

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

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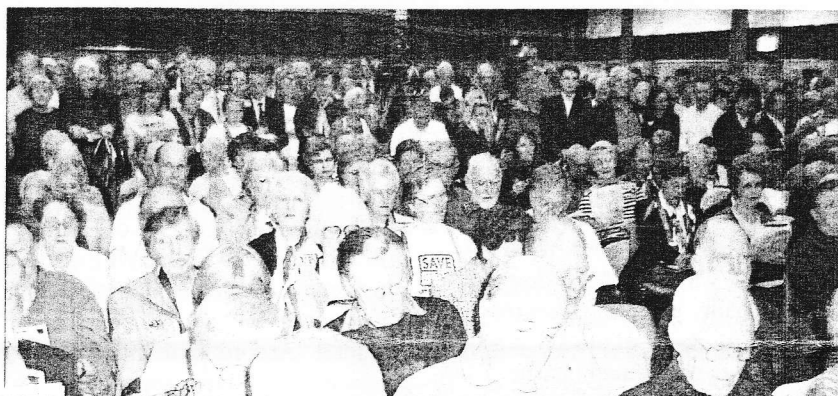
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The Hunters Hill

Trust Journal



Massive Town Hall vote said "No" to amalgamation

The streets of the Municipality have never looked so festive, with bunting waving from thousands of trees and lampposts. The festive mood carried over to the historic meeting held at the Town Hall (above) on September 17th, where more than 700 local residents crammed into the Hall and spilled out into the forecourt for the SAVE HUNTERS HILL COALITION meeting. There was cheering, laughing, and the rousing chorus of a special Hunters Hill song "This is a special place, a place where waters meet".

However the positive mood belied the serious nature of the threat facing Hunters Hill from Ryde Council's audacious ambit claim to take over two thirds of our Municipality. As former Mayor, Ross Williams, reminded us, there must be an 80% NO vote in the forthcoming poll of Hunters Hill residents to see off the threat. The amalgamation that produced the Canada Bay Council was born out of the apathy of the local community, where a mere 15% of people

voted. night's meeting, it's hard HHT President, Tony Coote, emphasised the gulf between the two municipalities, symbolized by their respective Civic buildings, the Hunters Hill Town Hall, and the Ryde Civic Centre. He spoke of how Ryde's proposal ignores the natural boundaries currently in place.

Kathy Prokownik, Citizen of the Year, and spokesperson for the successful "Save Hunters Hill High" campaign, said that the key elements to that effort, "working together, staying focussed, and being inclusive" made a huge cumulative effort work in a "ferocious defence of culture and assets" Jack Munday, key union activist in the Green Ban actions to save Kelly's Bush in the 1970's, spoke of the "unique alliance of enlightened middle class and a union with a social conscience Justice Barry O'Keefe, President of the National Trust, pledged that association's unqualified support for the battle to preserve the integ-

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The Amalgamation Wars Declared Again

As Trust members will be aware, Hunters Hill is once more at war with our younger neighbour, Ryde City Council, which wants to destroy our Municipality by taking over more than half of it. Some of the Trust's older members will remember the frontier wars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries which resulted in victory for the invaders, and many members will remember the Amalgamation Wars of the 1940s and 1970s, when the invaders were repulsed.

Background

The Minister for Local Government, Tony Kelly, has written to all Councils in NSW asking them to submit proposals on how they can institute reform to improve efficiency and to better serve the ratepayers. Without informing Hunters Hill, Ryde Council has submitted to the Minister two proposals for boundary changes, both of which involve taking chunks out of Hunters Hill.

What Ryde wants

Ryde's Proposal 1 takes a large chunk of the western part of Hunters Hill including the Gladesville shopping centre, Hunters Hill's conservation area No. 2 and Gladesville Hospital. According to their submission, it will move about 2,000 people into the City of Ryde. Ryde's Proposal 2 involves taking all of that part of the Municipality west of the expressway and 8,000 people from Hunters Hill. If the Minister supports either of these submissions, it will mean the end of the Municipality, because the remainder will have only 6,000 people and will not be viable.

The Trust's response

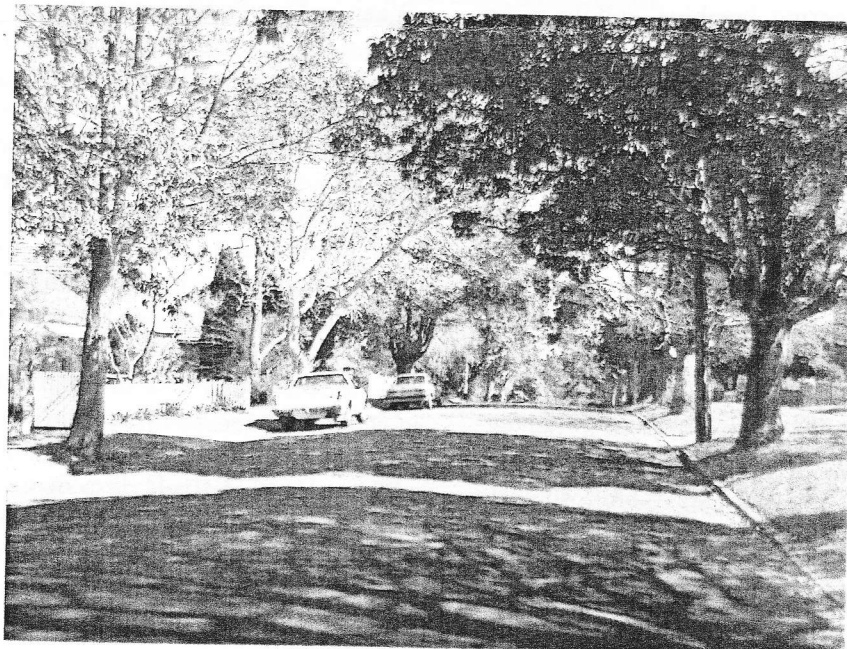
The Municipality has well and truly dug in for this latest assault. Council, the Trust and a number of citizens' groups have come together to form the Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition (SHHMC), which has met twice already (see the report on the last meeting in this journal). The Trust is playing a significant

role in the fight to convince the minister to reject Ryde's bid. We addressed the meeting at Ryde Council, have been involved in the community meetings and have made a submission opposing the takeover that was included in Hunters Hill Council's submission to the minister. The Trust is acting as banker for all the fighting fund to help finance the campaign which has already attracted over \$2,000 plus a \$5,000 donation from Council.

The Hunters Hill Trust's submission

In our submission opposing the boundary changes we noted that the Hunters Hill Trust was established in 1968 in response to proposed changes to Hunters Hill Council's Local Environment Plan. Had these changes been implemented, much of the heritage of Hunters Hill would have been demolished and unit blocks constructed in its place. The Trust stood candidates in the Council elections, got a majority on Council and rewrote the LEP, thus saving much of the heritage of "Australia's oldest garden suburb" and creating a Municipality which is of national significance. The Trust took the initiative in a number of heritage areas including the Green Book, now in its fourth edition, which formed the basis for most of the original heritage listings in Council's LEP and the original Heritage Study of the Municipality made by Meredith Walker. The Trust was also responsible for the inclusion in the LEP of the Conservation Advisory Panel, which advises Council on heritage matters. The committee includes representatives from the com-

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At left—Milling Street, 2110, part of the Hunters Hill community and sought by Ryde for amalgamation.



Pictured left—Flagstaff Street, Gladesville, in the area sought by Ryde Council.

munity, the National Trust, the Institute of Architects and the Hunters Hill Trust. It has become the model for many other Councils – including Ryde.

As a result of the Trust's initiatives, Hunters Hill Council led the way in conservation and heritage planning in Australia for many years.

A community of interest

The Hunters Hill Trust was the foundation of Heritage and Conservation planning in Hunters Hill. The Trust is entirely home-grown, and came out of a direct *community response* to a threat to the Municipality. The great majority of the Trust's 492 live within the Municipality of Hunters Hill and are spread right across it, including the part that Ryde has its eye on. Five of the Trust's present committee of seven live in this bit of the Municipality.

The Trust continues to be one of the main custodians of Heritage in the Municipality today and has been involved in many community actions, including the fight to save Kelly's Bush and the campaign to keep the High School open. The Trust is just one example of the special nature of the community of Hunters Hill, which has a very high level of resident involvement in its activities, and a high level of community concern in its governance.

The Municipality of Hunters Hill

The Municipality of Hunters Hill is less than 5 Kms long and the Town Hall and Council Offices sit right at its geographic centre. There are only 14,000 residents with one Councillor for every 1500. Because of its small size, the residents of Hunters Hill relate first to the Municipality and second to whether they happen to live in Gladesville, Boronia Park, Hunters Hill or Woolwich. The established "community of interest" for the residents of Hunters Hill is *the Municipality* and this is reinforced by the history of the area.

The establishment of Hunters Hill as a Municipality was one of the first under the Municipalities Act of 1858 and as Jules Joubert noted it was a "fought-for Municipality". There was disagreement about the area to be included, with a result that a number of different petitions were submitted to the Governor. The successful petition was signed by 60 people including leading entrepreneurs Charles Jeaneret, D N Joubert and Jules Joubert. The petitioners were a multicultural group including French, Germans, Italians, English, Scots and Irish. Hunters Hill was proclaimed a Municipality on 5 January 1861 and a Council elected on January 29 of that same year. Jules Joubert was elected Chairman, C H Fairland was the first Town Clerk and aldermen included James Farnell and Gabriel De Milhau. The architect and local resident, Wil-

liam Weaver was engaged by Council to assess property values so that rate notices could be sent out.

The Municipality of Ryde was not declared until 1870 and it ceased to be a Municipality in 1992, when it was declared a City.

Ryde Council's view of Hunters Hill

Ryde Council's submission (page 15) it describes the Municipality as being "characterised into (sic) two main parts; the *historic* (my emphasis) peninsula and *the remainder* (my emphasis) that has similar characteristics to the City of Ryde". It then goes on to state that "Burns Bay Road is the logical point for any LGA boundary adjustment broadly reflecting the established community of interest".

This statement shows a complete lack of understanding of the history and character of the Municipality of Hunters Hill.

The footprint of the Hunters Hill Municipality reflects its heritage and history. It is a narrow peninsula lying east-west, bounded to the north by the Lane Cove river, to the south by the Parramatta river and to the west by Pittwater, Ryde and Punt roads.

This northern boundary is the historic route from the farms and homes in the northern suburbs through to Sydney. Beverley Sherry, in her book Hunters Hill, Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb, writes that Walter Campbell, whose father was the Superintendent at Tarban Creek asylum, "recalls that the punt (at the bottom of Punt Road) was essential. It was a cumbersome apparatus and passengers invariably assisted in hauling it across the river. To get to Sydney, they transferred from the punt mid-stream to the Sydney-Parramatta steamer."

The north and south boundaries are natural boundaries formed by the two rivers. The western boundary is also a natural and logical boundary. Pittwater and Victoria roads follow the ridges and Punt road, which runs along the historic stone boundary

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walls of Gladesville Hospital was the shortest route down to the water's edge.

The European development of Hunters Hill has varied in accordance with its topography. Because of its steep terrain, poverty of soil, and lack of fresh water, the area to the east was developed for housing while the western part was developed originally for farming and later housing.

The freeway and underpass were constructed in the 1960's, and whilst this was a major trauma for Hunters Hill, resulting in the demolition of a number of fine heritage buildings including St Malo, the original subdivision and street patterns and the physical connection remain intact.

The whole of Hunters Hill, right up to its western boundary, is a peninsula. It is simply wrong to think of "Hunters Hill" as only that part of that peninsula to the east of Burns Bay Road.

The part that Ryde wants to resume

Ryde wants to take over that part of the Municipality, which is in fact *the oldest part of Hunters Hill and houses some of its most important heritage items*. Settlement began in this area in the 1790s when John Doody, who was a convict artist, William House and George Fieldhouse, received the first grants to start farming along Pittwater Road and Bateman's Road. **This part of the Municipality includes areas directly associated with the people who formed it, including,**

- The Heritage listed Joubert Subdivision associated with Didier Joubert (the first official mayor) and his son Numa who was mayor in 1888 and an alderman for 21 years,
- Streets which have the names of the pioneer settlers and aldermen, such as Salter, Manning, Joubert, De Milhau, James Everard (the first convict farmer),

The Ferry wharf at Gladesville, the Gladesville Bridge and the Figtree bridges all owe their origins to the efforts of Hunters Hill aldermen Charles Jeanneret and the Jouberts.

What the Ryde Council submission so carelessly describes as the "remainder" of Hunters Hill contains, amongst many other items, the following:

- **Gladesville Hospital** with its historic grounds and heritage buildings,
- **The Priory**, which is arguably the most important heritage item in Hunters Hill. It contains buildings dating from 1836, when Thomas Stubbs bought 18 acres at Tarban Creek and built a house and farm there. These buildings are the oldest in the Municipality. Stubbs sold the farm to the Marist Fathers in 1847 who established the French Mission there, naming the house Villa Maria, which marked the beginning of the French settlement in Hunters Hill. In 1857, parts of the original cottage were incorporated into William Weaver's fine Georgian design which, together with the 1876 additions made by Thomas Salter, are what now form The Priory.
- **Villa Maria church and monastery**
- **Riverside Girls High school**
- **St Josephs College** and its grounds
- **A large portion of Hunters Hill Council's conservation area No 1**
- **Hunters Hill Council's conservation area No 2**
- **A large number of heritage listed buildings**
- **Two Historic subdivisions listed as heritage items in the LEP** (Didier Joubert's Ryde Road subdivision, and the Gladesville Road Dept of Housing subdivision 1919)
- **Some of the oldest cottages in the Municipality**, including 13 Mars Street, which dates from the 1840s. Some of these cottages were owned by the stonemasons who built many of the houses and institutional buildings in the Municipality.
- **The majority of Hunters Hill's housing for older people in Gladesville Road**
- **The Hunters Hill shopping cen-**

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- **The Hunters Hill community centre**
- **Boronia Park**, which is a remnant of the historic Mars Field Common, the earliest common in Australia, and which contains:
 - 3 playing fields developed and maintained by the Municipality,
 - the largest piece of urban bushland in the Municipality
 - the Great North Walk track, which was an initiative of Hunters Hill Council
 - The Geoff Grace Wetlands – an environmental initiative in stormwater management of the Hunters Hill Council
 - A large number of aboriginal heritage sites

If Ryde succeeds in claiming this part of Hunters Hill it will have ripped the heart out of the Municipality and what remains will no longer be a viable local government area.

Penelope Pike's Heritage Study of Ryde Road

Recently the Hunters Hill Trust commissioned Heritage Consultant Penelope Pike to report on the impact of a proposed SEPP 5 development in Ryde Road (part of the area Ryde Council is trying to claim). The fact that we were prepared to finance such a report is another example of the strength of the community that exists in the Municipality.

It is worth noting what Penelope Pike says about **the Heritage Significance of Hunters Hill Generally**,

- "The Municipality of Hunters Hill, and in particular all the Conservation Areas within it, are of heritage significance because: (from Hunters Hill Heritage Study, 1984)
- it demonstrates the history of suburban subdivision, development and building practices in Sydney and particularly the use and appreciation of waterside areas; the use of Sydney sandstone as a building material; and the design of houses from 1840 – 1920.



At left—Detail of one of the oldest houses in the Municipality—in the area sought by Ryde Council

- it demonstrates the involvement and contribution of non-British Europeans – French, Swiss & Italians – in the European settlement of Sydney in the mid nineteenth century
- it contains evidence, both natural and cultural, of the area prior to European settlement and its occupation by Aborigines
- its townscape character is of aesthetic and cultural value to its community and its local government and their involvement in historical research and leadership in the conservation movement in NSW
- it contains tangible evidence of the past through all its periods of development and is of interpretative and educational value to Sydney as a whole.

These elements of significance have been carried through into the LEP and the DCP. Listed as heritage items are the early subdivisions and sandstone walls, as well as buildings and wharf sites. Houses of the 1920s outside the Conservation Areas and therefore not protected by conservation area provisions are listed as Contributory Buildings and protected under Clause 19 (6). Council's Heritage Advisory Panel in-

volves both the community and councillors and advises on heritage and townscape matters."

Conclusion

Over many years the community (particularly as represented by the Hunters Hill Trust) has worked to support heritage and conservation throughout the whole of the Municipality. Whilst there have been some disappointments and failures, the community has been successful in maintaining Hunters Hill as *a place of national significance*. For example,

- Hunters Hill has 1,244 noted and listed elements in its LEP.
- These include buildings, subdivisions, bushland, stone walls, clumps of trees and wharf remains.
- It has 223 places listed on the Register of the National Estate, one for every 63 residents.
- By contrast, the City of Ryde has only 19, that's one for every 5,789 residents

This success has only been achieved because Hunters Hill is *a special place* and is unique as a local government area. Because of its small size, Council is readily accessible to the community and responsible to it. Through its various committees Council consults widely and closely with the community and has achieved a level of intimate association with its ratepayers that is impossible in a lar-

ger Council area.

Could Ryde be trusted to look after Hunters Hill?

Consider also the buildings that are symbolic of the two Councils,

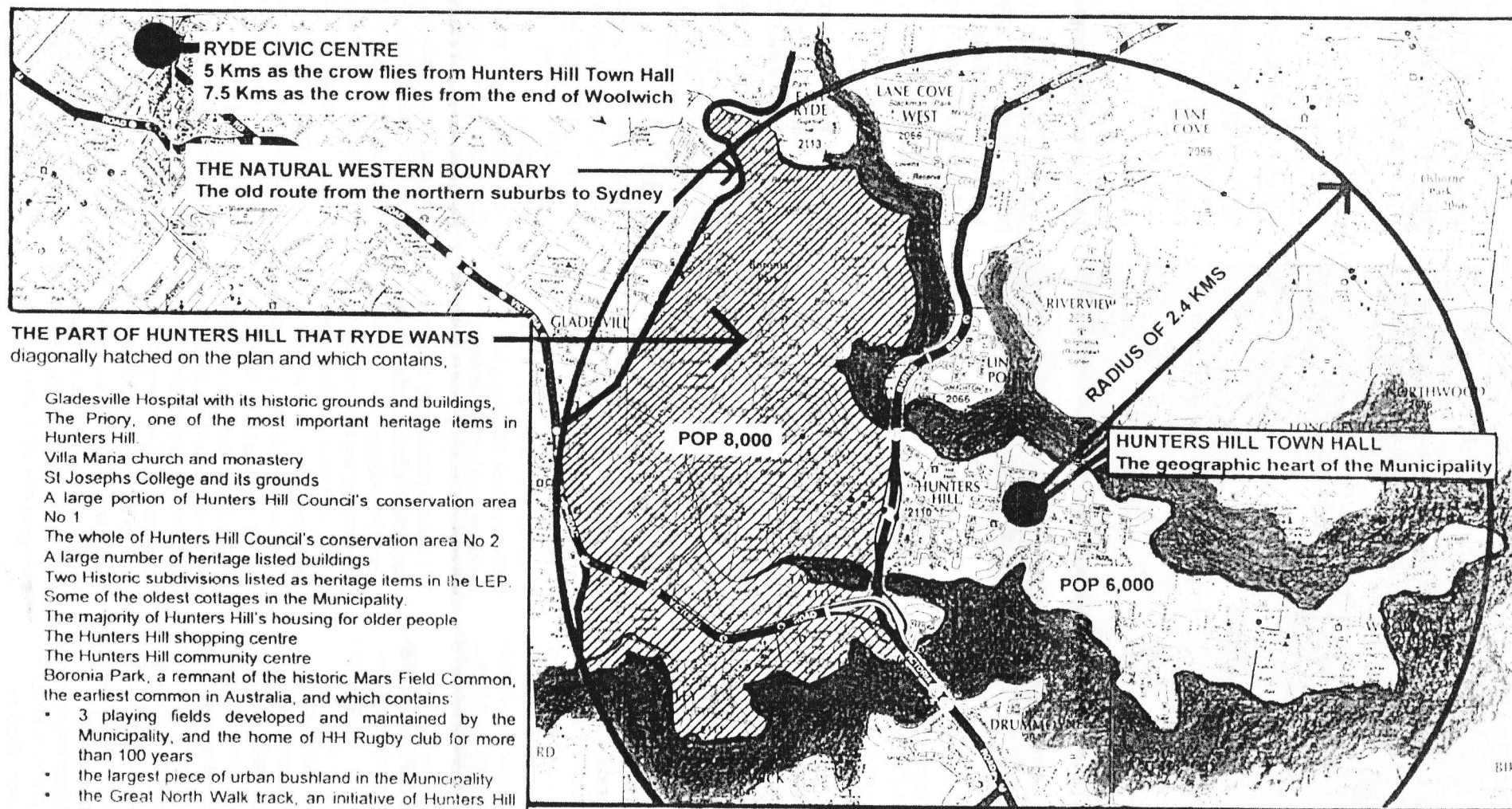
- Hunters Hill Town Hall is at the geographic heart of the Municipality.
- The building dates from 1866 (4 years before the Municipality of Ryde existed).
- In the 137 years since, it has been altered and extended and has survived a mighty conflagration.
- It is a fine example of the adaptive reuse of a heritage building.
- It is exactly what Hunters Hill is all about.

Ryde Civic Centre

Now consider Ryde City Council's headquarters, the Ryde Civic Centre.

- Built in the 1960s, it is a 6-storey, red-brick tower set in a sea of asphalt and exhaust fumes located right on the highest point of the Blaxland Road Ridge.
- Its Heritage classification would have to be intrusive. In other words, it has a negative impact on the area and to alleviate this it should that is be demolished.

This building is symbolic of Ryde Council and its understanding of heritage, streetscape and character. It is clear that Ryde should not be entrusted with the heritage Hunters Hill. If Ryde Council's boundary change proposals are accepted, the Municipality of Hunters Hill will be destroyed and the intimacy of the relationship between the community and Council, which has made Hunters Hill what it is, will no longer be possible. The Trust totally supports Council in its efforts to maintain the integrity of the Municipality of Hunters Hill as it exists now on its present boundaries. The Trust totally supports Council's request to the Minister of Planning to recognise Hunters Hill's unique place in Metropolitan Sydney and to reject the proposed boundary changes submitted by Ryde City Council.



Report on other issues tackled by the Trust

Even though the amalgamation war has taken the headlines, it doesn't mean we have stopped fighting a number of other battles. The latest on some of the ongoing larger proposals is as follows,

The Priory

The Priory is the most important heritage item in the municipality. It has buildings dating from 1836, and it represents 3 important stages of the history of Hunters Hill. At present there is a Development Application at Council for 5 town houses, an 18 unit apartment block and a large dwelling, all of which are within the curtilage of the Priory, which had been marked for no development.

In conjunction with the Friends of Gladesville Hospital, the Council and the PPL, we are fighting to prevent the existing public land being sold off and to have the curtilage area returned to public ownership. In this way the Priory and its curtilage can become a place for everyone. Obviously, this is a big ask, but, as the battlers for Kelly's Bush and the fighters for Hunters Hill High have shown, sometimes you can get what you want.

At the time of writing Council is still reviewing the development application and has asked Heritage

Consultant Penelope Pike to prepare an independent assessment of the proposal. The current owner, the Department of Health (which has vacated the building and will be putting it up for sale very soon) has objected to the 5 townhouses, which contravene the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan it commissioned.

The Hunters Hill Hotel development

This proposal is a massive over-development of the site. It involves a total refurbishment of the pub plus the construction of 38 apartments, commercial premises and carparking for 158 vehicles. It is 14 and a half metres above the footpath of Gladesville Road. It is effectively 5 storeys high and has a floor space ratio at least three times the maximum allowed under the current DCP. The carpark alone contains 3 storeys and involves an excavation into Hunters Hill's bedrock that is almost 8 metres deep and has parking for three times more cars than the existing carpark.

The consultation process prior to consideration by Council is still under way. Council has employed the architectural firm Architectus to make an independent assessment of the proposal.

The 35-39 Ryde Road SEPP 5 for 10 town houses

Another major development opposed by the Trust is the 35-39 Ryde Road SEPP 5 development, which involves the demolition of 3 cottages and the construction of 10 town houses. The Trust has now written three submissions opposing this development. We believe that if this goes ahead, then the whole of Ryde Road will fall to units.

We commissioned Penny Pike to write an independent heritage report on this development and she made a presentation of her report to the AGM. A number of Trust members did not support the commission of a professional report, and they reminded us that, in the past, such a report would have been done voluntarily. It is an unfortunate fact, that these days, we simply don't have the professional planning expertise to produce such a report, nor does anyone with the time to do it. We believe that Penny's report will be an important tool in fight to save Ryde Road. The cost of the report was covered by a couple of very generous donations, so the Trust itself is not out of pocket to date. Council officers are assessing the latest proposal and their report has not yet been completed. The consultative process has finished and the proposal will be going to Council possibly in early October. The Trust made a detailed submission opposing the development and sent copies to all the councillors in August.

GREEN BOOK The third edition of *The Heritage of Hunters Hill*—The Green Book—is available over the counter from the Hunters Hill Post office and the Hunters Hill Council office for \$29.95.

You can order a copy from the Trust at P. O. Box 85 Hunters Hill, 2110, but please add \$8 for post and handling.

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THE HUNTERS HILL TRUST INCORPORATED

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Committee – Sally Gaunt, David
Gaunt, Chris Hartley, Nicola
Jackman, Brendan Stewart

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

Join the Trust

**Membership of the Trust is
\$25 a year for a family,**

\$15 single and

\$5 for pensioners

and students.

Life member \$200

CHRISTMAS PARTY

**Put Thursday 27 November 2003 into
your diaries as the date for the Trust's
Christmas Party at Sally and David
Gaunt's historic Gladesville House, 15
Mars Street, 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Members and friends are welcome.

Ring Len Condon, 9816 2796 to book

Village working group is polarised

The Trust has a number of representatives on the Hunters Hill Village working group. The working group is a response by Council to the resolution passed by the public meeting in February last year, which rejected the draft DCP for the shopping centre and called for more community consultation.

The application is incomplete. For instance there is no heritage impact assessment. The Trust has asked for more information, but in the meantime made a submission expressing our total opposition to the proposal. The working group is somewhat polarised between the landowners who have a vested interest in maximising development, and the community who want to preserve the existing character and scale of the shopping centre. The major stakeholder was the Hunters Hill Hotel. It was their plans to re-develop the site, which was behind the move to create the original draft DCP. Recently the pub withdrew from the working party and submitted a DA for their site.

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Town Hall vote against amalgamation

city of a "treasure chest of Sydney", its spaces, houses, institution and 140 year old uninterrupted history of local government.

Ross Williams exhorted the crowd to respond with "passion and spirit" to the "farce" of the Ryde submission. A Ryde takeover would mean the end of "cost-effective local government", the introduction of "corporate government and the intensification of the built environment, not to mention a 30% hike in rates.

A Ryde owner of a heritage property spoke from the floor of her battle to protect her own and other local heritage assets, in the face of Ryde Council apathy.

This motion was passed unanimously. "That this public meeting called by the Hunters Hill community totally rejects the two Ryde City Council boundary proposals that would result in the extinction of our local government area; and affirms its overwhelming support for the retention of our historic boundaries. Moved by Kerry Bennett seconded by Adrienne Ryan who were both on the Save Hunters Hill Committee that successfully fought the amalgamation threat in the 1970s."

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We made the point to Councillors that The Trust is not entirely negative in our approach to development in Hunters Hill and we concluded our submission by stating that we would look favourably on a development that:

Retained the existing houses, with appropriate alterations and additions for adaptive re-use,
Kept development to single storey,
Kept on-site parking to a minimum and did not involve excavation for a carpark,
Maintained a 50% garden area, with 2/3 planting,
Replaced the existing fences with fences appropriate to the houses and which comply with Council's guidelines.