



Hunters Hill Trust Journal

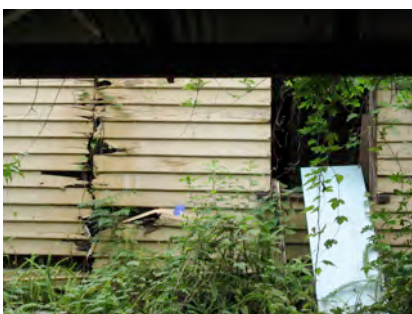
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CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

Heritage vandalism or demolition by neglect

This little cottage is at 11 Mark Street Hunters Hill. It is listed as a Schedule 5 Heritage Item in Hunters Hill Council's LEP. The Trust's Green Book notes that *between 1882 and 1892 Henry Nattey was living in Mark St. Nattey owned the land in 1880 and the house is typical of the small timber workman's cottages near St Joseph's College, which were being built in the 1880s. Henry Glading, painter purchased the house in 1895 and lived here. The cottage has been bought by St Joseph's College.*



The house is still owned by St Joseph's College but is superfluous to its needs and is being allowed to fall into total disrepair. At one point the college was canvassing the idea that the cottage be demolished so that their Mark St carpark could be extended.

At that time Council's Conservation Advisory Panel visited the cottage and noted its appalling condition. Since then nothing has happened and the condition of the house has further deteriorated.

The College's website proclaims: *St Joseph's College is extremely proud of the facilities and resources it provides for students.*

These include a Visual Arts centre, a Drama centre, a Music centre with Mac computers for digital producing and specially designed practice and rehearsal rooms, a purpose-built Science wing and a contemporary and

well-equipped Resources Centre that is open to students day and night and on weekends.

A state-of-the-art Technology and Arts Precinct opened during Term 2, 2013. This spectacular addition to the College campus allows students from Years 7 to 12 to explore and develop their creative talents in spacious, flexible and dynamic learning areas.

The school's pride clearly does not extend to its responsibility to preserve and maintain the heritage of Hunters Hill.



GLADESVILLE SHOPPING VILLAGE UPDATE

Of course St Joseph's College is not the only local organisation that appears to be failing in its responsibility to the heritage of Hunters Hill.

As was noted in The Trust's submission on the proposed GSV development, we believe Hunters Hill Council has also failed its duty to protect our heritage by failing to ensure the timber cottage at No 10 Cowell St is retained as part of any overall development plan for the Coles' site.

Since the last Journal in October 2013 the DA lodged for the redevelopment of the Coles' site has come under much scrutiny and criticism.

There were 277 submissions received by Architectus, the firm employed by HH Council to analyse the proposal and to make the submission to the Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) that will decide on the DA. Of the submissions only 5 were in support of the proposal.

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Preserving Australia's
Oldest Garden Suburb

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Publications

Heritage of Hunters Hill \$15
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MEMBERSHIP

The Trust welcomes everyone interested in preserving the unique character of Hunters Hill to become a member.

Single membership \$20
Family membership \$40

Contact the secretary to join or download a form from the website.

GLADESVILLE SHOPPING

VILLAGE DA – continued from page 1

The Trust's detailed submission can be accessed on line at the Trust's website. In essence we are opposed to the Development Application because we believe:

It is an overdevelopment of the site.

The revised DCP, which sets the planning controls, is flawed and misleading.

It will have an adverse impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding residential and commercial areas.

It will exacerbate existing parking and traffic problems.

It creates a poorly designed gated community physically separated from the rest of the area and fails to provide a safe and healthy environment for its occupants.

It involves the demolition of a building of considerable heritage significance, which was on land previously owned by Council.

The proposed redevelopment is a cheap and very ordinary proposition that is driven by commercial profit and pragmatism.

The Council, as a stakeholder in the proposal, has failed to properly represent the community by taking a leadership role in its development.



A model of the proposal showing the corner of Cowell and Flagstaff Streets. The wall is almost 15 m high on the corner, the equivalent of 5 storeys

A sizable portion of the land included in the development was owned by Council, including the heritage listed property at 10 Cowell St.

The developers have purchased Council's land with the sale subject to a put-and-call option with a 3 year time limit. This means that the land will revert to Council if the option to purchase has not been finalised in that time. As well, the deposit paid to Council will not be refunded.

A perplexing aspect of Council's approach to the sale of its property has been its failure to follow through on the Paul Davies Heritage Report to upgrade the heritage status of No 10 Cowell Street from a contributory item to a heritage listed item.

Why this happened has never been made clear. The main story from Council is that it ran out of time to properly consider the Davies recommendation. However this does not sit with the fact that it was able to find time to upgrade the heritage status of all of the other six items identified by

Davies in the Gladesville shops area.

It would appear that the Council was more interested in facilitating the commercial development of the site and thereby increasing the value of its land at 10 Cowell St than in preserving Hunters Hill's heritage.

Community briefing

On the 11th of February more than 100 people attended the Community Briefing from Architectus on their preliminary assessment of the scheme, which was damning, particularly in relation to traffic and the requirement for "active street fronts". The report recommended making extensive changes to the proposal or its withdrawal in its current form. The Architectus report can be seen on Council's website.

Local residents in Cowell, Flagstaff and Massey Streets have been galvanized into action. They have petitioned Council to revisit the heritage listing of 10 Cowell Street and through Greens MLC David Shoebridge have called for State heritage listing of 10 Cowell St.

The Trust's letter to Council

The Trust has written to Council urging it to revisit the listing of 10 Cowell Street and to make sure that the cottage is retained in any future development of the GSV site.

The listing would acknowledge the house's importance in the history of Gladesville and its incorporation into a revised development proposal would break up the scale of the buildings and soften the transition from residential to retail.

The Trust has also called on Council to review and revise the current Development Control Plan (DCP), which allows, amongst other things, a zero setback from Flagstaff Street for any development on this site.

The Trust has previously submitted that the Newbold Review of 2009, which removed the five-metre setback from Flagstaff St in the previous DCP, is flawed and misleading. This has led to some of the worst aspects of the current proposal, particularly in its impact on Flagstaff and Cowell Streets.

The previous DCP proposed landscaping and planting along the Flagstaff Street boundary of the GSV, which would go a long way to softening the impact of any proposal on the adjoining residential area.

Current state of play

The developers are in the process of amending the plans to address the many points raised by the Architectus report. Amended plans will be re-advertised and further submissions called for before Architectus make another report.

The Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) will not be involved until this process is complete and, judging by the developer's first attempt, the amended plans may not necessarily progress directly to the JRPP.

The cost of the Architectus review of the proposal to date will be significant and further costs will accrue when the revised plans are reassessed. It seems a great pity that an assessment of the original application, which was deeply and obviously flawed, was considered beyond the capacity of Council's planning department to handle in-house.

MONICA SHEEHAN



Long time Trust Member and Kelly's Bush Battler, Monica Sheehan, has died at the age of 95.

Monica was a familiar face at the Hunters Hill Trust Christmas Party until very recently. Her funeral service was held at St Peter Chanel Church. As reported in The Weekly Times, the last surviving Battlers, Joan Croll, Miriam Hamilton and Christina Dawson attended the service together with former BLF leader Jack Munday who, following representations from The Battlers, instigated the Green Ban on the Kelly's Bush site that led to its preservation as a public park.

Monica was named Hunters Hill Citizen of the Year 2011 and at the service Mayor Richard Quinn paid tribute to her outstanding contribution to the Municipality. "Monica was involved in many groups and organisations in the community, becoming the first female Secretary of the Hunters Hill Lawn Tennis Club; NSW President of the public speaking group The Penguin Club; a member of Rostrum, WAP (Women Active Politically), the Historical Society, Hunters Hill Trust, dramatic society and the bridge and bowling clubs.

"Monica was also a forceful member and former President of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush, a battle to retain bushland from development and the result of the world's first ever Green Ban.

"The Battlers were awarded the Honorary Freedom of the Municipality of Hunters Hill on 14 October 1996 at a special presentation held in their honour.

"Monica and the Battlers' fight to save Kelly's Bush from development, had international repercussions and together they wrote more than a page of Australian and international history."

Such warm appreciation from the mayor is in stark contrast to 1970 when, as noted by Monica in *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush*, "The Mayor ordered ugly photos of the Bush, including them in a Circular to Ratepayers, calling it "tick-infested rubbish", warning of exorbitant rates if the Bush were retained and absolutely no chance of unsewered homes being connected to sewerage unless A.V. Jennings built their houses. (A downright lie, sewerage has since been installed)."

Vale Monica Sheehan – or, as she was once known, Mrs Kelly's Bush.

BORONIA PARK OVAL UPDATE

The work to Oval No 3 is now almost complete and the playing surface is now in operation. On behalf of The Trust, committee member Alister Sharp has been following this development. Alister addressed the March 10, 2014 Council meeting in relation to a report prepared by a Council committee set up to review the long and protracted process. Here is an edited version of his address:

Summary The Hunters Hill Trust believes the Review Committee's report is

unsatisfactory and therefore should not be accepted by Council. The reasons for this include:

The Review Committee is reported as having met only once.

Key documents, defining the scope of work and agreements between Council and the HHRUFC are not included

Submissions received by the Review Committee are neither identified nor included with the report

The terms of reference are not addressed in a satisfactory manner.

The Trust is also concerned about what is happening about the Rugby Club's plans for the 'community facility' it wants to construct at Boronia Park. We sincerely hope that Council will be much more rigorous in ensuring proper community consultation and proper process if and when that proposal is considered again.

Failure to consult

The HHT has been following this project since its inception in 2010, and throughout we have been surprised by Council's reluctance to communicate with the community. In spite of the opportunities presented by Council's 3-monthly Newsletters, there has been no mention of the project.

Misleading information

Because the project was never formalised with a DA, it has drifted far beyond that envisaged. The report to Council on 27 June 2011, in response to Councillor Astridge's concerns about the removal of trees, referred to:

'a slightly increased level playing field ...' and 'a minor raising of the levels ...' A drawing for the project showed a proposed increase in level of 0.3 to 0.4m, plus an extension into the bushland along the lower edge and corners. That's a lot of fill!

'The works are largely maintenance works ... there are no perceived or potential adverse impacts on neighbours or users of the Reserve'. Even the proposed increase in level would have required around 150 truck/trailer loads of fill, but the field was also extended to the north.

'Planting of suitable native/indigenous trees at the northern end ...' No trees have yet been planted at the northern end, either on the field (as proposed) or on the slope down to Princes St.

'the works enhance and create new opportunities for biodiversity': The meaning of this is unclear.

'... this will free up Boronia Oval no. 1 for other uses ...' There has been no

indication of this happening.

Anybody familiar with this part of Boronia Park will have seen that these statements are not confirmed by reality.

Management and Financial irresponsibility

Failure to set up a proper management structure has resulted in this playing field, previously used for cricket and soccer, being unavailable for three years, and has involved Council officers in many hours of unnecessary work.

Consequently, Council has had to 'pick up the slack' associated with work required in the removal and disposal of contaminated and surplus fill, and the removal and disposal of surplus rock, installation of drainage, supply and installation of irrigation, supply and installation of turf and the supply of tube-stock plants (including labour for the rectification of the initial planting after heavy rain washed many away).

In addition, the installation of irrigation commits Council to the on-going costs of mains-water for irrigation (estimated at \$4000 pa) since the park bore cannot supply the quantity or quality of water required.

The Hunters Hill Trust asked Council to reject this report because it fails to address the terms of reference in a serious manner, and does not provide sufficient basis for Council to learn from the many errors of this project.

Unfortunately Council did not heed The Trust's advice and accepted the report of the committee.

Further criticism

In The Weekly Times The Rugby Club has expressed its pleasure that the work is now complete and in response The Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Protection Society President, Cathy Merchant, wrote to TWT with a copy to The Trust, expressing The Society's concerns about what has happened:

The Hunters Hill Rugby Club needs to be aware that not everyone is as pleased with the new Oval 3 and the process to construct it on Boronia Park. In the view of many it is not "much improved" but will leave a lasting environmental legacy on the heritage listed, multi use park which also contains significant stands of natural vegetation along Sydney Harbour foreshore through which the Great North Walk traverses.

The new batter along the edge of the oval is causing significant runoff problems and the Rugby Club has not maintained the sediment fence properly causing significant pollution of the Lane Cove

River after rain events. This is further exacerbated by the overall impact of the changed stormwater flows across much of the park due to the vast amounts of imported fill used to build the oval.

Ultimately trees will die and good bushland become weed invaded. Small bird habitat will be destroyed. There has been no consideration of how vehicle access and parking will be controlled when activity on the park is intensified.

Overall, the project represents a dodging of the intent of the carefully prepared 2002 Plan of Management for the park to share access and protect the park's natural and cultural heritage values. The massive enlargement of Oval 3, and the much-rumoured proposed Rugby club suggest an alienation of public open space which is unacceptable to many in the community.

THE MANSION AND THE MISSION HOUSE

Building in the 1850s on a Grand Scale

As the visible, public section of Hunters Hill is transformed with bulky modernity, and more to come, perhaps it is timely to consider two of our oldest buildings well removed from the commercial core, and relish their survival.



Villa Maria - the Mission House

Passy, the mansion, and Villa Maria (now known as The Priory) the Mission House, survive, and retain a sense of setting, faint reminders of the early period of development.

Investigation into historic buildings and their influential individuals has formed part of the protective role played by the Hunter's Hill Trust, since its foundation in 1968. The early initiatives of Didier Joubert, owner of over 100 acres were

crucial at the initial stage of development around 1853-4.

As the gold boom economy appeared likely to last, a well-connected William Weaver, about to retire as Colonial Architect, was perfectly poised to influence the design choices of wealthier landowners. His sphere of influence centred at Ryde where his uncle was head of a vast Anglican parish and where, since his arrival in 1851, he had joined a solid, sophisticated group of parishioners like the Blaxland, Darvall and Devlin families, among whom he could act professionally.

Edward Darvall's *Ryedale* and Charles Blaxland's *Cleves* (see files in Ryde Library Historical Collection) are contemporary examples of mansion/farmhouses built close to St. Anne's at Ryde, which bore Weaver's stylistic stamp, as does Passy and the well documented Villa Maria, all part of the same wider precinct prior to 1861 municipal boundaries.

As Edmund Blacket's Clerk of Works, Weaver had spent long periods overseeing major rural projects, particularly bridge construction, until 1854, when his appointment as Colonial Architect kept him in Sydney, and in a position to quietly consult for private clients. Most prosperous of all was Didier Joubert, who had lived in Sydney from 1841, closely involved in French matters and a shipper and trader to their Colonial ports. No architect's name has been

found for Didier Joubert's mansion Passy, a personal investment destined to accommodate Sydney's most influential Frenchman, Consul Louis Sentis.

Occasional references to Jules his brother as 'the builder' seem farfetched, since he held no equity in the land nor was likely to be given responsibility for such a project at that time.

Completed in 1855, by February 1857 Weaver advertised for stonemasons 'for the erection of buildings at Villa Maria, Tarban Creek', his design and costings clearly accepted already by Marist Fathers' superiors in France.

Both Didier Joubert and Sentis would have recommended Weaver as architect and discussed design detail – traditional, conservative - as well as assuring close observation of the process. Weaver himself would sign each and every account.

Sited high on a ridge line, Passy stood as a landmark from the city, Harbour and Parramatta River, emphasising an awareness of the French in the Sydney region, like the new Villa Maria mission house, with its supply of fresh water from Tarban Creek and a bay where ships could load and unload supplies to and from their mission bases.

The publicity 'machine' covered all possibilities, for, apart from Anglican connections and the *Herald*, Henry Parkes owner of *The Empire* lived at Ryde, and Jabez Heydon, a neighbour of Gabriel de Milhau, owned and edited the city's Roman Catholic newspaper *Freeman's Journal*. Every effort to attract investors would mention 'the home of the French Consul, Louis Sentis' rather than divulge Didier Joubert as its owner. Passy's eye-catching scale, position and proximity would lend appeal to surrounding villas being erected on Didier owned sites fronting Lane Cove River, and those facing east to the City.



Passy in 1953 – The Mansion

Early photographs in the Manning Album show Passy with orchards and a vineyard, typical of farmhouse mansions. One of the first colonial mansions of Parramatta River, the Macarthur family's Subiaco, also sat on productive farmland, acquired by Archbishop Polding for the Benedictine nuns.



Burrundulla Mudgee an early photo

Villa Maria's design bears close resemblance as well as to Weaver's design for Jervisfield for the Antill family at Picton almost a decade later, and a variation for Cox, at Mudgee, called

Burrundulla, both in late stages of completion when Weaver left Sydney in 1864 to take up the role of Chief Engineer in Auckland.

Significant too is William Wright's 1855-6 construction of Drummoyne House on the Point directly opposite Passy another signal in the Western Harbour of residential desirability, an attempt to equal those on headlands and bays to the East, Elizabeth Bay, Darling Point or Vaucluse.

Do they represent the high optimism of gold based prosperity of the 1850s? If so, then the retention of a sense of a generous garden setting and open space that mark Passy and The Priory today serve as a reminder of generous garden/farm land, curtailed with caution.

Ros Maguire

THE MANSION IN THE NEWS AGAIN

Passy today is a hot news topic and has accounted for more hits on the Hunters Hill Trust website than any other single item in the history of the site.

Back in April 1972 it was also a controversial building. An article in the very first Hunters Hill Trust Journal notes that six years previously The National Trust classified it as "highly significant, preservation strongly recommended".

This was before the Hunters Hill Council had listed any buildings as heritage items in its Local Environment Plan. The 1972 article continues:

But things are happening at Passy – unfortunate, regrettable things from the viewpoint of anybody interested in the preservation of historic and admirable architecture. It is being enlarged and altered, and the changes have already disfigured the colonial character. The tall Norfolk Island pine, so apt for the house and which dominated it, has been destroyed.

Worse may well follow, for plans submitted to Council for transformation of the main house indicate a scheme tragically out of keeping. The garden front may be kept intact, but other parts are to be changed out of recognition. When the present owner purchased Passy last year some said it was a good day for the house. Events have indicated otherwise.

There have been several months of argument and an appeal against Council's refusal of building applications is still

before the appeals board. It was the Council, as it existed before the elections, which took up the challenge of that Appeal and instructed its legal advisors.



"Arched-head, octagon and debased venetian windows in a row – all unrelated to Passy and to each other".

At the first two of three hearings held by the Board part of Council's evidence consisted of demonstrating the incompatibility of the proposed alterations (and those already done) with the historic character of the house. That objection by Council is entirely in line with the Draft Town Plan's provisions for historic precincts, but because the Plan is not yet in force, it was not introduced into the case. At the opening of the third session of the hearing of the appeal, Council's legal advisor announced that Council had now instructed him to offer no more evidence about the house. Among witnesses prepared but not called to give evidence, as a result of Council's decision, was David Saunders, head of the Hunters Hill Trust, Town Planning Sub-committee, Senior lecturer at the Power Institute of Fine Arts and a leading authority on the Preservation and restoration of old buildings.

The Trust has been reticent about publishing the unfortunate situation of Passy earlier, in case the Council's proceedings might suffer. It is now impossible to remain silent. The spoiling of Passy is far too serious to occur without vigorous attempts to deter such action. Council's advice and rulings have been ignored in several ways. The National Trust's advice to use an architect skilled in historic restoration, was not followed. The Hunters Hill Trust now intends to make it widely known that Passy is being treated in this way, and to encourage protest.

Current State Of Play - Passy

The present owners of Passy have submitted and have great plans for its restoration. These include the removal of much of the entirely inappropriate work done to the house in the 1970s and the restoration of a good deal of its existing

fabric. This is in addition to the construction of a swimming pool, garden pavilion and a commercial sized kitchen with a walk-in cool room and pantry that is attached to a large banquet hall designed to accommodate the regular family lunches. There is also an 8 car underground carpark and turntable beneath the banquet hall. The new work has in fact been designed by "an architect skilled in historic restoration" and has been approved by Council with the support of the Conservation Advisory Panel.

It's now 8 years since the first DA was lodged at Council and 2 years since the most recent revisions submitted and approved. In the light of various hearings being conducted by the Independent Commission against Corruption, the restoration of Passy may have slipped down the priority list. Quel dommage!

Current State of Play - The Priory

At the March 24 2014 Council meeting, Councillors voted unanimously to accept a recommendation from the *Priory Advisory Board* to open negotiations with lessee Rob Vass of Balmain. As reported in the *Weekly Times*, Mr Vass "will host wedding receptions, ensure continued community use and carry out some preservation work. The council had unsuccessfully attempted to raise money for its upkeep or find a non-profit, community tenant."

"Mr Vass is expected to operate The Priory on a lease that reflects its current market value. The operating hours will reflect "the need to permit the proposed business in accordance with customer expectations". Mr Vass can hold conferences and other private events."

Mr Vass will organise community meetings with local residents to determine the parameters of the venue prior to concept plans being drafted.

The Council some years ago commissioned a Conservation Management Plan for the Priory from Graham Brooks and Associates and Council has assured The Trust that any work carried out by the lessee will be strictly in accordance with this plan.

HUNTERS HILL VILLAGE BUS STOPS - THE MOVIE

Those of us who signed on almost a decade ago for the long, doomed fight to moderate the Hunter's Hill Hotel development will remember that perhaps the most common objections from

residents concerned traffic and pedestrian access. Many a testy evening was spent arguing with Council and its army of consultants about how an already congested intersection area (Ryde Road/Gladesville Road) would cope with the inevitable increase in car and commercial traffic. One "expert" retained by Council declared that there would be no appreciable effect. He was laughed out of the room, and never seen again.



For their part, the developers slowly accepted that their proposed design would need to include some form of response to the problem. Their eventual concession was to add a new bus bay, set back into the entrance to Joubert Street North just before the overpass. This was to be built by the developers, at their expense, and was a condition of Council's approval of the whole scheme. Everyone accepted the compromise.

Fast forward to mid-2014. The HHH development is now complete (in all its imposing ugliness), but where is our new bus bay? It doesn't exist.

An opportunity to pursue this mystery came up when the Council recently invited residents of the Village area to attend a workshop on improving our run-down pedestrian facilities. After the usual mollifying twaddle from a hired "facilitator", I asked why we still had a temporary bus stop for city-bound passengers outside the Hotel. What had happened to our Joubert Street bus bay?

Came the answer: "Oh no, that couldn't be built. It turns out Telstra has an important communications pit at that corner that would cost a fortune to move. And anyway, the bus drivers said it would be too hard turning across traffic from the bay to the right-turn lane on the overpass." What a handy result for the developers! They get to duck their responsibility for

creating extra traffic, and save \$100,000 or so in the process.

"So where's that bus stop going to go?" I asked. At which point the Council representative dropped his little bombshell. "That'll now be on the down ramp on the Eastern side of Burns Bay Road." Uproar. "You mean people will have to cross through at least two sets of traffic lights, walk over the overpass and halfway down a ramp – currently with no footpath – to catch the 506 to the city?" Yep. It's apparent that nobody with any clout at the Council travels on public transport, or understands how many elderly people live in the Village area.

And what about the stop for the other direction? "The current stop at the fruit shop will go, and passengers will have to use the next stop in Ryde Road, beside the new Mapledorams development." Seriously? "Have you been there lately? The footpath is now so narrow and the bus shelter so deep that people can only pass there in single file. Good luck in peak hour!"

But beyond the obvious practical problems of these ludicrous new bus stop locations lies a more troubling issue. For all its sanctimonious posturing about the special value of the Village environment and community, Council clearly doesn't (or doesn't want to) understand how crucial safe, easy and logical access to public transport is to its residents. We don't all have ratepayer-funded "company" cars.

David Salter

LANE COVE RIVER FORESHORES UPDATE



An ongoing concern of The Trust is the degradation of the natural and bushland character of the foreshores of the Lane Cove River and in particular the stretch of river from Boronia Park to the Figtree Bridge. The last journal noted that The Trust had written to Council on numerous

occasions about No 19 Bonnefin Rd, pointing out unauthorised work carried out within the foreshore building line. Councillor Peter Astridge took up the challenge and asked a number of questions of Council's Group Manager Development and Regulatory Control.

In the final washup Council has negotiated with the applicant to conclude the matter by reducing the height of the unauthorised retaining walls. This outcome is less than satisfactory because it does not recognise that the character of the natural rock outcrops and topography have been significantly diminished by the work. The Trust is lobbying to have all waterfront Development Applications given a more thorough assessment by Council by reference to its Conservation Advisory Panel.

The Trust has also made a submission opposing the subdivision of No 41 Bonnefin Road into two Torrens Title blocks and the construction of two semi-detached dwellings. We submitted that Council should not support this application because it will lead to an overdevelopment of the site and is out of character with the subdivision pattern of Bonnefin Rd.

We also noted that the application can only proceed if Council is prepared to waive its side boundary setback controls and that if it does so, the only real beneficiary of Council's largesse will be the building's owner. Finally, because this application relates to the foreshores of the Lane Cove River, which are of regional as well as local significance, we submitted that it is entirely appropriate for Council to ask CAP for its comments prior to making its assessment.

Council is still assessing the DA.

MUSINGS

An occasional column

Heckler house update

Readers will recall the house that featured in SMH's Heckler column in early 2012, which was reprinted in The Trust Journal of May 2012. The article compared the house's protracted and expensive build unfavourably with that of the Empire State building in New York. The house has been under construction since October 2009 and is still not yet finished. Workmen have finally got around to installing the designer front fence. As with so much of the rest of the house, the fence has not been designed with ease of construction or the frugal use of money and materials in mind, let alone any

consideration of the character of the front gardens of the rest of Bonnefin Rd. The design of the welded steel grill fence and gates owes more to what one would expect to see around the detention centre at Manus Island than what you see in a Hunters Hill street and pays scant attention to the fence guidelines in Hunters Hill Council's DCP. The workmen have laboured for weeks with the help of a crane to manipulate the incredibly heavy sections of the fence into place. At the time of writing it is still not finished and the tiny little garden beds in the front corners of the lot are still full of weeds.

Average home takes twice as long to build

Julie Powell reported in the Sydney Morning Herald of February 6, 2014 that "the average Australian detached home takes nearly twice as long to build as it did in 2000, according to new academic research that could have been ripped straight out of an episode of *The Block* or *Grand Designs*."

"In 2000, the average detached house – home to 78 per cent of households in 2011-12 – took only four and a half months to build. That rose to eight months in 2010, according to the most recent available data.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute said one cause of the ongoing housing shortage is that homes are getting bigger and the designs are becoming grander and more complicated to build.

The median floor size of new homes in growth suburbs increased 39 per cent, from 138 square metres in 1990 to 192 square metres in 2007."

Anyone used to watching the progress of house builds in Hunters Hill would be astonished to see any house or alterations to an existing house completed in 9 months, no matter how small. For example it is now four and a half years since work started on The Heckler house.

Where The Bloody Hell Are You?



Council has ensured that local residents and visitors have an immediate answer to this existential question with the new signage on Gladesville Road on the corner of Joubert St.

Overseas investors in Hunters Hill

Much has been written in the press about overseas investors buying properties in Sydney, their impact on the property market and the fact that first home-buyers are being priced out of the market. There is also an impact on the local community. In my street there are three houses owned by overseas investors who seem only to be looking for a place to park their money. They don't live in the houses nor do they rent them out. The houses remain dark and lifeless except for an occasional visit from the pool cleaners. The gardens remain uncared for and the vitality of the street and the local community is diminished.

The development of Hunters Hill Village

As the Hunters Hill Hotel building and the Mapledoram's Corner development near completion the impact of these new buildings has become clear.



Heritage item overwhelmed

The Hotel site development was allowed by Council to include an additional storey over and above the three-storey limit set out in the Development Control Plan for the area. The objective of the DCP was to set the predominant scale of the village at two storeys high. It allowed a third storey provided it was set back three metres from the main structure.



Hotel building and car park entry

The Mapledoram's Corner building complied with the DCP height controls as well as retaining the old butcher shop

building on Gladesville Road. It is clear now that the 3 storey limit with the third storey setback is the appropriate scale for the village.

The hotel development is a storey too high, which allows it to dominate Sydney Ancher's hotel building, which is a Heritage Item. As well the limited palette of materials and colours used on the Mapledoram's Corner building seem more appropriate than the somewhat frantic mix of materials, shapes and colours used on the Hotel development.

Tony Coote

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In November last year, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, NSW Minister for Planning and Infrastructure announced the withdrawal of his planning Bills until February this year. This announcement was the result of heavy amendments made to these Bills in the Upper House by the Labor, the Greens and the Shooters and Fishers parties.

As a member of the Better Planning Network, the Hunters Hill Trust supports BPN's call for a complete withdrawal of the current planning reforms, on the basis that they:

- fail to achieve a less complex planning system than the current one,
- will reduce community participation in planning and development decisions,
- still provide numerous ways for developers to apply for spot rezonings (eg through Strategic Compatibility Certificates),
- will continue the deeply flawed private certification system,
- will not improve housing affordability and thereby provide housing stock for those most in need,
- will not reduce the risk of corruption associated with planning and development decisions, and
- will result in reduced environmental and heritage protections.

Overall the Bills' fast tracking of development at the expense of true environmental concerns constitutes a failure to honour the Premier Barry O'Farrell's original election promise to restore the public's confidence in the planning system. The Bills ignore the recommendations in the independent review of New South Wales planning conducted by Messrs Moore and Dyer, and we strongly believe that this report should be the starting point of any new legislation.

The O'Farrell Government's recent statements in the media suggest it will

now side step Parliament and use the existing planning legislation to affect the necessary radical changes to the planning system. This includes the possible expansion of development in a way that does not require any community consultation to be conducted as part of the assessment process. We cannot afford anything less in planning than socially and environmentally responsible development and genuine partnerships with the community.

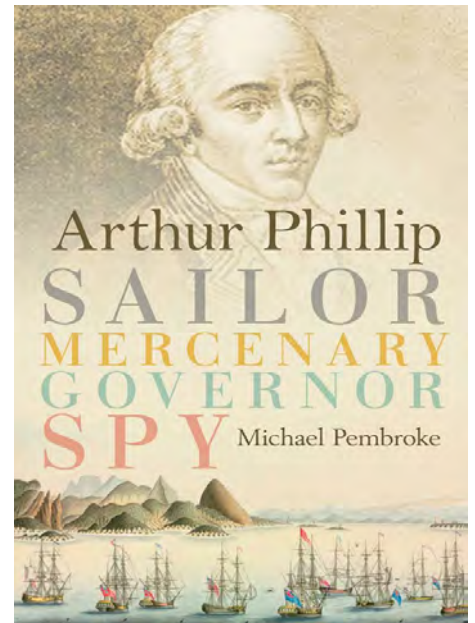
In 26 March this year a Call for Papers in relation to the NSW planning reforms was moved by Mr David Shoebridge and passed by the Upper House with the support of the NSW Labor and Shooters and Fishers parties. This call for papers requires the Government to produce within 21 days all the documents relating to the review of planning, the communications they have had with the big developer groups and the Government's instructions for the drafting of the Planning Bills 2013.

The call for papers includes meetings and communications between the Minister for Planning and the Department of Planning and industry groups including the Property Council of Australia, the NSW Minerals Council and any lobbyists. This is an important step in understanding what factors influenced the NSW Government's planning reforms, in particular their radical departure from the Moore and Dyer report with its strong community and environmental focus. An appropriate endnote to the Call for Papers is that on the same Wednesday, BPN held a successful protest outside Parliament House. Approximately 50 people were in attendance, with the Hon Luke Foley and Mr David Shoebridge MLC making speeches. A surprise visit was made by the Planning Minister, Mr Brad Hazzard, who happened upon the protesters in the street while getting his morning coffee.

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On a personal note, this will be my last report as President as I am stepping down from the Executive at the AGM after having served on the Committee for approximately 20 years. What the Hunters Hill Trust and the Better Planning Network exemplify is the power of community involvement and I would encourage the membership to think seriously about how they can find time to support the Trust in a more active way. Aside from my professional passion for heritage, it has been an enormous amount of fun and the personal rewards have kept me only too happy to be closely involved for so long.

Robyn Christie



AGM GUEST SPEAKER MICHAEL PEMBROKE

The guest speaker for this year's AGM is Michael Pembroke, the author of *Arthur Phillip: Sailor, Mercenary, Governor, Spy*. Michael is a writer, judge and naturalist. He lives and writes in Sydney and Mt Wilson, where he has established a wonderful garden.

About Michael's biography of Arthur Phillip, Simon Winchester writes: "The colour and dash of Arthur Phillip's extraordinary life, lived in amazing times in every corner of the world, is told just brilliantly in Michael Pembroke's utterly absorbing book, designed to become a classic of imperial literature". Copies of the book will be for sale at the AGM and Michael will be available to sign them.

HUNTERS HILL TRUST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**When: Thursday May 15
7.15 for 7.30**

**Where: Hunters Hill RSL Hall
Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill**

Guest Speaker : Michael Pembroke
Author of the biography of
Captain Arthur Phillip;
*Phillip: Sailor, Mercenary,
Governor, Spy*

Refreshments provided