First World War, itself represented by a chaste memorial, and California Bungalows from the 1920s. Other styles of the 1920s are to be found as well, such as the Georgian Revival which found its way into the bowling club and a nearby house at the corner of Madeline and Ady Streets. Although built of materials which are characteristic of the interwar period and not at all like traditional stone, the proportions, detailing and scale of these buildings make them fitting neighbors for the area's earliest houses. Modern styles of the 1930s and 1940s are also to be found and include houses such as those in Ryde Road, and Alexandra Street, not to mention "Thirlestane" near the Alexandra Street wharf. The municipality boasts an Art Deco Commonwealth Bank at Gladesville, and a fine Functionalist style pub, the Hunters Hill Hotel.¹

The municipality also has a fairly large number of dwellings from the 1950s and 1960s, as demonstrated by Woodward Street. One of the most historically important is to be found at 12 Ellesmere Avenue from 1960. This was designed by architect Don Gazzard and became the model for a Lend Lease project home which was first built in 1961 at a display village at Carlingford and has been recognized as an important contribution to the Sydney School aesthetic of the 1960s and making it accessible to a broad public. Hunters Hill escaped much of the intrusion of 1960s flat building, and these tend to be situated on its western periphery. However, the convenience demanded by other parts of metropolitan Sydney imposed physical change of a rather dynamic sort in the middle of the 1960s with the construction of the Gladesville, Tarban Creek and Figtree bridges. These, the largest man-made objects in the municipality were designed by the engineers G Maunsell and Partners in association with architects Fowell, Mansfield and MacLurcan. Ironically, although these are fine, monumental and aesthetically satisfying structures many of the municipality's early houses disappeared with their construction. Even later decades are represented by competent architecture which may or may not compensate for these losses, bringing us to the present time.

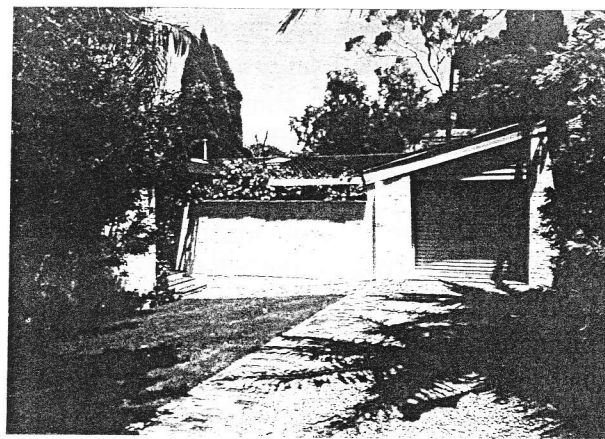
As far as the preservation of twentieth century architecture is concerned, it is fair to ask the question, When does heritage actually "start"? Architecture belonging to the last century, or even to the period before the First World War, has a patina of age and almost automatic importance. Hunters Hill has always been an affluent suburb, and this is reflected in the quality and conservatism of much of its architecture. However, it is a safe assumption that none of the buildings in the municipality have escaped the touch of this century, which has witnessed the processes of change accelerating at ever greater pace - the evolution of architectural style provides ample evidence of this. Change has become especially fast since the 1950s, and redevelopment is now taking place to major "young" buildings such as the State Office Block. As Ross Thorne has pointed out, "if antiquity is assumed to be a criterion for 'historic' it is likely that no buildings constructed in recent years will ever become old enough to qualify for that distinction because of premature demolition. As a result there is a risk of an ever increasing gap between the present and the time of the last extant historic buildings."²

Perhaps the importance of Hunters Hill's twentieth century architecture can be demonstrated by the example of two prominent architects. Henry Budden (b.1871 - d.1944) lived in Hunters Hill between 1892 and 1910. Whilst articled to architect Harry Kent he won a Travelling Scholarship from the Sydney Architectural Association in 1894 and went to Britain where he studied at the Royal Academy and travelled on the continent. Budden returned to Sydney in 1899 and subsequently became a partner in the firm of Kent and Budden. Early in the new century he designed several houses in Hunters Hill including the small scaled essays in the Federation Queen Anne style at the western end of Prince Edward Parade, and large two storey houses such as the now somewhat debased "Morillah" at 54 Woolwich Road from 1902, "Kurrowah" at 74 Alexandra Street from 1903 and also debased and the intact "Mornington" at 16 Vernon Street from 1906. These fine and romantically designed buildings exemplify his use of asymmetry and relating of house to site. Here views played an important part, an innovative concept at a time when most dwellings were aligned with the street. Budden is important beyond the context of Hunters Hill as well. In the late 1920s and 1930s his association with

Nicholas Mackey produced some of Sydney's major Art Deco and Functionalist office buildings.

The Hunters Hill Hotel is another major building from the 1930s. It is one of a series of suburban and rural hotels attributed to the architect Sydney Ancher whilst he worked with architect Reg Prevost between 1936 and 1939. Ancher was a young man at the time, having graduated in the late 1920s and then travelled to Europe where he absorbed much of the new architecture which he saw there. He was amongst the first to introduce modernist architecture to Sydney, and was very influential in the post war decades. The hotel ably demonstrates the importance of twentieth century buildings and the reasons why they should be conserved. "Going to the pub" has been an important aspect of life for many (though not all) Australians. Indeed the building type was amongst the very first to arise in the early days of the colony. Many hotels were refurbished or rebuilt across the state during the interwar period, and the architecture which resulted reflects how modern style was viewed by commercial interests - as a means of advertising but also as a means of appearing progressive. Indeed, for many people the hotel would have been one of their few experiences of modern architecture. The building is evidence of the ways that the state's licensing laws determined design and use. In short, it is an embodiment of aspects of social life in the late 1930s. The changes which it has undergone reflect the shift in social activity in the area since the time it was built. It is one of two hotels still functioning in the municipality.

One of the problems associated with the hotel is that it represents "low culture" and entertainment - buildings to cater for popular taste such as cinemas and pubs have generally been denigrated. However, the building has substantial claims for preservation because it is a good or notable example of its type. The rapid cycles of change also produce rarity with many pubs undergoing detrimental change or demolition. The Hunters Hill Hotel is architecturally the only one of its kind in Hunters Hill (as indeed it always has been) but it is the only one of its kind in adjoining municipalities such as Ryde and Lane Cove. There is enough



This Ellesmere Avenue house was designed in 1960 and is regarded as an important contribution by architect Don Gazzard to the Sydney School aesthetic of the 1960s and making it available to the general public.

intact early fabric left to understand how the building was designed, whilst the layers of change it contains reflect changes in the social activities of the community. It is important as a place for communal gathering and part of the "cultural landscape" of Hunters Hill, and also a vital visual landmark for it provides an anchor in a debased landscape and a sense of continuity. Though a building such as the Hunters Hill Hotel is atypical in its local context and may not "fit in" to the general perceptions about the area, at a metropolitan and state level it has much to contribute. Even at a local level, however, its nonconformity adds to the richness of the whole.

It has been suggested that heritage can be defined in terms of what we value or repudiate in the present or fear in the future, a reaction in part to the evanescence of things. In the face of change we cling to the remaining familiar vestiges. And yet much change is heedless - movement is equated with progress, whereas progress may be taken as concern for what we have and the need to treasure it for what it is, a reflection of ourselves. Greater awareness is needed because of the pace of sales and development or alteration which attends property ownership currently. Each change made to a building obscures its original character and can destroy rare and precious details and finishes. This piecemeal and small scale attrition can be seen across the entire state. All Australians have the right to interpret their own past and efforts in new houses show clumsy attempts to acknowledge this, but in the rush to conform to pressures of fashion

and return on money spent, heedless misappropriation of the past or worse, inappropriate treatment of an existing building to conform to current vogues are irreversible, destructive and, once the fashion has gone, trivialising.

An appreciation of the past obviously enhances a sense of continuity. To a young adult born in the early 1970s the 1950s and 1960s are "historic" epochs, whatever else older members of the community may think. The reasons for preserving artefacts and buildings from these decades and other parts of the twentieth century are in fact no different from those which justify retaining the buildings of earlier times, and include evidence of past techniques, examples of craftsmanship, aesthetic accomplishment, technological innovation, records of past life styles and aspirations, fine examples of a particular style, associations with famous or influential figures, and a valuable resource for designers in the future. No less importantly, they are the accessible historical record of the past for the entire community.

¹ Frances Pollon *The Book of Sydney Suburbs* (North Ryde, 1988), p 128.

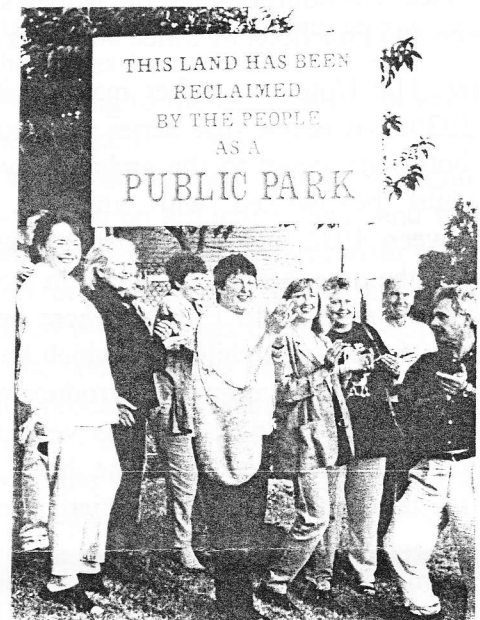
² Ross Thorne, Les Tod and Kevin Cork, *Movie Theatre Heritage Register for New South Wales 1896-1996* (University of Sydney, 1996), p.16.

Museum likes dock site

The N.S.W. Maritime Museum is still interested in moving their Blackwattle Bay works facility to Morts Dock, Woolwich. This was confirmed by a representative speaking at the Foreshore 2000 meeting at the Hunters Hill Sailing Club on February 18. Teachers from TAFE at Meadowbank who attended the meeting said that they were interested in moving the instruction of shipwrights to the site, pending an inspection of the site buildings.

Those who attended the meeting did not have any problems with these proposals.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Howard, has said that he is in favour of buying 100 hectares of Defence land at Middle Head and Woolwich for a new national park (Sydney Morning Herald 24/2/98). How does the Government buy something it already owns? We leave Mr. Howard to sort that out for you.



Foreshores 2000 sign erected outside the entrance to the former Army land at Woolwich.

What concerns us is that the parklands which will to be proclaimed at Woolwich, should be placed under the management of a local committee responsible to the Hunters Hill Council, similar to the management committees set up for kindergartens, sporting grounds and the like. This would ensure a local input into the use made of the park area.

The Trust believes that residents should become vocal on the sort of uses they would like to see on the Army land once the community gets hold of it. Foreshores 2000 members erected park signs on the boundaries last December, sending a clear message to the government. The gates are still locked. The Community Reference Group hasn't had a meeting with the Army for months. Several consultants' reports are outstanding. Members of the group were voted to form a committee a year ago to negotiate with the Department of the Army on your behalf concerning the disposal of the land.

Fencing Tarban creek

Sydney Water has decided to install fencing alongside Tarban Creek and across three footbridges in Tarban Creek Reserve. The Trust's vice-president, Sally Gaunt, has run a campaign against an ugly intrusion into a pretty little area of natural parkland in the middle of the municipality.

In the 80-odd years of the existence of the canal there has been one accident. This was a recent incident and involved a child who lost control of her new bicycle on the footbridge.

At a meeting with Sydney Water on the site in early December, 1997, possible alternatives to fencing, including signage, hedging with native plants, and returning the whole of Tarban Creek to its natural condition (as has been done at several sites around Sydney) were suggested, but to no avail. Sydney Water wants 1.2m high galvanised steel pool-type fencing. They declined to change the fence colour to less offensive green. This would have to be done by the Hunters Hill Council which doesn't appear to have debated the matter.

No sorry book at Town Hall

If you want to sign a sorry book for aboriginal reconciliation, you can't at Hunters Hill Town Hall. Strange? At their meeting on February 9, councillors voted 6 to 3 not to have a book. So you will have to go to All Saints Church, Ambrose street, if you want to apologise about the stolen children. The councillors who voted against the book also refused to make the Town Hall available free of charge for the Aboriginal Reconciliation presentation on February 24. In Mosman, Wollahra and Leichhardt, halls were free. The voting at Hunters Hill was - for the sorry book and free hall - Gollan, Phipson, Waddell; against giving the hall and having a sorry book - Astridge, Boyd, Hoopmann, O'Gorman, Sheerin, Williams.

When the reconciliation gathering was held on February 24, it turned out to be the biggest meeting ever held at Hunters Hill Town Hall, with 600 inside and 200 outside. Among those unable to gain admittance were Crs. Astridge and Williams. The last aboriginal in Hunters Hill, Black Lucy, died in 1920.

Something to do while waiting for the tax man

At a meeting held at the home of Carl and Alysoun Ryves on February 12, the 85 people present drew up a short list of actions which you can take immediately against increased land tax.

- Appeal against the valuation to the Department of State Revenue and the Valuer-General. Recent sales have shown that values are falling and are probably below the level looked at when the valuations were done.
- Ask the Department of State Revenue for a heritage allowance. Houses which are on the register of the National Trust or on the Hunters Hill Municipality register - *Schedule of Items of the Environmental Heritage (Schedule 6, LEP No.14) March, 1991* - are achieving up to 30 per cent reductions although there doesn't seem to be a hard and fast policy about this. The Hunters Hill Council is running a good little earner charging to write letters of verification for owners to send to the revenue collectors

Carl and Alysoun have started a think tank on land tax. If you have practical ideas, phone them on 9816 1741.

Meanwhile, Dr. Colin Rose will speak to his paper on N.S.W. Residential Land Tax at the Trust's general meeting on Thursday, March 19 - see back page for details.

Making the Trust work

Trust meetings this year will be held at the RSL Hall, corner Alexandra street/Ady street on the following dates at 8 p.m. -

- Thursday, March 19 - Land tax, urban consolidation, Army Land (see back page)
- Thursday, May 21 - Annual General Meeting
- Thursday July 16 - General topic
- Thursday., September 17 - General topic
- Christmas function - Thursday, November 27

The meetings provide an opportunity for members and friends to comment on issues affecting the municipality.

The committee meets on the second Thursday of every month at Vienna Cottage, Alexandra street at 8 p.m. and members are invited to attend.

Dual occupancy up and running again

On September 26, 1997, the State Government introduced SEPP53 which overrules the Hunters Hill Council site requirements for dual occupancy.

Under the council's Local Environment Plan the minimum area for a subdivision in the conservation area is 1,000 square metres. This was applied by council to limit the spread of dual occupancies.

The Government proposal permits a dual occupancy on a site of 600 square metres, allowing one dwelling per 300 square metres - three times the current housing density.

Within weeks of the Government proclaiming SEPP53 the council had received an application for a dual occupancy on a site of 607 square metres.

The Trust has written to the council asking that this application be rejected on several grounds, one of them being the SEPP55 provision.

The Council was invited to comment on the SEPP last year when it was at the proposal stage. The Trust believes that the council did not go in hard enough and has asked it to have another go.

The State Government is using SEPP53 to override town planning carried out with local knowledge.

Sounds familiar? It is. This ground was covered before when the government proposed a refurbishment of our town planning a couple of years ago.

The Trust argues once again that a smaller dwelling site area, permitting dual occupancy, is not wanted by the present-day residents of Hunters Hill, any more than the past.

To bring things up to date, the Trust has asked that the council conduct a poll of residents on the topic. More houses in the conservation area will mean the destruction of tree cover and building intrusions which cannot be supported by the current road and sewerage infrastructure.

Notwithstanding SEPP53, the council is entitled to review every application in the Conservation Area under the privileges of the Heritage Act, with particular attention to curtilage, vegetation, remnants of natural and historical features, the appropriate visual setting for retained items, walls, plantings, landscape items, visual corridors, screening of heritage items from detracting buildings and archaeological sites.

Join the Trust

Membership of the Trust is \$25 a year for a family. \$15 single and \$5 for pensioners and students. On joining you receive-

- a copy of **The Vision and the Struggle**
- a car sticker
- a badge
- copies of the Trust journal as printed
- copies of newsletters
- a lovely warm sense of belonging to an organisation devoted to retain the character of **Hunters Hill, N.S.W.'s heritage suburb.**

Please send your application with cheque or money order to The Hunters Hill Trust Inc, Box 85, P.O. Hunters Hill, 2110.

Trust contacts - President - Gil Wahlquist - phone/fax 9816 2627.

Vice-President - Sally Gaunt - phone 9816 4047.

Secretary: Len Condon - phone/fax 9816 2796.

Treasurer: Andrew Yew - phone 9816 3254.

Journal editor - Gil Wahlquist.

Boronia Park dog worry

A proposal by Hunters Hill Council to provide an off-leash exercise area for dogs in Boronia Park has been opposed by the Friends of Boronia Park (secretary Geoff Grace).

Trials will be postponed for a year. Meanwhile, off-leash exercise areas are to be trialed in Clarkes Point Reserve, Gladesville Reserve and Tarban Creek.

In a letter to the Parks and Trees committee, Geoff Grace said that Boronia Park was in danger of becoming a popular regional dog area, particularly for the 96,000 residents of neighbouring Ryde municipality which has no off-leash areas for dogs.

Dogs can be taken on the leash almost anywhere in Hunters Hill.

"However, there are dog owners who consistently flout the present regulations and do not even recognise signs prohibiting dogs in play areas", Mr. Grace said. "It is not uncommon to see Rottweilers and other large and potentially dangerous dogs off leash in the park, sometimes not even accompanied by their owners."

Getting busy in our bushland

Many trust members are in groups working to protect the municipality's bushland heritage. The Kellys Bush action group got things moving. Other action groups formed and with the appointment of a bushland coordinator, Diana Kureen, the council has produced an up-to-date evaluation of its bushland.

About 30 people attended a Bushland Focus Group meeting at the Town Hall on February 18.

Diana Kureen presented a report outlining the location of the 25 hectares of remnant bushland.

Remnant bushland is an area where the original (pre-1788) bushland survives.

Benefits of bushland include cleaner air, decreased noise pollution, maintenance of biodiversity and decreased stormwater peaks.

In a report to the meeting, Ms Kureen said that a comprehensive knowledge of the district's fauna and flora was incomplete.

The vegetation in the bushland is categorised into various plant community types - ridgetop woodland, open and close gully forest and shrubland.

The riparian zone vegetation consists of closed mangrove forests and three small occurrences of saltmarsh at Buffalo Creek Reserve, Tarban Creek Reserve and Ferdinand Street Reserve.

Urban development has had an adverse impact in the form of severe weed infestations.

"Often a sub-canopy of weed trees has formed which shade out the understorey, to the point that regeneration is unable to occur and species diversity is lost", Ms Kureen said.

Among vegetation communities identified are -

Boronia Park - Turpentine/ironbark forest - remnant stand of *Syncarpia glomulifera* at the Princes street entrance. An open forest on the sandstone slopes is characterised by *Eucalyptus piperita* (Sydney Peppermint), *e. gummifera* (Bloodwood), and *Angophora costata* (Sydney red gum) with areas of *Kunzea ambigua* (Tick bush) scrub. A sandstone gully forest is characterised by *e. pilularis* (Blackbutt) and smaller trees such as *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* (Blueberry ash) and *Callicoma serratifolia* (Black wattle).

Kellys Bush - open forest with Sydney Peppermint, Bloodwood and Tick bush. A closed forest along the foreshores is characterised by *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson fig), Blueberry Ash and *Banksia integrifolia* (Coast Banksia).

Tarban Creek - An open forest on clay soil with Blackbutt, and *Angophora floribunda* (Rough Barked Apple) the only recording in Hunters Hill of this species. There is an open forest with Sydney Red Gum and a saltmarsh with *Sarcocoma quinqueflora* (Samphire) and *Atriplex australasica*. The mangrove forest is *Avicennia marina* (Grey Mangrove).

Buffalo Creek Reserve - An open forest of Blackbutt, Bloodwood, Sydney Red Gum, Blueberry Ash and *Glochidion ferdinandi* (Cheese Tree). The riparian zone has *Melaleuca linarifolia* (Snow in Summer), *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak), Saltmarsh and Grey Mangrove.

Ferdinand Street Reserve - A remnant stand of *Eucalyptus tereticomis* (Forest Red Gum) is possibly indicative of richer clay soil vegetation that might once have been present. Blackbutt, Swamp Oak and the small area of Saltmarsh give the area a high conservation status as most of the species present are locally rare and represent community types that were once common in the municipality.

Gladesville Reserve and Betts Park - Canopy trees in the steeper terrain are *Eucalyptus capitellata* (Brown Stringy Bark) - the only occurrence of this species within the municipality - and Blackbutt, with Port Jackson Fig and Sydney Red Gum at Betts Park. There is a sub strata of Coast Banksia, Blueberry Ash and *Pittosporum undulatum* (Native Daphne) with stands of Swamp Oak at the river edge.

Mornington Reserve - Remnant trees and shrubs include *Eucalyptus resinifera* (Red Mahogany) - one remnant tree of this species also occurs at Woolwich Baths - Bloodwood, Port Jackson Fig and Swamp Oak.

Clarkes Point Reserve - There are no distinct plant communities left, however there is a stand of Forest Red Gum, a locally significant species that was once more common in the area and *Rapanea variabilis* (Muttonwood) a rainforest pioneer.

If you would like to spend a few hours a month working in a bushland area, see the coordinator Diana Kureen at the Council, phone 9816 1555

Where is land tax taking us?

Is urban consolidation good for you?

What's happening to the Army Land?

These are the topics for the next general meeting of the on Thursday, March 19, 1998 at 8 p.m.

at the RSL Hall on the corner of Alexandra and Adv streets.

Members and their friends are invited.

Hunters Hill Trust

Land Tax - Dr. Colin Rose, of the Theoretical Research Institute will speak to his sensational paper The N.S.W. Residential Land Tax: Tax Liability and Land Value. Hundreds of people have downloaded Dr. Rose's paper from his web site. To quote his abstract:

This paper calculates the tax liability of the new NSW Residential Land Tax in “net present value” terms. This gives a much clearer representation of “effective” tax rates for land both above and below the threshold. For instance, if real land values grow at just 2% (well below historical precedent), we find that the actual tax liability can easily consume over 50% of present land value. At higher growth rates, the tax liability is more severe. The long term impact of the NSW Land Tax thus represents a significant transition of wealth from the private sector to the State, not only for property above the threshold but quite generally also for property below the threshold.

**Download the paper before the meeting from
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/tri/tax.html>**

Urban Consolidation - an up-to-date report on the effect of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's SEP53 on housing density in Hunters Hill.

Army Land - Speakers will indicate what would be a reasonable outcome from the discussions which the Community Reference Group and Foreshores 2000 have been having over the past year concerning the future of the Army land at Woolwich.

**All welcome. Thursday, March 19 at 8 p.m. R.S.L. Hall,
Hunters Hill Trust Alexandra street Hunters Hill 2110**