

**The Hunters Hill Trust
Inc.
Established 1968
Preserving Australia's
Oldest Garden Suburb**

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The Hunters Hill Trust Journal

Hunters Hill Council has a fence policy to protect the suburb's Heritage character – a critical view

The front fence of a property is a very important element in the townscape of the municipality and makes a major contribution to the character of a street. A well designed front fence is considerate of the character of the street and uses appropriate materials and proportions. A poorly designed front fence does not consider the character of the street, uses inappropriate materials and is poorly proportioned. Such fences are very detrimental to the character of the street and are usually out of character with the house they front.

Hunters Hill Council recognised this when it adopted "Guidelines for Fences" in 1991. This excellent document was prepared with assistance from the NSW Heritage Assistance Program and is a very good guide to appropriate designs for fences in the Municipality. However, judging by the

increasing number of inappropriate and out of character front fences that are popping up all over the municipality, it seems that the "Guidelines for Fences" is not being followed by fence builders and is not being considered by Council's planning officers when they approve DAs. Another possibility is that front fences are being constructed without Council approval. I live in Bonnefin Road, and the street is characterised by very simple and unassuming low brick and stone front fences which allow for the front gardens of the houses to become an integral part of the streetscape as well as allowing for views of the Lane Cove River between the houses on the northern side of the street. However in the past decade Council has allowed a number of inappropriate front fences in the street which are having a very detrimental effect on

its character.

Without walking very far from my place at No 29, I noted the following examples of front fences:

No 5 Bonnefin Road: This is a brand new fence which is still under construction. It is solid rendered brick, 1600mm high with 2000mm high brick piers at 2000mm centres.

No 7 Bonnefin Road: This fence was built some time ago, possibly before the Guidelines were introduced. It is 1800mm high solid painted brick which completely obstructs the view of the house and glimpses of the river.

No 25 Bonnefin Road: This fence is similar to the one at No 7 and it too was most probably built before the fence policy was adopted by Council.

No 27 Bonnefin Road: This fence was completed within the last 6 years and is an overly elaborate 2000mm high aluminium picket fence

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with fleur-de-lis finials and monumental gates.

No 28 Bonnefin Road: This fence is still under construction and is another overly elaborate fence with rendered and painted brick piers and decorative Victorian cappings. With its oversized carport and inappropriate fence, the front of this property is completely out of character with its house, a potential heritage item, being a fine example of a between-wars brick cottage.

No 35 Bonnefin Road: This front fence was only completed at the beginning of this year and is 2000mm high, built of solid brick, rendered and painted. It has two 2000mm high welded steel gates set into it. Council's failure to apply its own guidelines to front fences is by no means restricted to Bonnefin Road and examples of inappropriate front fences can be seen in almost every street in the municipality. This is a great pity because the effect on the character of the area is very detrimental. Yet the Guidelines for Fences seems like one of the simpler planning controls to enforce. I urge Council to become more serious about front fences, to look more carefully at all development applications in the light of its own guidelines and to make property owners demolish non-complying front fences built without proper planning approval. - **Tony Coote**

This is an extract from a letter written to Hunters Hill Council

Trust Christmas Party

The Trust Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, November 30 at "Leicester", 11 The Point Road, Woolwich, home of Nabeel and Marian Ibrahim. Guest speaker will be Rick Le Plastrier on "Peninsulas of Sydney".

Environment Court supported heritage argument on 1 Ferry Street house

An objection in the Land and Environment Court against a decision of Hunters Hill council to refuse demolition of a house and erection of a new building No. 1 Ferry Street was rejected by Commissioner G. T. Brown in a judgment delivered on July 26. Residents of Ferry Street, and the Hunters Hill Trust had objected to the development which was No 99 1249. The Trust argument for preservation of the existing building is on our website - www.interweb.com.au/hhti/

The court number of the case is 10163 of 2000, E. Yip v. Hunters Hill Council.

Findings in full are available on the court website although there is often a time lag. A copy of the judgment can be seen at Hunters Hill Council. This account covers a few of the points from the judgment. There was a three-day hearing, which included an inspection of the site.

The site was found to have a significant number of natural and landscape features including rock outcrops, stone walls and natural vegetation such as a large Port Jackson Fig, which assumes a prominent position on the lower level rock platform. "The subject site is also visually prominent given that is the most southern point of the foreshore in the immediate area, as well as being adjacent to the Ferry Street Wharf" the judgment said. "The site with its elevated natural rock outcrops and landform creates a natural backdrop to the wharf, especially from the eastern corner of the reserve.

"the streetscape is characterized by one and two storey homes in garden settings. The buildings erected on sites in the vicinity Are either two storey or part one and two storey, with the roof space being adapted for use as habitable area". The council had objected on points which included non-compliance with DCP 15 regarding the character of Hunters Hill, impact on the landscape and scenic quality of the locality including impact on the

Parramatta River.

Residents objected because of loss of views and character of the development.

The judgment said: "The visual appearance of the proposed dwelling is a key consideration in these proceedings, being a matter that is specifically addressed in a number of planning documents that are applicable to the site.

"the visual appearance of the proposed building was assessed from two principal locations, i.e. from the land surrounding the subject site and from the water.

"In my view the proposed house will clearly dominate and be an obtrusive element in this part of the foreshore, notwithstanding its compliance with the height and storey controls of LEP35.

".... There is no particular problem with constructing a modern building on the site but not one so eye catching.

"In my view, the visual impact from the water is sufficient for the application to be refused.

"The concept of view sharing is a well established principle in planning matters and is reflected in most local government planning controls however it is difficult to conclude that this principle has been adequately addressed" he said. "in this case when virtually every room in the proposed home has panoramic water views at the expense of the most desirable views from the adjoining property".

The Commissioner agreed with evidence that the building would have an unsatisfactory impact on surrounding heritage items.

In summing up he said that the comments of the Council's Conservation officer, Greg Patch, were well balanced and appropriate.

Builders are chipping away at Hunters Hill sandstone features

New rock-breaking machinery is making it easier for builders to excavate the peninsula sandstone.

Excavation and removal of stone from a site is probably in breach of DCP 15 Clauses 3.1, 3.2 which refer to topography and natural landscape.

On the one hand the sandstone of our parks is subject to the most rigorous conditions to ensure its preservation, on the other hand there is a tendency for builders to attack it without constraint. Recent large scale excavations, i.e. 17 Mount Street, have council approval. Are they outside the provisions of the D.C.P? The slope has been destroyed, natural wild-life corridors broken and a feature of the streetscape obliterated. Is this what residents want?

An adjoining heritage quarry, the source of building materials for historic Kyarra, has been filled in with a swimming pool.

An education campaign must be conducted for the benefit of councillors and council officers administering the DCP. This would then be extended into a program to make residents aware of the importance of sandstone features so that they will assist in preserving them.

These points must be considered:

1. The sandstone outcrops of the Hunters Hill peninsula as an important part of the geodiversity of the Sydney basin. The sandstone is a unique feature, starting at the heads and dipping to the west until it disappears altogether at Ryde.

First settlement was on the shale flats on the south side of Port Jackson. The sandstone ridges had no agricultural value and were untouched. As colonists became more affluent, they looked to the elevated sandstone as sites for their mansions.

The current attack on sandstone outcrops is destroying the very feature

which makes the peninsula a unique place.

2. The flora and fauna which is hosted in the natural environment provided by the sandstone. The variety of forms of the sandstone has permitted flora and fauna to persist through the 200 years plus of development. This biodiversity depends of the preservation of the sandstone in its original form beneath the housing. Bird and other wildlife corridors are important to maintain biodiversity.

The council's policy on preserving a percentage of soft space on the site is a recognition of the important of biodiversity. There is no biodiversity in concrete.

3. The economic consequences of levelling sandstone outcrops. The value attached to Hunters Hill real estate is in large part due to the diversity of levels and outlooks created by the landform. The sandstone and its flora are what the residents view

and enjoy. This pleasure is not afforded to those who live in a flat environment. The sandstone contributes to the premium prices which Hunters Hill houses attract.
-Gil Wahlquist

Archives at Ryde

The archives of the Hunters Hill Trust are now in the Local Studies section of the Ryde Library. The library has a complete set of Hunters Hill Trust journals, cloth covered hard bound. The Local Studies Librarian, Glenys Murray, is a member of the Trust committee. Photographs from the Trust archives have been handed to the Hunters Hill Historical Society and can be seen at the museum.

The re-location of archives is part of the program which included the lodging by Douglass Baglin of his photographs with the State Library. The aim is to make Hunters Hill history accessible now and in the future.

The Trust website, visited by 12,673 people since July last year, is part of this process. This beats the Journal print run of 450 copies.

Trust president for 2000-2001 is Tony Coote, replacing Gil Wahlquist who stood down after four years.

*The book **The Industrial Village of Woolwich**, by Connie Ewald has been reprinted.*

Copies are available over the counter at the Hunters Hill Post Office, Alexandra street for \$12, or posted from the Treasurer, The Hunters Hill Trust Inc.,

P. O. Box 85, Hunters Hill, 2110 for \$14.

The book has been published by The Hunters Hill Trust assisted by a grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society from funds

allocated by the Ministry for the Arts, New South Wales. All Trust publications are on sale at the Post Office.

THE HUNTERS HILL TRUST INCORPORATED

Address mail to

Hunters Hill Trust Inc.

P. O. Box 85,

Hunters Hill, 2110

Officers for 2000-2001

President – Tony Coote; 9817 3466

Vice-president – Gil Wahlquist phone 9816 2627

Secretary – Len Condon, 9816 2796.

Treasurer – Chris Rumble, 9879 0308

Journal editor – Gil Wahlquist.

Committee – Sally Gaunt, Robyn Christie, Celia Roberts, Glenys Murray, John Birch.

Committee meetings are held at 8 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at Vienna Cottage, Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill.

Increases in house prices, the appearance of mega-houses and the revaluation of properties to astronomical levels has caused the long-standing residents to ask "what is going on". There are 466 items listed in the council's Schedule of Environment Heritage, Schedule 6, LEP No. 14. It has become the sport of developers to buy these items, because of their provenance and position and then see how far they can go to make changes to the property which you, Trust members, fought so valiantly over the years to protect.

One particular concept which the Trust has criti-

One particular concept which the Trust has criticised is the idea that because a house is small and old it has no place as part of the real estate of Hunters Hill.

More than 12,600 people have visited the Trust website. The site has a number of valuable features, including the Hunters Hill Council's new thinking on heritage policy. www.interweb.com.au/hhti. We have links to other important Hunters Hill sites, including the Council.

Telling the story is a part of saving our heritage streets

cised is the idea that because a house is small and old it has no place as part of the real estate of Hunters Hill.

The Trust believes that the removal of smaller houses obliterates evidence of the rich variety of persons at every level of society who once did, and in fact still do, call Hunters Hill their home. In particular, houses which were not placed on the Schedule of Heritage, perhaps because they did not meet the requirements of stone, timber, or age, were picked off at will by developers in the past. Walk down any street and you can see the replacements.

Every house, considered alone, is vulnerable. What is arguable is the preservation of the precinct, the streetscape, the character of the suburb.

Then the house becomes part of an inter-generational story which can only be read, as the history of the people who lived here, if the house remains.

The western part of the suburb, not in the conservation area, is vulnerable as long as its story is not told. Several members are working on documentation of streets in West Ward.

Conservation is not only about houses, it is about people.

We had an example of this when the Trust secured a grant of \$1000 from funds allocated by the Royal Australian Historical Society on behalf of the N.S.W. Ministry for the Arts to publish a history of the people and industries of Woolwich, written by

Trust member Connie Ewald. The first printing of 300 copies of this volume, *The Industrial Village of Woolwich*, sold out rapidly. We have printed another 300.

This showed that our suburb is about people and that for the sake of the future the evidence of their occupation must not be removed.

In the coming year we will construct the Three Patriots walk, a section of the Great North Walk, to commemorate the Centenary of Federation. This walk commemorates Hunters Hill residents who

took part in the debate on Federation - Sir George Dibbs, Angelo Tornaghi and Charles Jeanneret.

For this purpose we have received a grant from the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. We expect the Hunters Hill Council to oversee building of the walk which is along the Lane Cove River foreshore of Hunters Hill High School. Committee members Tony Coote and Sally Gaunt have taken part in the planning of the walk.

- Gil Wahlquist

An extract from the President's Report for 1999-2000 delivered at the annual General Meeting.