

# Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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## ANOTHER FRENCH CONNECTION WITH HUNTERS HILL

Senator Bob Brown and his partner Paul Thomas recently commissioned Hunters Hill Trust member and noted marine artist Ian Hansen to paint the farewell of Bruny d'Entrecasteaux's expedition from Recherche Bay on the far south east coast of Tasmania in 1793.

The two boats pictured are the *Esperance* and the *Recherche*. In the background is snow-covered Mt La Perouse. In 1791 The French Assembly had commissioned d'Entrecasteaux to search for Jean-Francois de la Perouse, last seen in Botany Bay by the First Fleet in early 1788.

The expedition twice visited Recherche Bay, named after his ship by d'Entrecasteaux. They first came for five weeks in May 1792 and then again for a similar period in January 1793. The expedition never found la Perouse but they did make excellent charts of much of Van Diemen's Land, which were published in France as *Atlas du Voyage de Bruny-Dentrecasteaux* in 1807.

d'Entrecasteaux never made it back to his home in Aix-en-Provence. He died of scurvy on 21 July 1793.

On a recent Q & A Special, Bob Brown spoke of how the expedition "*met the aborigines, the Lyluquonny people. There were feasts, music, athletic contests. They had walked for three days around the huge bay to see the French off.*"

*(They were) totally different people, they couldn't speak each others' language, (they were) from other sides of the planet, (they) got together, shook hands, loved each other and left with tears in their eyes.*

*It's a great lesson for us all. Paul and I are going to give the painting to the people of Tasmania. (It is) currently at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. What a great event, unknown to most Australians, took place right there on our southern doorstep. We need to know more about it. It's a gift from us to the people of Tasmania for all the wonderful things they have done for us during my political life."*

Recherche Bay itself was saved in an historic deal on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2006. It was the same day 213 years ago, that the French had their significant friendly meeting with the Lyluquonny people. In a significant outcome for the cultural historic landscape now listed as a

National Heritage, the owners David and Robert Vernon agreed to sell their historic property to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy to be managed for the nation. In a deal brokered by Senator Bob Brown, generously underwritten by businessman Dick Smith and with the Tasmanian State Government contributing, the historic forest is now safe from logging.

No matter what your politics, it is impossible not to acknowledge and celebrate Bob Brown's immense contribution to conservation and the environment in Australia.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESKTOP

I attended a symposium recently organised by Australia ICOMOS to celebrate International Day for World Monuments and Sites on 18 April. As some may be a little curious to know what the acronym ICOMOS stands for, let me begin by explaining (and forgive me those already in the know). ICOMOS stands for the International Council on Monuments and Sites, an international non-government organisation that concerns itself with cultural heritage. ICOMOS is a sub set of UNESCO, based in France (albeit with a very active Australian branch), and largely takes carriage of the listing of World Heritage sites of cultural importance. The celebration marked the fact that 40 years ago World Heritage listing was established when the program to nominate "outstanding sites of cultural or natural importance to the common heritage of humanity" was instigated by UNESCO.

So what was the focus of the symposium? Three papers were presented, one on the changing demographic concerning Asian tourism, another on community response to the World Heritage listing at Norfolk Island and a third on the World Heritage site of George Town, Penang.

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*Preserving Australia's  
Oldest Garden Suburb*

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**MEMBERSHIP**

The Trust anyone 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.

**From the President's desktop –  
continued from page 1**

And what was the main issue that came up for discussion at the end of the day? Interestingly for me, the issue was the place of the community and World Heritage listing.

It was observed how heritage practitioners have moved from a position of informing a community about what they have assessed to be important, to one where they listen to the community about what it considers important. The Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS Guidelines to best heritage practice) has evolved with these changed attitudes.

While another whole symposium could easily be devoted to the concept of the community, it made me reflect on the issue closer to home, that is of community and local heritage listing. Permit me to share my reflections with you.

The first and obvious starting point is what is the meaning of "community"? The dictionary definition covers a group of people sharing a place, a religion, a profession and so forth. In the case of local heritage listing we assume it is the local community of the Municipality of Hunters Hill. It has a geographic base at its core. But it is important to understand that within a physical area there are a number of diverse, smaller "communities", each potentially with very different interests.

The case of the Hunters Hill High School fence is an example. Members of the High School community were angered by the local residents community who resisted the erection of a high perimeter fence. The fence now dominates the foreshore walk alongside the school oval. It was unclear whether it was designed to keep residents out of the grounds or to keep school children within. It seems

extraordinarily sad that a united school and local residents community that had fought so long and hard against the State government's attempt to close the school and sell the land could now be at odds with the school community which now occupied the site.

So a local community is not one voice, but a collection of voices. The collection of diverse voices suggests the inevitable problem of whose voice do we listen to? We cannot always do a straw poll and weigh up the most number of votes.

The Hunters Hill Trust has been lobbying recently in relation to the work to the oval and developments at Boronia Park; potential changes, we understand, that represent the interests of another community within the community, the Rugby Club. The Trust recently received a blog on its website suggesting that the Trust was out of synch with the "community" and should leave such matters alone. We encourage feedback to issues or campaigns on our website, but

not abusive or anonymous ones which cannot be published. But do we at the Trust represent a whole community? I would say no, but understanding the ambiguity of "voice" should not stop the Trust from isolating causes to champion if we feel they are well founded.

This brings me to my final point that again is closely related. And this is the collective voice as opposed to the individual voice. As we who read the Journal know, Hunters Hill is a conservation area, an historic Municipality that seeks to retain the existing character of the suburb. It is an attractive suburb in which to live, a fact reflected in its popularity and in the price of housing. But once people buy into the suburb they are keen (indeed some determined) to make changes that suit them, not the community.



There has been a recent incident in my street. The chain saws began early one morning and concerned residents were alerted to the felling of two beautifully tall eucalypts. The owner had sought and obtained permission from Council to remove the said trees. They were deemed dangerous by an arborist employed by the owner, but that their removal may have added monetary value to the site by way of increased solar access and views did not come into the assessment. But once gone, after fifty years of growth, they are not replaced easily. Neither will the birdlife that once frequented them. The incident will strike a familiar chord with the many who have suffered a similar loss all too frequently.

Incremental change is a great danger in Hunters Hill. Being a garden suburb every tree, picket fence and garage has the potential to change its character. This of course leaves aside the obvious change in the scale of new housing that elbows out of view any stone cottages or historic character that we might be trying to retain.



I have always believed that heritage works from the bottom up – it is informed by the community that values it and has ultimate care for it. It is not an abstract concept defined only by the heritage professionals. But the community must use the voice they have or the voice of self-interest becomes dominant. The Trust seeks to give you, its members, a voice in the debate or the trees will fall, one by one, and the giant fences will go up without a reaction and the parkland will become a sportsground. And what we have will be lost by our community's silence.

*Robyn Christie*

**MORE ON TREE REMOVAL**

While Hunter's Hill is proud of its claim to being 'the oldest garden suburb' with a significant tree canopy, there is little doubt that it is no more immune to the war on trees than any other local government area. Policy guiding management, retention and replacement of trees, and documents such as the Tree Preservation Order and Significant Tree Register are in place, but the ease with which it is possible to have a mature tree felled leads us to question the effectiveness of such instruments.



**Unauthorised tree removal in Boronia Park**

The "Urban forest", whether that is our street trees or those on public as well as private land, contributes to a context for our built environment and enhances our suburbs. Clearly trees which have become diseased or are proven unsafe can be legitimately removed, but neighbours appear able to deliver heartache to nearby residents and remove the amenity of large trees from the enjoyment of locals at the filling out of a form. Birds and other wildlife relying on our trees suffer the loss and the green web is diminished.

Vandalism of trees at the edge of public land to maintain water views is another vexing issue for Council and residents

alike. We must continue to promote the values of our trees and give them better protection as an integral part of our local heritage.

*Brigid Dowsett*

**HUNTERS HILL FEATURES IN HECKLER**

Everyday the Sydney Morning Herald has a column on the back page of the news part of the paper where readers are invited



to contribute a "heckle". Here is a recent Heckler from Tony Coote. On January 21, 1930, in the middle of the world's busiest city, excavation for New York's Empire State Building began. 14 months later, on May 1 1931, the building was officially opened.

At 102 storeys it was for years the world's tallest building. Around 21,000 people work there every day. It has a total floor area of 257,211 square metres. Each day's work on the build produced 612 square metres of floor space. It cost, in today's dollars, around \$500 million or \$1,944 per square metre.

In my quiet suburban street there is a house being built that has been under construction since the beginning of October 2009. For the past 28 months, six days a week, teams of carpenters, concretors and sundry tradesmen have been building a two-storey, detached house. With a floor area of around 200 square metres, it is not a mega-mansion. However more than \$5 million dollars have already been spent on the build and its completion is still a long way off.

When the house is finally finished, each square metre of floor area will have cost around \$27,500 and each day of its build will have produced a mere 0.9 square metres of floor space.

The house replaced a perfectly adequate brick bungalow, which was demolished and carted away. Then, before the build could even start in earnest, hundreds of cubic metres of sandstone bedrock were jack-hammered out of the site to join the remains of the old house at the tip.

The house's fashionable designer has called up only the best and most expensive materials and fittings and added to its complexity and expense with demanding and esoteric architectural details. Consequently the environmental footprint of the house is massive. Its profligacy is clearly indicated in its square metre cost.

As well, the impact of the protracted build on the immediate neighbourhood has been much greater than that of a more moderate development. For almost two and a half years our narrow street has been crowded with tradies' utes. Large mobile-cranes, skip-trucks, concrete mixers, earth-moving trucks and excavators regularly visit the building site and stay for hours. Street closures are common and there have been a number of accidents. Parking is a nightmare and walking can be dangerous.

All this aggravation and environmental degradation has been caused by one individual with more money than sense and a designer who has no regard for the environment. What can be done to curb these antisocial endeavours?

How about a profligacy tax on buildings that exceed a certain cost? And why not include a completion date in the Development Approval and penalise the building owner for every day that the build goes over that date?

**Heckler Update**

The house referred to above is in Bonnefin Road and as the build approaches the three-year mark it is still a long way from completion.

It has been the subject of previous mention in the Journal and on the website because of its adverse impact on the bedrock of Hunters Hill and the ongoing traffic and parking issues caused by the build. These problems have been exacerbated by another project being built almost opposite, which has resulted in Council installing a couple of *no-stopping* signs thus permanently adding an unsightly street sign to the existing mess in the street.

## NEWS FROM HUNTERS HILL'S RESERVES - Alister Sharp

Things are happening at three of Hunters Hill's reserves, and next-door in Ryde.

### AT RIVERGLADE RESERVE

Currently Council is reviewing the Plan of Management (PoM) for Riverglade Reserve following community concern at the increase in intensity of use of the reserve for organised sport during the 2011 soccer season. Residents and other users of the Reserve were particularly upset that, in spite of a commitment to consultation in the PoM, the changes were made without consultation with the many other users of the Reserve.



The Plan of Management for Riverglade Reserve recognises one soccer pitch, and a second pitch had been used occasionally since 2007. In early 2011 the playing area was reconfigured to create six pitches (see photo above), and the Reserve became the main site for the soccer club's activities. This large increase in organised sport caused conflict with other users, and the many car movements and associated parking created by the soccer games caused congestion in surrounding streets. Residents and users of the Reserve formed the association Friends of the Environment at Riverglade Reserve (FERR) to urge Council to take the needs of others into account.

After FERR organised a petition and public meeting in August, Council decided to review the PoM.

The current PoM for Riverglade Reserve (dated 1999) was adopted at the time Huntleys Cove was being re-developed for

housing, and is concerned with the remediation and the ecology of the Reserve, its cultural heritage, and arrangements for visitor management. In particular, it anticipated the creation of a walking/cycle network, off-leash areas for dogs, and maintenance of 'special areas of open space for low-key recreation'.

A draft of a revised plan was developed in 2009, and put on public exhibition, but was never adopted. Amongst other issues, the draft sought to recognise that the Priority had come under Council's care.

The current Plan (dated 1999) exists only

in paper form, but the 2009 draft plan can be downloaded from Council's website: [http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page\\_Id=609&h=0](http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=609&h=0).

The review of the PoM is being conducted by a consultant, Kym Shilton, who had been advising Council the development of a Recreation Strategy. The review is being managed by Margaret Kelly, Council's Community Services Manager.

#### Timeline for the review

The timeline for the review is as follows:

*On 20 February 2012 a notice was circulated to residents living near the Reserve, and posted in the Reserve, inviting users to complete an on-line survey. Unfortunately there was no mention of the review in Council's newsletter of that time, and the survey closed on 16 March without a closing date having been advised.*

*The notice invited users of the Reserve to meet the consultant on site on the morning of Friday 2 March and the afternoon of Sunday 4 March, and invited 'key user groups, community interest groups and stakeholders' to meet the consultant later in March 2012.*

*The consultant is to produce a draft revised PoM by the end of May 2012.*

*Council is expected to consider the draft Plan at its meeting on Tuesday 12 June. If accepted, the draft Plan will go on public exhibition from Mon 18 June until Friday 13 July 2012.*

*After possible amendments, the Plan could be adopted by Council in late July or early August.*

*The plan would then go to the Minister for Lands for adoption under the Crown Lands Act.*

News of the review is being posted on Council's website: [www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page\\_Id=813](http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=813)

In February 2012, Council stated that it had 'agreed to a significant reduction in the soccer to be played at Riverglade Reserve for the coming (i.e. 2012) season as follows;

*Saturday soccer – The full sized and ¾ pitches will be retained. One only 30m x 50m pitch will be installed at the eastern end of the reserve for the period 28 April to the end of July 2012. The use of this pitch will be restricted to Saturday mornings between 8.15 and 11am.'*

*Sunday usage – pre-season games have been agreed to on Riverglade Reserve in February & March. There will be no Sunday use of Riverglade Reserve for soccer once the pre-season games have been completed.'*

### AT BORONIA PARK

Several projects associated with sporting clubs are proceeding at Boronia Park; they have in common that they are funded and managed by the clubs rather than by Council, and that there has been no consultation with residents or other users.



**Expansion of No 3 Oval**

No 3 oval at Boronia Park, previously used for soccer in the winter and cricket in the summer, and for recreational use by the general public at other times, is currently undergoing conversion to a full-sized rugby field.

The reason for converting No 3 oval to use for rugby is unclear, yet Council has stated that *'The Club is proposing to make this its main field in the longer term. It should be noted that this will free up Boronia 1 for other users, so it is reasonable to assume that other users of the Boronia complex will benefit from improved facilities.'*

Considering that No 1 oval has a paved parking area, a grandstand, equipment store, and toilets, and in recent years has been fitted with spray irrigation and lights, it is not obvious why the Club would desire to abandon it.

The work on No 3 oval is described by Council as *'providing a slightly increased level playing area'* and *'A minor raising of the levels of the field to improve drainage and the playing surface'*. Council states that all work, apart from staff time, is being carried out at the Club's expense.

Drawings lodged with Council show the work will extend both ends of the field, will square off the corners, and will add approximately 0.3m to the height. This is estimated as requiring about 5500 cubic metres of fill and top-soil. Although not shown in the drawings, a number of trees were felled to make way for the extension of the field. As is evident to visitors to the

Park, this work has required many hundreds of truck movements, and the continuous presence of three excavators over six months. As is also clearly evident, the heavy rains this year have



washed large quantities of silt out of the filled area into the bushland and adjacent waterways, and hence into the Lane Cove River.

In spite of the magnitude of this project, Council classed it as 'exempt development', which therefore required neither consultation with the community, nor development approval. Exempt development usually is a classification available only to work carried out by a public authority, or small scale building work which is not the case at Boronia Park.

**A Rugby Clubhouse?**

For some time now, the Hunters Hill Rugby Club has been planning to build a clubhouse at a location between Nos 2 and 3 Ovals; this location is identified in the Boronia Park's Plan of Management as being for a 'Community Hall'.

Whether a Rugby Club clubhouse could meet the definition of a community hall is debatable; the PoM constrains such a Hall to be *'a low-key social event location, not a licensed facility and (must) not threaten the security and peaceful ambience of the park ...'* *'Off street parking is to be strictly controlled.'* *'... angle parking on the road be created ...'* *'Any further hardstand for parking was opposed.'*

In August 2009, at an on-site meeting, the Club displayed drawings for a two-storey clubhouse, with change rooms and storage below, with a bar, restaurant and deck above, served by an extended, upgraded carpark between ovals 2 and 3.

Clearly this proposal was inconsistent with the concept of a Community Hall as described in the PoM. Council says this proposal has now been dropped.

To date, Council states that it has received no specific proposal from the Club, but at its meeting on 13 December 2011, it gave 'approval in principle' for the Club to proceed, and is seeking to lease the site to the rugby club for at least 20 years. Being for more than 5 years, this would require the specific approval of the Minister. Council has given an assurance that any structure built on this site would be consistent with the PoM, and subject to the normal Development Application processes.



**Rebuilding the cricket storeroom**

The Cricket Club has lost access to No 3 oval, but continues to use Nos 1 and 2 ovals during the summer, and has built a set of cricket nets on the far side of No 1 oval. As part of this project, the shed there was rebuilt as a waterproofed cricket storeroom. Surprisingly this new structure has now been demolished.

Again, there has been no consultation with the community, and there is no Development Application for the work.

*Council explains that this, too, is considered 'exempt development', 'ancillary to a sporting facility', and has stated that 'The work is being undertaken by Ryde Hunters Hill Cricket Club at no cost to Council.'*

See also the photo of unauthorised tree removal on page 3.

**AT GLADESVILLE RESERVE**

In April 2012 Hunters Hill Trust member Yvonne Dornan wrote a circular to Henley Residents and interested members of the community:

*'Fellow Henley Residents and interested members of the community,*

*It has been more than a year since the removal of Hunters Hill Council as Reserve Manager of both much of Gladesville Reserve and the Henley Bowling Club and into the control of a department of the State Government.*

*Such an action significantly reduced the influence of opinion of local residents about future use of the Reserve as well as the building.*

*Following the Public Meeting in the town hall in March, I wrote to the chief of Department and the Minister stating the five resolutions passed at that meeting and requesting a revue of the decision. No doubt the council have also been active in this.*

*On Friday last I received a letter on behalf of the Minister, advising that the Department has issued Hunters Hill Council with a licence to manage the Reserve, including the former Henley Bowling Club premises prior to the gazettal of Council's reappointment as the Reserve Trust Manager of the whole of Gladesville Reserve.*

*Council has agreed that consultants would be engaged to prepare a Plan of Management for Gladesville Reserve. There will be a public exhibition phase, which will invite interested members of the community to submit their views and comments on the future use and management of the Reserve.*

*So it is back in the hands of the local people.*

*Be ready to have your say.*

*(It needs to be made clear that this has had nothing to do with Marine Rescue being a tenant of the Bowling Club. That organisation decided the premises were*

*not suitable for them and they moved elsewhere some time ago.)*

**IN OUR NEIGHBOURING SUBURB OF RYDE**

Meanwhile, Ryde City Council has placed on public exhibition (4 April - 8 June) a draft plan to integrate the use of public open space throughout the municipality: see [www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/iosp](http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/iosp).

The aims of Ryde's Integrated Open Space Plan are stated to be to:

*Establish a clear understanding of the types of open space and their distribution across the city,*

*Recognise the recreational, environmental and social values of open space,*

*Establish a clear understanding of stakeholder and community needs in relation to open space,*

*Establish clear linkages and corridors between key points of interest, town centres and transport nodes and suggest enhancements,*

*Identify future actions to ensure that the values of open space are sustainably managed,*

*Inform an open space enhancement program to improve facilities and encourage their use.*

An overall plan for the allocation and use of open space promises to be a useful means to reconcile the many different needs of residents, and could provide a model for an Open Space Plan for Hunters Hill.

**NEWS UPDATE**

For more detail of all aspects of the Trust's work visit our website. The Trust has input into some of what happens in Hunters Hill through our membership of Hunters Hill Council's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP), through submissions made in response to various proposals and through our input to hearings of the Land and Environment Court. The Trust also receives queries and submissions from its members regarding problems with developments in their backyards.

**FERRY TRIP**

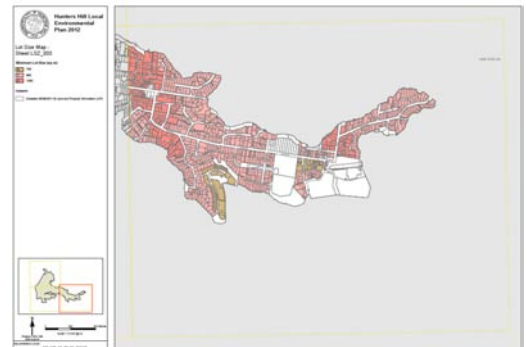
During the recent Heritage Week the Trust sponsored a ferry cruise around the

harbour foreshores on 18 April on the Rosman ferry "Lithgow". It was built in 1927, but is fortunately equipped to deal with some of the wettest weather our city has experienced. Those who braved the less than ideal but very atmospheric conditions were rewarded with a relaxing and informative journey and an enjoyable afternoon.

The Trust is keen to continue with these cruises as it's a great way to view our part of the world from a comfortable heritage vessel, learn about the history and see many places of interest, as well as promoting the work of the Trust. The Committee would be delighted if there is a member willing to help by taking on the task of managing the bookings for the trip next April (and November?). We get enthusiastic people attending and you can join them on the cruise if you wish.

Please contact the Secretary (or Brigid Dowsett 9816 3168) to learn more.

**HUNTERS HILL COUNCIL'S DRAFT LEP**



The draft Local Environment Plan (LEP) is now on public exhibition for comments and submissions. Council received a State Government Grant to employ a planning consultant to help prepare the draft plan. At an information meeting on May 1 consultant planner Brett Newbold gave a presentation of the plan and answered questions from the audience.

He pointed out that the NSW Department of Planning has mandated that all councils rewrite their LEPs in a standard form in order to simplify the planning process across the state. He said the draft LEP, which is now in the State Govt approved format, is not very different from the original LEP No 1.

The existing LEPs for the Gladesville shopping centre and Hunters Hill village were already in the standard form and have been included in the Draft without change.



There have been a number of changes to the original LEP for the remaining, mainly residential, areas of Hunters Hill. The changes include the following:

*The maximum height of buildings is now measured overall rather than to the top ceiling level and the new maximum height will be 8.5m rather than 7.2m previously.*

*State standard "complying" and "exempt" codes will apply. However these will not apply in the conservation areas, to heritage-listed buildings or to buildings in the foreshore reserves.*

*The existing Conservation areas have been retained but schedule 7 "contributory buildings", which previously existed outside the conservation areas, have been deleted.*

*In accordance with the Paul Davies Heritage Study, 53 "contributory buildings" have been upgraded to "items of heritage" and others have been downgraded.*

*There has been a number of new heritage items added to the new schedule and building owners have been notified of these changes and can appeal against the classification if they so desire.*

*There is no reference to the Conservation Advisory Panel in the Draft LEP but it will be included in the Development Control Plan (DCP), which is currently being revised.*

*Council lobbied successfully to have minimum "landscaped areas" included as the density control rather than the Department's preferred floor space ration.*

*The new draft will include the minimum landscaped areas of 50% of the site generally and 60% for waterfront properties. Landscaped areas in the Draft will not include pools or paved areas.*

*The Draft LEP uses maps to define zonings, heritage items etc. The original LEP had 3 maps while the Draft has 11. These include maps of Scenic Protection, Foreshore Building Lines, Riparian Lands and Biodiversity. The latter two categories relate solely to public lands. Existing bushland on private property has not been mapped.*

In summary the new LEP will not make much difference to the way development applications are assessed. The new landscape area controls will increase the planting areas of developments, which will help reinforce the garden character of the Municipality.

It is important that the new DCP picks up on the need to reinforce a number of the draft controls.

Finally it should be noted that the Council will still be somewhat hamstrung by various factors including the Land and Environment Court in its attempts to ensure that development in Hunters Hill is sympathetic to its existing character. The only real way of ensuring this is to have sympathetic building owners.

#### 11 MADELINE ST

In the last Journal Robyn Christie hoped that "a purchaser of the right ilk will be found, a person who will want to keep this gentle, polite and modest cottage and bring it back to life". Current indications are that such a person has indeed bought the place.



#### MAPLEDORAM'S CORNER

Following negotiations in the Land and Environment Court plans have been approved for the development of this important corner of Hunters Hill. The approved plan removes a whole storey from what was originally proposed and retains Casey's Buildings in Gladesville Road (where the butcher shop used to be). This has to be counted as a small win for the community.

#### 25-27 RYDE ROAD

Following a Court appeal revised plans, which increased the amount of deep soil planting, have been approved for the demolition of the existing houses and the construction of 2 storey high units with an additional attic storey in the rear units.

#### PROJECT HOUSES IN HUNTERS HILL

There is a creeping tendency in Hunters Hill for new residents to want to knock down the cottage that they recently bought (for umpteen million dollars) and then replace it with an off-the-shelf project house that is twice the size of the existing structure. It is the role of Hunters Hill Council's Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) to assess many of these proposals for their impact on the Conservation Area



and/or on nearby heritage listed items and then to advise the General Manager of its view.

Often the nominated applicant for the job is the project builder acting on behalf of the owner. In a lot of cases the applicant will not have sought a preliminary meeting with Council or CAP to discuss the suitability of their proposal. In such a case the project will have been fully documented and is ready to build. If the applicant has provided a heritage impact statement (often there is no statement at all), it will be the work of a heritage gun-for-hire that fully endorses the proposal.

By their very nature project houses have been designed to go anywhere provided the block is a standard size and is relatively flat. Project houses are not specifically tailored to their location and their design and selection of materials is not predicated on enhancing its particular character.

In almost all cases a project house will be quite incompatible with the existing character of Hunters Hill and building owners will inevitably be disappointed and frustrated when they discover that Council does not support their proposal.

#### MUSINGS

*An occasional column*

##### Blots on the streetscape

In my part of Hunters Hill, extraneous and unauthorised advertising signs are increasingly blighting the streetscape. Such signs include the trucks and trailers of a firm of landscape contractors, which are almost covered with the firm's name and logo.

The business appears to be operating out of a nearby house and its vehicles are parked in the street from late afternoon until work time the next morning when the employees arrive to drive them to the job site. There is also a trailer belonging to a rubbish contractor, which is piled high with old TV sets and computer monitors. It sits

in the street day in day out with the business name prominently displayed.

There is a proliferation of boats parked on the streets as well as building site fences with large advertising signs that stay up for years. One piece of signage that is much more permanent is on the Commonwealth Bank in Joubert Square.



Blots on the streetscape are not confined to advertising signs, boats and trailers. Up and down the coast there has been an acceleration of the destruction of many of the humble beach shacks that gave character to these places. They have been replaced with McMansion weekenders like the one below.



These gross expressions of wealth and status stand empty for most of the time - silent witnesses to an age of excess.

Similar houses are often the subjects of Kevin McCloud's *Grand Designs*. Michael Duffy writing in the Herald recently noted: *The grand designers are the modern bourgeoisie, but lack some of the redeeming features of their predecessors. Their lives appear to be completely devoted to making money and spending it.*

*With the exception of the obligatory passing reference to how they're doing it all for their children, there is rarely any mention of community or religion or volunteer activity or what once passed for culture. Most Grand Designs homes do not have granny flats or gardens you'd want to walk in. Or bookshelves. Their walls are often bare of images, apart from*

*photographs of the occupants or something slick that looks like it was bought from IKEA. This helps explain why the interiors seem more like magazine photographs than places to live.*

Here is a more modest beach house not far away from the one below left.



**Fear and Loathing in suburbia**

Meanwhile at Hunters Hill High the fence along the river has not yet been lowered to the promised 1.8m. Its looming presence remains a testament to an unfounded feeling of paranoia in the community.



In an opinion piece in the Herald last month Ross Gittins noted that crime *figures are dropping but most people find that the truth is no fun. A survey conducted in New South Wales in 2007 found that more than 80 per cent of respondents believed property crime had been increasing or had remained stable over the past five years. Only 11 per cent said (correctly that) it had been falling.*

Tony Coote

**THE DICTIONARY OF SYDNEY**

Dr Emma Grahame is the Editorial Coordinator of the *Dictionary of Sydney* and she writes: *The Dictionary of Sydney* is really a historical encyclopedia, focused on greater Sydney, and envisaged, from the start, as a digital, online resource. It was the brainchild of City of Sydney historian Shirley Fitzgerald in 2004, and the project was up and running by 2006, with first public access in November 2009. The editors know of no other project like it in the world.

It is a new kind of history, an ever-growing repository of historical information. As Sydney grows, the *Dictionary* will grow with it, filling in the blanks as new material is uncovered both from the past and the future. As new interpretations develop, the *Dictionary* is able to include multiple articles on a single topic or area, allowing for historical debate and discussion.

The *Dictionary of Sydney* is completely free to the public; you don't need a password to get into it. Simply go to: <http://home.dictionaryofsydney.org/>

**The Truth about Thomas Muir**

Beverley Sherry's essay on the political reformer Thomas Muir is now published in the *Dictionary of Sydney*. Muir was the most celebrated of Australia's first political prisoners, transported for sedition. Beverley considers Muir "a tragic and heroic figure" who was "ripe for myth-making from the start". Her essay lays the myths to rest but shows the true legacy of Muir, and concludes: "Today we take for granted the freedoms and the democratic rights Muir fought for". See the complete essay at:

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/muir\\_thomas?zoom\\_highlight=thomas+muir](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/muir_thomas?zoom_highlight=thomas+muir)

Beverley's essay on "Stained glass" is also published in the *Dictionary of Sydney* illustrated mainly with photographs by Douglass Baglin:

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/stained\\_glass?zoom\\_highlight=stained+glass](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/stained_glass?zoom_highlight=stained+glass)

**THE HUNTERS HILL TRUST AGM**

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of The Hunters Hill Trust **on Wednesday 13 June 2012** at 7.30 pm **at The Hunters Hill RSL Hall** Cnr Ady and Alexandra Streets **Guest Speaker to be advised**

Light refreshments will be served Please come along and bring your friends

**NOMINATIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE ARE CALLED FOR** Nominations should be on forms available from secretary David Gaunt 9816 4047 or [david@gleebooks.com.au](mailto:david@gleebooks.com.au)