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Preserving Australia's  
Oldest Garden Suburb**

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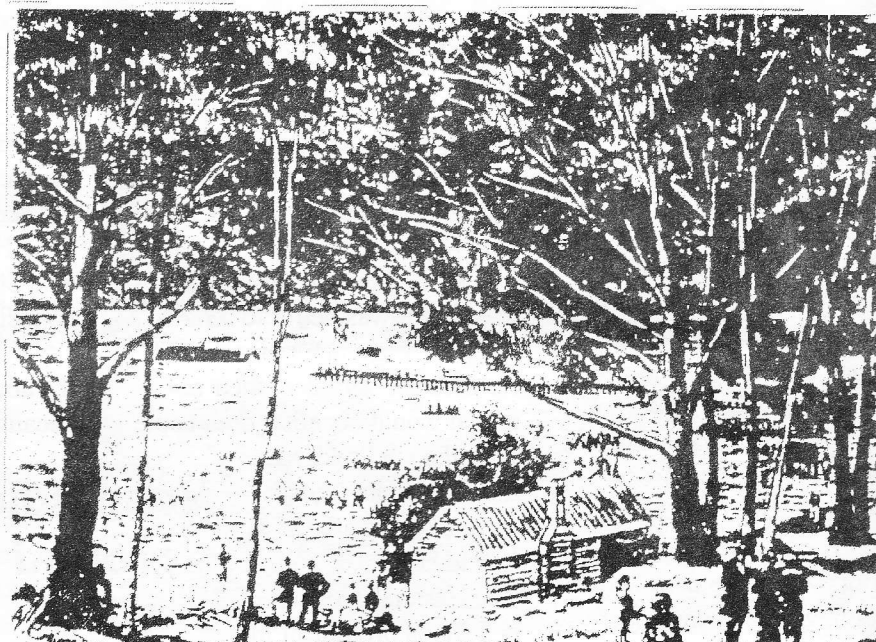
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# The Hunters Trust Journal



*A lovely piece of real estate on the Lane Cove River – about 1880*

## Not ..... Happy ..... Jo

The document *Building the Future*, which appeared in March 2001, promoted a feeling of unease in the community when the Minister for Education and Training, Mr. John Aquilina, said the recommendations in the report were not negotiable. He withdrew this statement, but not before the Hunters Hill community had been threatened that the high school was to be sold. The reason – the money was needed to finance the ideas in *Building the Future*. This paradigm had a familiar ring. Wasn't the Commonwealth Government going to sell the Woolwich Army land to finance the move of

the sea transport division to Townsville? And didn't the Defence Department real estate department produce artist's impressions of how houses would look on the site. Whoa. The State Education Department was doing the same thing with the Lane Cove River site of the High School. There was a difference. With the Commonwealth there was a period of across-the-table negotiation. With the Education Department? It's been all up hill for months. At last there was a meeting of the School Closures Review Committee after the Parents and Citizens Association collected a number of signatures.

Those citizens asking of the Review Committee on August 30 considered that it went well. But why wasn't a period of consultation before *Building the Future* was announced? Say last year, or before that, when the school's principal seconded to deputy duties? Was *Building the Future*, under consultation back then? Wasn't the committee asked for its view the way the Department of Education and Training runs its business? Should teachers go to get themselves

- Gil

# Heritage listing is a contentious issue often further blurred by prestige and greed

*writes Paul Coombes, a former Alderman of Hunters Hill Council.*

**T**he battle over property heritage listings can be billed Snobs v. Slobs.

Those assembled at each pole are either passionately for preservation of demolition. There is no middle ground. They tout the advantages of having their interest singled out for special treatment. These can be individual properties, streetscapes or areas such as parks and waterfrontages.

Mostly, money is at the core of disputes involving individual properties. The so-called slobs (owners/developers) want to get rid of heritage properties and use the sites to make money by building habitable spaces on them - usually apartments, but sometimes offices. Their motivation is transparent.

Those labeled as snobs love the cachet "my heritage listed home".

Heritage values, reflected in selling prices, are frequently less up front. But to be fair beyond the name calling, many people who want listings believe structures of historic or intrinsic quality should be kept in order to reflect Australia's heritage. It is our story in materials, skills and shapes.

One weapon developers/demolishers used in their propaganda war against listing was that owners would lose control over what they could do with their properties.

The furphy was that all repairs, maintenance, capital works and changes in gardens were prohibited unless totally in keeping with the

original. The other was that heritage properties were too expensive for owners to properly maintain.

The next step in the argument was that it was better to remove these eyesores before they deteriorated further; also, their removal would benefit more people once the land released is developed into (mostly) three-storey walk-up apartments.

The Heritage Council of N.S.W. is prominent in preserving properties. It has worked hard to counter myths about listing and has been involved in research over the past 10 years and has found listing hasn't affected property values adversely. The report found that, in some instances, listing has had a positive impact. The council argues the main reason people purchase heritage buildings is because they like them.

Countering perceived negatives of heritage property ownership the council argues it places no legal restriction on the sale or leasing of properties. It says such properties are best cared for when lived in and there are no restrictions on renewing bathrooms, kitchens and services. Sympathetic additions can be made, warehouses can be converted to residential and maintenance doesn't require formal approval. Real estate agents frequently advertise heritage listing features of a property to give it a

push in the market and have advised the Heritage Council that well cared-for heritage properties are the easiest to sell and bring the highest prices. The State Government and local councils are pushing for higher density developments. These can harm the amenity of surrounding houses because of overshadowing, poor

landscaping and minimal boundary setbacks.

Heritage listing of properties and streetscapes can help in the battle against these encouraged intrusions. When councils and governments are forced to account for the impact of developments on listed ar-

reas the Heritage Council says listing provides certainty for owners, neighbors and intending purchasers. "This is important when people are looking for a particular environment in which to live and work", the Heritage Council says. Heritage listing can also provide other benefits including land-use concessions, restoration advisory services, heritage valuations for land tax purposes and funds and loans earmarked for specified property work.

To discover the status of a property check the listing schedule in the council's local environmental plan and the State Heritage Register. Non-statutory authorities with lists are the National Trust Register and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' Register of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Buildings.

*Reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald, 18 July, 2001.*

**No middle ground when Snobs v. Slobs**

# Woolwich – a walk forgotten

**I**s a public north-facing waterfront reserve, with a whiff of history, worth the short steep climb which is needed to get you back to familiar places?

The Walk starts at the north end of Gladstone Street, behind the Woolwich Aged Care Retirement Village, which now occupies the grounds of the old Woolwich Public School. It descends rather steeply to a small public reserve with picnic tables by the Lane Cove River (*see picture*). For the last few months, a locked gate has barred the entrance, so the Friends of the Walk were understandably alarmed when they read the contents of a recent consultant's report to Council. John Chetham & Associates had been asked to evaluate the existing reserves along the Lane Cove river in the Woolwich area, and the costs and benefits of a reserve which might extend from the Mornington reserve to the Woolwich baths.<sup>(1)</sup>

The only section of this waterfront land currently in public use is part of the Woolwich Foreshore Walk. The hillside above most of the reserve is owned by the Marist Sisters College, who also control the waterfront land to the east, towards the Woolwich Baths. Public access across this land is prohibited. Other sections of the waterfront which Council had the right to acquire, by donation or on payment of market value, were parts of 16 Vernon St., near Mornington wharf reserve, and 68B Woolwich Rd, at the bottom of "Bond's Lane" (See sketch).

Much of the consultant's report



relates to the viability of the Walk, though the final recommendations were confined to Council action on parts of the Vernon Street and Woolwich Road properties. This article deals only with the Woolwich Foreshore Walk. In summary, the consultant considered that the Walk

was highly degraded, with difficult access, high maintenance costs and limited use, confined mainly to a few strictly local residents. Such residents were also said to be so rich in large north-facing riverfront gardens that they had no need for a public reserve.

While this article was waiting to go

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## Report by Connie Ewald

*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.*



## The only quiet, north-facing picnic spot at Woolwich

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to print, council decided that the walk would be re-opened at some future time, awaiting decisions on a safety gate, minor repairs and public liability.

### Brief history.

When the land for Woolwich Public School was notified for resumption in the Gazette of 28 August 1888, most of it was between North Parade, now called Vernon Street, and Onions Point Road (Woolwich Road). A sixty foot strip, reaching from the main road to the Crown Reserve along the waterfront, was added at the eastern edge.<sup>(2)</sup> Perhaps it was hoped to use the existing old stone jetty, a little further to the east, to provide for scholars from along or across the river. The advantages of swimming baths are noted in several other documents. For instance, one of the early offers of land for the school was for a block near the corner of Gale and Collingwood Streets, in which proximity to "land proposed for boat sheds and public baths" was noted.<sup>(3)</sup> The school was opened in 1892, and in the following year the block to the east (now 64 & 66 Woolwich Road, occupied by retired Marist sisters) was offered to the Minister for Public Instruction as land suitable for a teacher's residence, with the added advantage that it would allow for "swimming baths in the river for scholars". The offer was refused, and children had to wait until the Woolwich Baths opened about fifteen years later.

**Land clearing** Why is the steep part of the Walk so full of weeds? We are not sure whether it was once cleared of its native vegetation or whether it was simply infected by exotic seeds spreading

from the cleared Marist land. Perhaps it had already been cleared when it was acquired. The part of the sixty foot strip closest to Woolwich Road was incorporated in the school playground, which, at least in later years, was fenced at about the level of Vernon Street, and only partly cleared. In 1893 the playgrounds still included "about thirty indigenous shade trees, chiefly stringybark", and even in the 1940s students could still play in the bush at the back of the school. However, the same report recommended planting of native trees on the north and east sides, perhaps referring to a cleared sixty foot strip.<sup>(4)</sup>

### Steps to the waterfront.

In the area close to the first picnic table, old maps show a structure at the waterfront and a trig station. A series of such trig points was needed to map the shoreline and to determine mean high and low water marks. The earliest available register of Sydney trig stations was produced in 1891. It refers to a trig point about "one chain south-east of small old stone jetty, south side of Lane Cove River".<sup>(5)</sup> The jetty is also shown on a map of 1883.<sup>(6)</sup> It is about six metres wide and eight metres long, and does not extend to the water at lowest tide. It is more of a platform than a narrow walkway to deep water. We still do not know the date of construction or removal. It seems likely that the stones from the old jetty were used to build the stone wall which extends across the waterfront of the block to the east of the public school strip. This block was added to the Marist land many years after the opening of the College in 1908.

### Construction of the present track

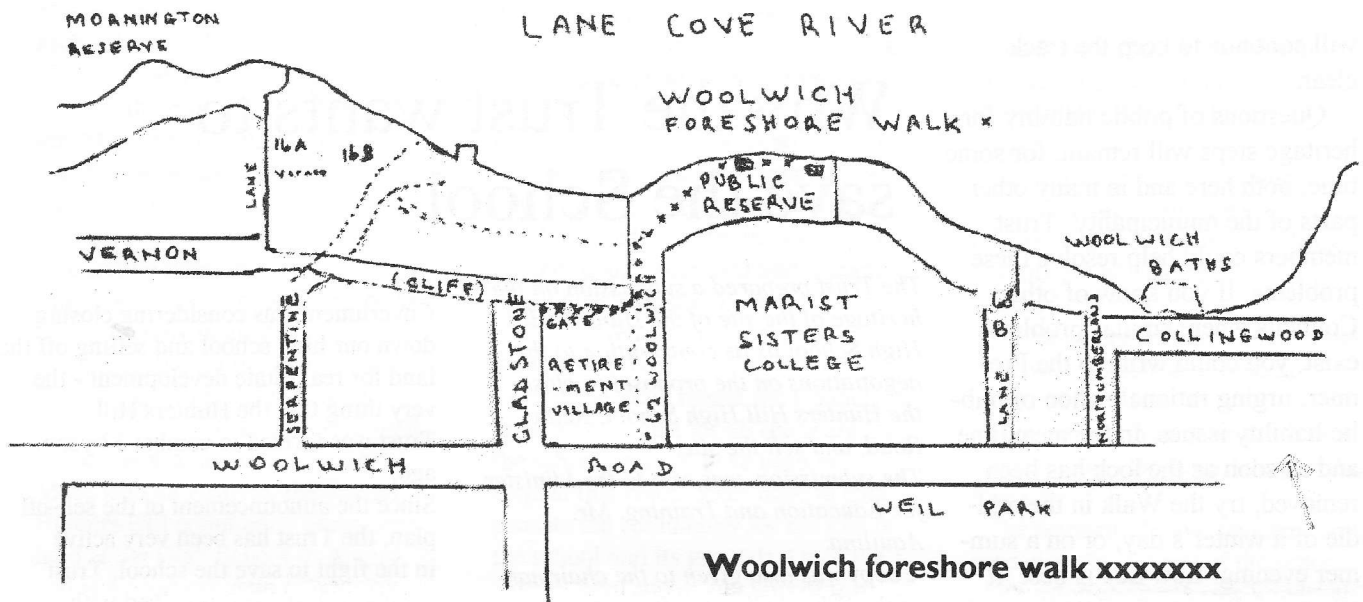
Over the years, the vines and other weeds in the steep strip to the waterfront made access difficult. It was a real discovery when students uncovered traces of an old track and made their way down to the water in the early 1980s. The headmaster, Graham Lennan, recommended re-establishment of a track to the local Bi-centennial Committee, which obtained a grant towards expenses. Council negotiated a right of way for a public path in 1986, and this right persists, though the land is now under the care and control of the Illawarra Retirement Trust.

Council then constructed a fine track. Unfortunately, a small part of it was found to lie on the property of the Marist Sisters, who erected a fence, and caused the public pathway to divert west, on a steeper gradient. This is still quite easy for walkers in profiled shoes, though others might look wistfully at the well-graded wooden steps just on the other side of the fence. Slight re-routing to the west to avoid the steepest section is hindered by the massive encroachment of the neighbour's rubbish pile.

After closure of the school in 1988, the land was about to be bought by a private developer, who withdrew from the contract following sustained public protest against alienation of public resources. The group Friends of Woolwich Foreshore Walk was formed in 1991 to keep an eye on the public reserve and to remove exotic plants, as far as possible, from the foreshore strip between the two picnic tables. The work was done by volunteers, one of whom was an expert regenerator, and with the co-operation of Council. For reasons mostly beyond their control, the Friends neglected the track during the last two years. Some steps became slippery and dangerous, and others

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were overgrown. A locked gate was installed in about April of this year.

Total expenditure on the track by Council, 1991-1996, was probably of the order of \$1000, an average of \$200 per year. The major items were removal of a patch of prickly pear from the neighbouring Marist land, and occasional track clearance. More frequent rubbish removal, track clearance and weeding were carried out by volunteers. During this period the track was in reasonable condition and quite frequently used by picnickers and family groups, not strictly local. We know of no reported accidents or claims against Council for negligence.

#### Misleading aspects of the consultant's report

Various criticisms of the report were presented to Council in some detail. One of the most contestable features was the estimate of the costs of rehabilitation and upgrade, especially those associated with public liability. The report claimed that, following a recent court judgement, "it may be necessary to provide handrails and night lighting on public stairways in remote locations". For Woolwich Foreshore

Walk total estimates were \$58,000, of which \$16,000 was allowed for lights and rails alone. The application of such a judgment to bushland reserves seems highly unlikely. It would be the end of the Great North Walk, let alone the tracks in the Blue Mountains National Park.

It is true that all Councils and other authorities face increasing costs of insurance for public risk. In this case some of the steps do not accord with current standards. A few minor alterations could be made fairly easily. As well, legislative changes on public liability are due to be considered by the NSW Parliament before long, and there is some chance that more common sense may prevail.

#### Possible future users

One of the limitations of the existing cul-de sac walk is lack of advertisement of its existence. This might change if many more people visit the Woolwich area, after the former defence lands are re-designated, and the connections through Kelly's Bush to Woolwich Road are shown on public maps. Visitors may note that within the Woolwich area, the foreshore of the Walk is the only quiet north-facing picnic spot, sheltered from cold southerly winds. Phil Jenkyn

has suggested that the old Woolwich Public School building, part of which has been restored for use by both the retired people and the rest of the community, might become a resource center for visitors interested in local history. Other possible uses have also been suggested. Once visitors get as far as the old school they may also try the Walk.

Locally, not every resident of the municipality has access to the "large and well-landscaped gardens" mentioned in the report. Ferdinand Street reserve is the only other north-facing sheltered spot suitable for a small picnic. Local advertisement would probably increase the use and the appreciation of both reserves.

#### Future of the Walk

Faced with what they saw as an imminent threat, the Friends quickly cleared the track and removed some of the worst weeds from the foreshore section. The Parks & Trees Committee recently visited the site and recommended to Council that the track should be kept open, the locked gate replaced by a pool-gate, and the Marist College offered assistance in controlling some of the worst weeds overhanging the reserve. Volunteers

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will continue to keep the track clear.

Questions of public liability for heritage steps will remain, for some time, both here and in many other parts of the municipality. Trust members could help resolve these problems. If you know of other Councils where similar problems exist, you could write to the Premier, urging rationalisation of public liability issues. In the meantime, and as soon as the lock has been removed, try the Walk in the middle of a winter's day, or on a summer evening. Low tide is best. It gives an illusion of continuing public space.

Acknowledgements to many people who helped to gather the historical information, especially Greg Larkin, who searched out old titles and provided land maps.

- (1) John Chetham & Associates. Acquisition assessment report for potential linkages in foreshore open space in Woolwich between Mornington Reserve and Northumberland Street, Woolwich.
- (2) Sunnyside North sub-division of lot 112, granted to T.D. Edwards in 1839. Block E, lots 1-5, register vol921/folio232. Strip to waterfront is shown as Lot 1, DP 795382. on contemporary maps. Old title, Bk.434, no. 566. The strip marked the boundary between two separate grants to T.D. Edwards. It was also the boundary, Lot 1, of the Village of Woolwich. The western boundary, north of Vernon St, is only marked by two nails.
- (3) State Records Office, Archives, Woolwich Public School. Letter, C. Joubert to Minister for Public Instruction, 19 June, 1888.
- (4) Archives, Woolwich Public School. Memo. to Dept. of Technical Education from Albert Gale, 20 July, 1893.
- (5) Register of Trigonometrical Stations for City of Sydney and Environs, second edition, 1891. Department of Lands, Sydney.
- (6) Map transmitted to the Surveyor General with report 84/8, 25 March 1884, by John W. Deering. Map 12-440, sheet 4.

## Why the Trust wants to save the School

*The Trust prepared a submission on the heritage of the site of the Hunters Hill High School as its contribution to the negotiations on the proposal to close the Hunters Hill High School, Reiby Road, and sell the site.*

*The submission was sent to the Minister for Education and Training, Mr. Aquilina.*

*A copy was also given to the chairman of the School Closures Review Committee, Mr. Vernon Dalton. This is the wording of a letter given to the School Closures Committee.*

The Hunters Hill Trust was formed by local citizens in 1968. This was in response to a proposed town plan, which, if implemented, would have destroyed the unique heritage and character of the municipality. It would have replaced fine old houses and leafy streets with 3 storey walk-up home units and carparks.

The Trust is also committed to,

. The preservation of all features of Hunters Hill having beauty, architectural and historic value.

. To ensuring that any planning of Hunters Hill should pay full regard to protecting and improving the amenities enjoyed by residents.

One of the aims of the Trust's draft plan prepared in 1968 was the preservation of the harbour foreshores and it included a specific proposal for "Permissive Public Occupancy of a 50 foot wide waterfront strip north of Hunters Hill High School".

Last year Hunters Hill Council signed a 20 year lease with the State Government for the land now occupied by the 3 Patriots walk along the foreshores of the High School grounds. The walk was funded by a Centenary of Federation grant from the Commonwealth Government and was constructed by Hunters Hill Council. When the walk was opened on May 12 this year the Trust's 30 year old dream became a reality. Half way through the construction of the walk, we learned that the NSW

Government was considering closing down our high school and selling off the land for real estate development - the very thing that the Hunters Hill Trust was formed to combat 33 years ago.

Since the announcement of the sell-off plan, the Trust has been very active in the fight to save the school. Trust members have been involved with the P and C, have attended meetings and protests, have written to the papers and to various ministers, and we have prepared a detailed submission in response to the Government's white paper, Building the Future.

In our submission to the Building the Futures Document, which has already been submitted to this committee, we argued against the closure of the school for the following reasons,

### **Community disquiet.**

No one in Hunters Hill wants the school to close. Opposition to the closure from residents, parents, former pupils and many other interested people has been overwhelming.

### **Balance and equity in the community.**

The closure of the High School will result in an unacceptable lack of choice in the community for secondary school pupils, leaving Riverside Girls High as the only state high school in a Municipality that has been a centre for learning since the mid 19th century.

### **The Heritage of the site.**

In our submission we document the history of the site from the fishing grounds of the Wallumedagal people who lived on the banks of the Turanburra prior to European settlement, to the pleasure grounds of the mid 19th century, the Figtree film studios of the 1930s and 40s through to the establishment of the first co-educational

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high school in the Sydney Metropolitan area in 1958. Every stage of this rich history is represented on the site and all of this will be lost or severely compromised if the school is closed.

#### **The public domain.**

The school is a community resource that is used by many different groups, including the Chatswood Evening College, the Korean cultural group, sporting groups as well as the community at large. The Moocooboola Festival, the annual Hunters Hill community event, was held at the High School in August and is a good example of how the school and its facilities are used by the wider community.

The school also makes an irreplaceable contribution as public open space.

The grounds form an important part of the "lungs" of the municipality containing a significant area of remnant bushland as well as six trees which have been included in Council's Significant Tree Register. The grounds provide a buffer between the river and the increasingly dense housing development surrounding it.

Except for the brief period when it was a film studio, the High School site has been part of the public domain. If the school is closed the land will be privatised and will no longer be in the public domain and accessible to all.

#### **A loss to the community**

Since the 1950s when the High School was established, the land has been exempted from paying rates to the Hunter Hill Council. The local community has subsidised the school to the tune of millions of dollars in rates foregone. If the State Government closes Hunters Hill High the Government will make a profit and the local community will lose out.

The community will lose all those services and amenities that are now provided by the school. The community will suffer from increased vehicular traffic in the area and it

will have to pay for the increased usage of the local infrastructure, such as roads, garbage services, libraries etc that will flow from any development that increases the local population. As well, if other recent developments are anything to go by, the local community will be forced to suffer the ugliness of another poorly designed and inappropriate development on what is now one of the few remaining accessible stretches of the Lane Cove River. Even if the State repaid the Council for rates plus interest for all the years that the school grounds have been exempted this could never hope to compensate the community for the loss of the school and its grounds. Once the High School site or any part of it is sold off it will never be returned to the public domain because the cost will be prohibitive.

#### **Government Foreshore Policy**

In our submission to the Building the Future we include a statement issued by Premier Bob Carr in August 1997 entitled Sydney Harbour Foreshores, whose guiding principles include,

- . maximising public access to foreshore land,
- . the retention of public ownership of such land
- . the preservation of all items of heritage significance
- . the retention of key waterfront industrial sites

The sale of the High School site will breach these guidelines which were specifically designed to protect the foreshores from the continuing pressures of private housing development.

#### **Attempts to communicate with the Minister**

The Trust has written to the Minister of Education, John Aqualina a number of times since as we first heard rumours of the sell-off. So far we have have not received a single reply, not even an acknowledgement of receipt.

Some of the points we made in our letters to the Minister include,

- . Our dismay at the failure to rebuild the heritage listed school hall destroyed by arson in October 2000 and the neglect of the school grounds because of the lack of a full-time groundsman.

- . The failure of the Government to upgrade and maintain the facilities at Hunters Hill High in the last 20 years.

- . The failure of the Government to respond to the challenge of private education as a factor in the falling enrolments of local children at Hunters Hill High.

- . The disparity between the facilities at private schools and those at Hunters Hill High.

- . The dedication of parents continuing to support the school despite this disparity.

- . The betrayal of these parents that is caused by the closure of the school.

- . Our astonishment to see a redevelopment model published in the Sydney Morning Herald on June 15, 2001 showing the school buildings replaced by houses.

- . A request that the minister properly consult with the community and that the Trust should be included in the consultation process.

#### **If the school is closed**

The Trust is committed to fighting for the preservation of Hunters Hill High School. However, if all of our efforts to prevent the closure of the school prove fruitless, then the Trust is committed to fight for the retention of the school site as public land. The Trust will join with all other interest groups to argue, lobby and do whatever is necessary to prevent this part of the Sydney Harbour foreshores from being sold for private development.

The population of Hunters Hill has declined from 13,017 in 1976 to 11,969 in 1996. However it is projected that by 2003 the population will be back to 13,000. If the school is closed and housing is built on the school site this too will increase the population of the municipality.

Here is an ironic paradox. The closure of the school will lead to an increased demand for high school places in the Municipality.

- **Tony Coote**

*President of the Hunters Hill Trust*



# Mr. Carr's policy on foreshore lands

In August 1997 The Premier of New South Wales, the Hon Bob Carr issued a statement on Woolwich entitled *Sydney Harbour Foreshore*.

The comprehensive nine-page document detailed the government policies on the development of waterfront land. The statement foreshadowed the draft Development Control Plan (DCP) being prepared by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and the Office of Marine Administration to provide more detailed provisions than those contained in the then current *Sydney Regional Environment Plan (SREP) No. 22 - Parramatta River and SREP No 23 - Sydney and Middle Harbours*.

Mr. Carr concluded: "This statement reveals our vision for all Sydney Harbour development".

A volume entitled *Draft Development Control Plan and Working Paper for Sydney Harbour and its Tributaries* was published in December 1997. It ran to 31 pages, plus maps of ecological communities and landscape character types.

The Plan began by repeating the Guiding Principles given by Mr. Carr. They are:

## 3. Guiding Principles

3.1 The NSW Government has developed the following guiding principles for determining the future use of publicly owned Harbour foreshore land:

- a) Maximise public access to, and use of, land on the foreshore.
- b) Land made available for public access and use should be retained or placed in public ownership.
- c) Public access links between existing foreshore open space areas should be, retained and enhanced
- d) Significant bushland and other natural features along the foreshore should be conserved and made available for the public's use and enjoyment
- e) Any change in foreshore land use should protect and enhance the unique visual qualities of the Harbour.

f) All items of heritage significance should be conserved and enhanced.

g) The first step in determining the future use of a surplus foreshore site should be to establish whether the site or part of the site is suitable for regionally and locally significant open space that will enhance the harbour foreshore open space network.

h) Any development on land not required for regional open space should be in the scale and character of its foreshore location. Significant proceeds from development of this land should be used to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of public open space.

- i) In order to maintain the commercial viability of the Port of Sydney, consideration should be given to the retention of key waterfront industrial sites. Wherever possible, public access through these sites to the foreshore should be provided.

## Improve the environment

The working paper added: "The strategy also includes the preparation of this draft Development Control Plan (DCP) which provides guidelines for development and activities of public and privately owned land in and around Sydney Harbour and its tributaries. The draft Development Control Plan will help improve the natural and urban environments along the foreshores of Sydney and Middle Harbours and the Parramatta River.

...it supplements the REPs by establishing guidelines for development and activities with the aim of:

- minimising impacts on ecological communities
- ensuring that the scenic quality of the area is protected or enhanced

- providing siting and design principles for new buildings and waterside structures; and
- identifying locations with potential for foreshore access.

The document stated that although the REPs do not cover the Lane Cove River, "it should be noted that the Office of Marine Administration (OMA) which is responsible for assessing activities within and along the Lane Cove River, will use this document when assessing these proposals under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The new SREP22 and SREP23 were promulgated in December 1998.

## River Study

A study of the Lane Cove River commissioned by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning from consultants has been completed. A change of use of the high school site should not be undertaken until this report has been considered.

## Rates will go higher under amalgamation

Hunters Hill average rate is the highest in NSW despite the fact that Hunters Hill has one of the lowest if not the lowest ad valorem rate in NSW. This is because property values are high in Hunters Hill, but it is also exacerbated by commercial properties being charged the same rate as residential properties. In other municipalities the commercial ad valorem rate is two to three times the residential rate. So Hunters Hill collects a large amount of income per household although if we were to be amalgamated into any of

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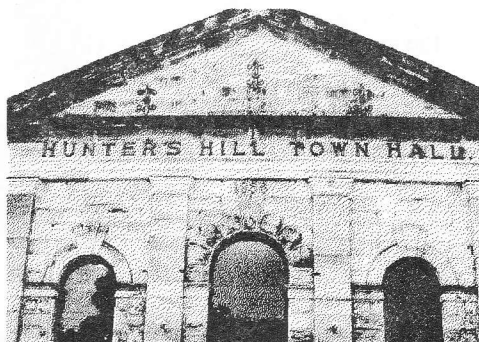
# Council states its policy on gardens

*The Trust has received the following letter from Don Cottee Manager, Public Works and Infrastructure, Hunters Hill Council.*

## GARDENS OF HUNTERS HILL

I refer to the Trust's letter concerning issues in relation to the presentation and management of the cultural landscape within the Municipality of Hunters Hill. The first issue raised:

*"The preservation of traditional gardens, plantings and species that are in private ownership."* It is necessary to have an understanding of the powers under which Council operates. The provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act govern most of the planning issues in the area. Council has powers to:- **Approve:** Building works and associated landscape design work at the time of Development Consent.- **Approve:** Applications under Council's Tree Preservation Order. Council does not have powers otherwise to make orders in relation to trees or existing landscaping. There is no provision in the existing legislation which would enable Council to manage all existing landscapes. However, Council is concerned about the character and existing plantings in the area, and has taken the initiative to improve the awareness and promote traditional plantings. This has



been achieved through the creation of a Significant Tree Register and associated vegetation. Numerous listings have been made with the co-operation of property owners. The Trust is invited to make submissions for listing if it has not already done so. In response to "The Trust is fearful that modern fashions in garden landscaping are altering the traditional landscaping of Hunters Hill, more vigilance on the part of Council is necessary other than the requirement for a landscape plan as part of the D.A. processes." Council considers that due diligence is exercised within the powers available to Council. Council cannot exercise **more vigilance** when the enabling powers do not exist to address the concerns of the Trust. The second issue concerns the ability of private owners not only to alter the garden layout, but also change the whole shape of the site through extensive excavation work. The extent of excavation and variation in levels in conjunction with building works is taken into consideration at the time of Development Consent. It is to be noted that Hunters Hill has very high standards for soft landscaping requiring 50% of site. Rock outcrops in some localities are protected (e.g. foreshore building lines). Development Consent is required for cutting or filling of more than 500mm and this relates to garden areas. Council has intervened in cases where this has occurred making the necessary orders to remediate sites where consent was not obtained. Council carefully examines existing vegetation and levels at the time of assessment. The final concern is the public domain - Hunters Hill streetscape.

*"The Hunters Hill Trust believes that more care could be taken in retaining traditional*

*stone kerbing, historic street planting schemes, appropriate pavement finishes, and that new amenities such as bus shelters seats and wombat crossings, are treated in a consistent and appropriate manner."* Council has a policy of retaining existing stone kerbing. Stone kerb is not replaced by other materials with the exception where perambulator/disabled ramps are provided. In the last 10 years great care has been taken in maintaining this resource. Council engages in community consultation on the development of tree planting schedules and the removal of trees which are senescent or causing problems. Great care is taken in this area and the Trust is

## Stone kerbing is retained

invited to be briefed on the processes Council undertakes through the Parks & Trees Advisory Committee and Bushland Committee in this regard. Council has adopted a standard design for bus shelters and this was de-

veloped in conjunction with Council's Conservation Advisory Panel some years ago. Additionally, Council uses a lesser shelter structure. These structures were well received when provided in Ferry Street. Following representations from the Trust, Council is not entering into agreements for commercial advertising shelters at this time.

Council has been using a consultant to list and assess the health of all street trees on Council's road reserves. These together with significant trees have been plotted and recorded in Council's Geographic Information System. Additionally, it is advised that for the past 9 months Council has been using a suitably qualified landscape architect to assess development applications with respect to the landscape component. As the Trust is represented in the CAP, it should have been aware of some of these initiatives. It is somewhat disappointing to Council that the Trust did not put its views to Council before publicly stating its concerns.

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the adjoining Councils our rates would double or treble According to the draft strategic management plan the amount spent on heritage and conservation in 2000/2001 was \$35,800 which was made up of the following items

Heritage Consultant \$26,500  
Salaries and allowances \$4,300  
Heritage week \$1000  
Heritage data base \$2500  
Office Expenses \$1100

This is out of the total expenditure on development and environment of \$658,300 and a total operational expenditure for Council of \$7,672,950.

# That was the year that was

## *President's Report, May 10, 2001*

This year has been one of much activity and notable achievement for the

Trust and I think you have been well served by those elected to the committee at last year's AGM. During the year Celia Roberts left to study in England. Her departure has meant that the average age of the committee has gone up by a couple of decades. Glenys Murray had to resign because of work pressures, and our Treasurer Chris Rumble, most unfortunately, after sterling work keeping the accounts in order, will not be up for re-election this year. Thanks to Celia, Chris and Glenys for the time and energy they have contributed. During the year we were joined by Stephen Ramsey who maintained the west of the expressway push on the committee.

Thanks to the other committee members, Secretary Len Condon, Vice President Gil Wahlquist, John Birch, Robyn Christie and Sally Gaunt, Trust representatives on various local and council committees

The Trust continues to be represented on Hunters Hill Council's Conservation Advisory Panel and The Parks And Trees committee. We are also represented on the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Committee, the Foreshores 2000 and the National Trust's Historic Houses Committee, Hunters Hill Council Photographic Project. The Trust has been closely involved with an ambitious project developed by Hunters Hill Council's Heritage Officer, Greg Patch. The idea of the project is to photograph and document every building in Hunters Hill. This will help immensely in the upgrade of the heritage listings and it will help establish a better understanding of the character of the area and the nature of its cultural landscape.

### *The Trust Journal and Web site.*

Gil Wahlquist once again is to be congratulated for the Trust Journal. This has to be one of the best looking publications of any local voluntary group in Australia. He puts in an enormous amount of work ensuring that the content is vital and interesting and that

the journal comes out on time. Gil is also responsible for the web site which has received 25,000 hits to date.

### *Green Book*

The Heritage of Hunters Hill (or the green book) has been one of the most useful and important accomplishments of the Trust but there are no copies left. Committee member Robyn Christie is continuing to investigate how we can best upgrade it.

### *Christmas Party*

A very successful Christmas party was held at life member Marian Ibrahim's place and included an inspiring talk from Rick Leplastrier of the Harbour Federation Trust. We are very grateful to Marian and Nabeel Ibrahim for their generosity volunteering their house for the party. We rely on the generosity of members each year for this key event in our calendar.

### *Closure of Hunters Hill High School*

As you are aware, the completion of the 3 Patriots Walk has been our biggest project this year. The possible closure of the High School has been our biggest protest. The Trust has been active in fighting for the retention of the high school which we see as an invaluable local community resource. Committee members have been involved with the P and C. have attended meetings and protests, have written to the papers and to various Government ministers. Gil Wahlquist prepared a 30 page submission as part of the P and C's response to the Government's white paper and as well, he is preparing the Trust's own response to the paper.

One of the reasons put forward by the Education Department for the closure of the school has been the lack of support for it from the local community. This argument is quite irrelevant, the school, after all, attracts students from far afield who come because they and their parents appreciate the school's fantastic riverside location, its green grounds and its fine academic record. However, it is a fact that locals,

particularly on the peninsula, do not support Hunters Hill High and send their kids to private schools outside the area.

It is ironic that the success of the Trust all those years ago may be partly to blame for this lack of commitment to the local community.

Today, the majority of those people who started the Trust most probably could not afford to live in Hunters Hill, yet it was their success in preserving the suburb that has made it such a sought-after and expensive address.

The community spirit that existed in Hunters Hill 35 years ago is not exactly shared by those who have 4 Mercs in the garage and whose main activity is scrambling up the greasy pole of success and status.

Keeping an eye on developments The Trust continues to monitor development proposals in Hunters Hill. This is done through its representation on Council committees, by maintaining an overview of Council business and by being available as a listening post for the concerns of local residents and Trust members.

We have made submissions to Council on a number of matters including various Development Applications, the implementation of Council's fence policy and the need to preserve historic gardens and trees as well as the buildings. Successes this year included the Land and Environment Court's rejection of a proposed mega mansion at No 1 Ferry Street, and the rejection by Council of the Adshell Bus shelters which would have filled our streets with illuminated advertising signs.

The pressure for development in Hunters Hill continues to be a major problem and the fight against gross and inappropriate proposals is getting more intense and complicated. To illustrate this, here are a number of examples from my experience on Council's Conservation Advisory Panel.

There is a proposal, currently under consideration, to demolish No 29 Dick





*At the walk opening on May 12, 2001 (from left): Tony Coote, Don Cottee, Gil Wahlquist, Cr. Susan Hoopmann, Senator Marise Payne, Kerry Chikarovski MP, Sally Gaunt.*

Street Henley, a 1916 house on the waterfront with a wonderful old garden. No less than four heritage architects were present when the Conservation Advisory Panel visited the site, and to a man they supported the demolition of the house. The main reason given was that the existing house was of no particular importance, and was not suitable for modern living.

The Trust disagreed with the 4 Heritage Consultants' assessment and opposed demolition. However this view was not supported by the majority of the panel and will probably not be supported by Council. The result will be the demolition of the house and garden and the construction of a glass and steel box. There can be no real doubt that the house and garden are worthy of preservation (go and check it out for yourself). Thanks to the weight and thickness of the heritage consultants' reports, Council's decision will most probably be made, not on the merit of the case, but on whether it believes it could successfully defend rejection of the demolition proposal in the Land and Environment Court.

Another similar is the proposal to demolish No 9 Toocooya Road, a fine Federation Arts and Crafts bungalow dating from 1918. This house is in the Conservation area with other houses of a similar vintage on either side. The house is also known as Tannadice House, but is not a listed Heritage item. This is one of a number of properties in Hunters Hill which were not included

in the original heritage listing because they were not in the green book. We anticipate that these omissions will be rectified when the inventory of Heritage items is upgraded.

The Heritage assessment of Tannadice House was made by a leading firm of Heritage consultants and it recommended against demolition.

However, a second report by the same firm was presented to the Conservation Advisory Panel on the night of its meeting. We were told that the first heritage report had been sent out by mistake before it had been properly checked. The second report recommended that the house did not warrant preservation. These two examples illustrate a trend. Increasingly Heritage Consultants are becoming the hired guns of building owners and developers. Their main role is to support the wishes of their employers. Obviously, a developer will shop around until he gets the Heritage report he wants. There is a clear need for the establishment of an independent heritage review process to prevent this rorting of the system.

#### *The Corridor House*

Another unfortunate trend we have noticed is the "corridor house". This is a term CAP member, councilor Margaret Christie coined. It describes what happens when you take a small heritage listed cottage, and "make it suitable for the needs of a modern house holder". This is achieved by building a huge, out of scale, two storey addition up the back. The original modest dwelling becomes merely a corridor which leads to the "real house". The "corridor house" joins the first-floor "pop up" as a totally inappropriate model for alterations and additions to heritage houses.

The argument that an old house should be demolished or changed beyond recognition simply because it is unsuitable for current needs is totally spurious. Whether it is in Hunters Hill, Paddington, the Rocks or any other heritage pre-

cinct, there are hundreds of examples of old houses where people are happily living with all the required mod cons. These people chose to live in these houses because they appreciated their heritage.

They love the houses for what they are, and they do not want to turn them into something they never were. They bought the house, not the real estate. Our challenge is to educate would-be heritage owners to this view.

#### *Other areas of concern for the future*

There are a couple of things which have recently come up and which will no doubt become issues for the Trust in the near future. With the NSW Government proposal for inner city Council amalgamations, and the associated rhetoric about increased efficiency and cost savings, it is almost inevitable that Sydney's smallest local government area, Hunters Hill, may again be considered for amalgamation.

Another NSW government initiative, the white paper "PLAN FIRST", proposes significant changes to the planning procedures right across the state. Near the top of its goals is "Certainty for Business and Investors". This can often be code for the relaxation of planning controls including those on heritage. Committee member John Birch has prepared a brief submission on the white paper which, while welcoming the goals of enhanced efficiency and transparency, expresses concern about its priorities and methods and requests further consultation prior to the Government finalising its proposals.

So much for the struggle, now for the vision,

#### *Sydney Harbour Federation Trust*

The passage of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust legislation through Federal parliament represents a triumph for a number of community groups and local councils. These groups and Councils came together to oppose the Government's original scheme to sell off much of the lands for development.

The Trust was well represented on the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Committee, and on the Foreshores 2000 committee by Gil Wahlquist Trust member Phil Jenkyn has been outstanding and

**THE HUNTERS HILL  
TRUST INCORPORATED**

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Hunters Hill Trust Inc.  
P. O. Box 85,  
Hunters Hill, 2110

**Officers for 2000-2001**

President – Tony Coote; 9817 3466  
Vice-president – Nicola Jackson  
Secretary – Len Condon, 9816 2796.  
Treasurer – John Birch, 9816 4415.  
Journal editor – Gil Wahlquist.  
Committee – Sally Gaunt, Robyn Christie,  
Stephen Ramsey, John Birch, Nicola Jackman,  
Brendan Stewart, Gil Wahlquist.  
Committee meetings are held at 8 p.m. on  
the second Thursday of each month at  
Vienna Cottage, Alexandra Street, Hunters  
Hill.

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indefatigable in the work that he has done to gain this great result.

*The Three Patriots Walk*

The completion of the Three Patriots Walk has been the biggest project of the year. A number of us had dreamed of creating a walkway along the foreshores of the High School, getting rid of the old 6 foot high rusty cyclone wire fence that separated the water from the grounds and opening up this very beautiful part of the Lane Cove River to the public.

Gil Wahlquist put together a very professional application for the Federation grant and Trust stalwart Bev Sherry had the idea to incorporate the three local Patriots into the proposal which linked the walk to the centenary of Federation and clinched the grant.

Apart from Gil, who also organised the signage and the opening celebrations, other committee members actively involved in the project include Sally Gaunt, who designed and planted the landscaping and me. Don Cottee from Hunters Hill Council has been very closely involved, as the project manager.

Apart from the fence which was carried out by outside contractors Northside Fencing and Sally Gaunt's landscaping, the work was mainly carried out by Council staff. Council also made a financial contribution to the cost of the walk.

*- Tony Coote*

Our speakers at the Annual General Meeting Were:

Dr Lyn Carson, from the department of Government and International Relations, University of Sydney and her partner Dr Stuart White, from the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney.

# Members and friends are invited to our Christmas Party

The Hunters Hill Trust Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, November 29, 2001 at the home of Carl and Alysoun Ryves, 5 Werambie Street, Woolwich.

The party will be held from 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Carl and Alysoun are long-time members of the Trust. They have been at the forefront of the campaign to save the Woolwich Army Land from development.

Alysoun is an accomplished maker of quilts and took part in a program to make quilts to aid the staging of the Paralympic Games in Sydney last year. In 2000 Alysoun was named Hunters Hill Citizen of the Year.

Carl is an Olympic yachtsman and competed in Mexico City sailing a yacht he built himself. He was also a part of an America's Cup Challenge. This year Carl took part in an Olympic veterans yachting series in Denmark.

The Ryves house was built in 1891 for H. Carpenter. The architect was William Martin and the contractor was E. H. Clarke. The original house was wooden with a tin roof. The tin roof was replaced with tiles some years ago. The house has a stunning northern frontage to the Lane Cove River.

The Christmas party will be held in the spacious living room and verandahs of the house.

Guests are warned that access from Werambie street is down 20 steps. Assistance is available to the disabled. Parking is tight in Werambie Street and space is more likely in The Point Road, with a short walk to 5 Werambie Street.

Bookings are essential.

Donation of \$25 per person.

RSVP Monday, November 26

The Secretary, Len Condon,

P.O. Box 85,

Hunters Hill 2110.

Or phone 9816 2796