



## From the President's Desk

*David Gaunt*

Welcome to the new issue of the Journal and Season's greetings for 2007. As I've said several times in these pages during my Presidency, there's all too often a litany of depressing news about developments proceeding against which we have argued vigorously. It would be hard to find a better example in the last few months than **The Chalet**, at 2 Yerton Avenue, where the Trust opposed a contentious DA for an important site. Ironically enough, this was the Hunters Hill home from 1954 of Nora Heysen, whose life and artistic career are being celebrated in a screening of Eugene Schlusser's film: "**A Life of her Own: Nora Heysen**", hosted by the Trust on November 11th at the RSL. (See back page for details). . You'd have to wonder what she'd have made of it.

Nevertheless, it's a pleasure to be able to report that there has been a wonderful resolution to the long-running question of the future of the **Priory** and its curtilage. Unquestionably, this is the most significant public building and space in our municipality, and the announcement of its transfer from NSW Health to Lands Department, and its addition to the adjoining Tarban Creek Crown Reserve (Riverglade) can only be welcomed with great enthusiasm. This means, of course, that Hunters Hill Council, as Trustee for the Reserve, will also become Trustee for the Priory. Foresight, vision and a strong dose of common sense should govern its future uses, given its public ownership, and remarkable history. For religious, agricultural, sporting, public health, and community significance, it's hard to think of a more iconic building, so it deserves our best consideration. (See our article on the Priory and Riverglade).

We also report in this issue on our very successful "**Greening Your House**" seminar with Peter Meloy, Sustainability officer at Baulkham Hills Council. There's no doubt that Peter's aims for domestic sustainability meet with the objectives of the Trust's own charter: today's environmental watchwords like 'embedded energy' and "reduced footprint" are echoed in our position on virtually every potential development in the area. It is at least encouraging that Council has appointed, for the first time, a **Sustainability Officer**. We'll watch the implementation of his ideas, and that of the Council's new Sustainability and Biodiversity Advisory Committee with great interest.

Look forward to seeing you all at the **Trust Christmas Party** on November 29th (details elsewhere), where Tom Uren, long-time champion of heritage and environmental causes, will be our guest.

## The Trust Needs You

Your Committee works hard without much recognition, and some members have been doing this work for over ten years. We all still have day jobs as well, which can make it stressful, though we still manage to have fun at our monthly meetings. Is there anyone out there who would consider taking on an active role on the Trust? Please think about it, and stand for the Committee at the AGM next year. Or just chat with a Committee member about what you might be able to contribute.

**Remember, the Trust's work is important for the future of Hunters Hill.**



*Preserving Australia's  
Oldest Garden Suburb*

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### TRUST CONTACTS:

President: David Gaunt 9816 4947 or david@gleebooks.com.au  
Secretary: Len Condon 9816 2796  
Postal Address: PO Box 85 Hunters Hill, 2110

### PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE:

Heritage of Hunters Hill \$29.95 (25% discount to members)  
Vision and the Struggle \$15.00 (25% discount to members)

## OBITUARY

### Tony (Robert Anthony) Simmons: 1933 -2007

*Roslyn Maguire*

Tony was a member of the Hunters Hill Trust Committee during the early 1980s when major developments like Pulpit Point aroused political interest. As one of the first industrial sites of the western harbour to undergo total transformation, the then Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Bob Carr in company with Rodney Cavalier, came at the invitation of the Trust, to view the site and surroundings (see Hunters Hill Trust Journal, February 1986). The Trust's submission Parameters of the River outlined a number of recommendations.

Tony trained as an architect in England and on that Trust Committee his advice and expertise were valuable. It was a period when local conservation of buildings was at its most enlightened - Meredith Walker's listing of heritage properties continued the earlier work of the Hunters Hill Trust's 'Green Book' and Penelope Pike's employment as Conservation Adviser to the Council frequently led to more stringent controls. Tony served on Council's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) for many years.

Tony Simmons's concern for conservation was also evident in many local houses with which he had professional involvement. The late '70s and early '80s was an era of 'alts and adds' and he designed many of these domestic projects on and around the peninsula. Though several have undergone further renovations, many remain where his work is essentially unchanged - in Manning Road, Alexandra and Ferry Streets, Prince Edward Parade and The Point Road. With the notable exception of the observatory rotunda at Passy (c1996), few would be aware of these alterations, since Tony's objective was always to maintain the character of the house and integrity of the streetscape. As well as satisfying his clients, his guiding principle was to produce work in sympathy with the historic suburb.

Like many involved in those heady days of Hunters Hill conservation, Tony's contribution deserves recognition at his passing.

## GREENING YOUR HOME

### Without Breaking The Bank

*Presented by PETER MELOY*

In August we hosted a very informative presentation by Peter Meloy. Peter has been a resident of the Central Coast since 1991 and currently lives in Bensville. He is a qualified town planner and has made a career in local government town planning. He has also worked as a consultant for a local private planning consultancy.

In 1999, when Peter bought his present house "Leilani" he decided to use the opportunity to demonstrate in "real life" that genuine, attainable alternatives existed to those proposed by decision makers: that sustainability is possible; that development need not be at the expense of the environment; and in the long-term, that we can enjoy a wonderful lifestyle yet hand to our children a planet that will provide them with an equally wonderful lifestyle...if we care enough to do so.

"Leilani" is a work in progress. To date, Peter's efforts have resulted in the house's overall energy use being reduced by over 70%, "green" power being exported back to the grid from his solar panels, water being heated by the sun, the house being far more comfortable to live in, and there being a significant reduction in the house's water use. More work is planned to further increase the comfort levels of the house without artificial heating or cooling and to further reduce the house's reliance on town water supplies.

Peter regularly holds tours of and gives presentations about "Leilani". His message is simple: if we seriously believe the world's scientific community's warnings about the catastrophic impacts that we and our children will face through climate change then we must all act now. It is our future and it is our choice.

Originally built as a small weekender in the late 1950s, this dwelling was substantially extended in the 1980s. Leilani represents what most Australian homeowners face: an existing home designed and constructed with little regard to the passive solar principles of orientation, design and materials. Peter has commenced a program of retrofit that is intended to significantly increase the thermal performance of the house and, at the same time, significantly reduce reliance on external energy and water inputs.



Leilani

## TWO EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

**On Sunday, 11th November, at 5pm, at the RSL Hall, Alexandra St, the Trust is hosting a screening of**

### **"A Life of her own : Norah Heysen"**

**To be presented by the filmmaker, Eugene Schlusser, as our contribution to the Jacaranda Festival.**

**This is free for Trust members, \$10.00 (or \$5.00 conc.) for others at the door. Please come, & tell your friends.**

The film has received a very positive reception at screenings to date. Launched in Hahndorf attended by 200 paying guests the film was received with wild applause. The eminent art historian Bernard Smith after viewing it wrote:

"...a magnificent achievement. It is beautifully framed and richly coloured and traces her work from her early life in Hahndorf under her father Hans's tuition to her life in London and association with Lucien Pissarro and her growing interest in Impressionism and early modernism through her links with the Byam Shaw school. It is a timely achievement, in my view, as it provides a bridge from Hans Heysen's art to the present...a splendid introduction."

## TRUST CHRISTMAS PARTY

**Bookings are now open for our favourite event, being held this year at "Orroroo", the home of June Beck, 59 Alexandra St, at 6.30 on Thursday, 29th November.**

**Our speaker will be Tom Uren.**

**Tickets are \$30.00 a head, which includes drinks and a light meal, and bookings can be made by phoning Sally & David Gaunt on 98164047.**



## Notice to Unfinancial Members

Please send us a cheque for this years subscription : \$25.00 family, \$15.00 single, \$5.00 concession  
Send to The Treasurer, Hunters Hill Trust,  
PO Box 85, Hunters Hill, 2110,  
or you can pay at the door when you come to the Norah Heysen film or the Christmas Party.

# RIVERGLADE

Sally Gaunt



The recent and unexpected accession of the Priory into community ownership as part of the Riverglade Reserve makes this not only one of the three major open space areas within the Municipality, but also the one with the most outstanding heritage significance. This magnificent Georgian house with its outhouses comprises an intact heritage precinct with a colourful history reaching back to the earliest days of the settlement of this area, and will be the jewel in the crown of Hunters Hill's heritage portfolio.

The Eastern Farms stretched from Tarban Creek out to Parramatta, along the rich fertile shores of the Parramatta River, and supplied much of the food for the colony of NSW. The farming settlement of this western part of the Municipality dates back to pre-1800. The fine house which was to become known as the Priory was purchased by Father Rocher of the Marist Order in 1847 from landholder Thomas Stubbs. It became the headquarters of the French Mission until the Order transferred its operations to Villa Maria in Mary Street in 1857. It provided a haven of rest for the survivors of the early missionary efforts in the South Pacific. The Fathers were self-sufficient, growing most of their own food in the substantial garden situated between the Priory and Tarban Creek. They also established one of the first vineyards, and fruit trees were imported from St Helena. Their other needs were supplied from Sydney Town, and shipped up on small barges which tied up to a jetty situated below the house. The original sandstone sea wall is still intact and can be seen a little way downstream

Tarban Creek at this point was still navigable almost up to Manning Road, whereas now it is severely silted up with sewage and other sediment and colonized by mangroves. The creek also provided good fishing, as is evident from the even earlier heritage - the substantial Aboriginal middens which can be found beneath almost every small cliff above the creek line. The early settlement's original water supply was provided by the permanent stream of Tarban

creek and a large dam was constructed in 1860's upstream from Manning Road, is what is now Tarban Reserve. The foundations of the weir can still be seen sticking up out of the grass. The existing weir, below Manning Road, dates from a later period, probably from the time that the creek was channeled.

After the Marists moved on it was taken over by the government as part of the Bedlam Point Lunatic Asylum, later to become known as Gladesville Psychiatric Hospita, though it is known to have been the residence of local identity Thomas Salter for at least ten years, through till 1888 when it was resumed by the Asylum.

Most of the hospital construction took place on the southern side of The Great North Road (Victoria Road), where it can still be seen in the vast heritage precinct still in the hands of the NSW Department of Health. The Priory is the only remaining heritage building on the northern side. The adjacent hospital buildings and other infrastructure, mostly dating from later periods, disappeared under what is now called "Botanic Cove".

The hospital land below the Priory was derelict up until the last ten years. Now it is the magnificent and much appreciated Riverglade Reserve. Hunters Hill Council is to be commended on their development and care of this lovely valley. Planting, walkway building and bushland regeneration have all been undertaken and are ongoing. The latest project is the clearing and replanting of the small tributary stream which surfaces near the Priory and runs parallel to Manning Road. The photos below are before and after shots of the work. The revegetation is only twelve months old. Now, all we will have to do to make the Riverglade environment really beautiful and resilient is to persuade Sydney Water to stop the sewage overflows into the main creek upstream , still occurring regularly in spite of their new super-duper storage tunnel.



Before



After

Now that the Priory has come into the framework, Council will no doubt be clearing around the perimeter wall to expose the building and its fine old formal plantings, so they can be better seen from the walkway below. Unfortunately, the land just above and behind the Priory, which should be part of its curtilage, is in the hands of developers who want to build yet another multi-unit block. The Trust will be lobbying hard to try to minimize its impact on the Priory.