



Hunters Hill Trust Journal

TEN YEARS IN REVIEW

The last decade has seen slow and intermittent progress in the fields of preservation and conservation. Indeed, these are now respectable areas of concern, save for Friends of the Earth, whose Federal grant was cut off because the group opposed uranium mining. In areas where immediate financial gain is not so large, however, buildings, parks and wildlife are receiving increasing protection — except in Queensland, where the definition of 'conservation area' permits cattle grazing, mining and export of sand to Japan.

When the Hunters Hill Trust was formed in 1968, conservation and preservation were considered by many to be suspect and pinkish issues designed to rob property owners of their rights to taste and profit. With the National Trust (N.S.W.) and local bodies such as Beecroft-Cheltenham, Paddington, Balmain, Glebe and Annandale, the Hunters Hill Trust has spent ten arduous years persuading governments that preservation of architecture and environment are important government functions. Now, in name at least, we have support on government levels:

Federal: The National Heritage Commission

State: The Heritage Council

Municipal: The Townscape Advisory Committee

LOCAL BEGINNINGS

The Trust's 1969 submission to Hunters Hill Council included the strong suggestion that a committee composed of representative experts be set up to advise Council on building decisions affecting old buildings either directly or by proximity. While that provision was deleted from the Draft Town Plan by the State Planning Authority except as an option open to Council, Council has, to its great credit, established the Townscape Advisory Committee, composed of experts from such bodies as the Institute of Architects, the National Trust (but not, interestingly, the Hunters Hill Trust), and local representatives. While the Townscape Advisory Committee has been used infrequently and inconsistently in the past, there are signs that it may become a positive influence in the future.

NATIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The Australian Heritage Commission Act has recently provided for listing to be commenced by the National Heritage Commission of elements of the National Estate — defined as those "things we want to keep", places of "aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance or other special value for future generations as well as for the present community". The Hunters Hill Trust is at present filling out forms suggesting buildings and natural features for inclusion on the Register. The Commission has no powers of its own; demolition or development proposals affecting

items on the Register will be referred, but even in the case of federal buildings demolition may take place if no feasible alternative can be found. The Heritage Commission sees its role as providing an information base and research, and it will not take part in arguments about the designation of areas unless requested to by a state. Any force it may have is persuasive — it could only watch when 85,000 acres were removed from Kosciusko National Park so that the ash trees might be cut.

STATE MOVE

During the second half of 1977 the State of N.S.W. established the Heritage Council, a group of experts from relevant bodies, empowered to list buildings and elements of the environment for preservation, with legislation in train for protection and enforcement. Such legislation, the Planning and Environment Commission foreshadowed, will be able to make the punishment fit the purse, might enable rate revaluations, loans and grants for repairs.

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INSPECTION APRIL 30
BOOK CELEBRATION
JUDITH WRIGHT

THE CONSERVATION OF MARSHALL HOUSE

Marshall House, known also as Eulbertie, was bequeathed to the Hunters Hill Primary School some years ago, and has stood threatened, as arguments raged as to whether the building should be demolished (used as stone kerbing) to make way for playing fields or brick school-architecture.

Thanks to the response of the Government Architect's Office and the enthusiasm of architects Flynn and Burkett, Marshall House nears a new stage in its existence. The building has been restored on the outside and converted on the inside; it will provide classroom and office space, resource and withdrawal areas, tuckshop and clinic.

John Flynn escorted a Trust reporter and photographer over the site, and explained the Government's new policy which has saved the building. Schools, courthouses and similar public buildings are now being restored to the best of the ability of a skilled cadre of craftsmen employed by the Government Architect's Office (costs are not released), because private owners could not afford the sorts of costs incurred (attempts to budget for the surprise and unforeseen contingencies would be a nightmare). The Government, then, is restoring selected buildings as examples which will stand as monuments in the future.

Marshall House/Eulbertie revealed secrets during the work. Traces of an earlier building were uncovered — earlier roof timber supports were left when a grander roof was built on top, windows had been blocked, a wall moved. It became evident that the house started as a single storey one in about the 1830's, was enlarged by 1879 to 12 rooms (according to Trust records compiled from the now burned rate books), then the two-storey verandah and conservatory were added in about 1905. The picture below shows a timber lintel, one of several which held up walls of stone or stairs for a hundred years. While much of the old timber has been re-used, judicious replacement by steel will withstand the tramping of feet in the future.



Workmen's secrets also have been revealed. The front window was turned into a doorway by simply patching timber to the floor. If they ran out of cedar, they pieced with hardwood, slapping a bit of dark stain over nail holes.

The architects feel that Marshall House/Eulbertie is representative of the predominant style in Hunters Hill, which is distinctive. It is an example of "component" building, in which builders purchased standard doors, balusters, so that the joinery was not unique or produced especially for a particular house.

Marshall House/Eulbertie has now existed through four periods of architecture. When restoring a house, should one aim for "small cottage", Victorian or Edwardian reconstruction? John Flynn outlined the problem as one of definition: one can restore and have a museum, or one can conserve — keep the exterior appearance, conserve the interior by adapting it to an appropriate use.

The technology now exists which can make larger openings possible; ventilation, insulation, lighting — the tools and techniques of building have opened up the interior of the building so that it may fittingly serve its educational purpose.

The exterior of the building has been reconstructed and missing elements have been painstakingly matched, as the picture of the joinery shows. Timber railings on the verandah will complete large areas for small-group work while restoring a finishing touch of turn of the century grace and elegance.

The reconstruction and conservation of Marshall House/Eulbertie is proof that the nineteenth century buildings for which Hunters Hill is renowned can be preserved, used and appreciated for generations to come.



DELEGATE'S REPORT

National Estate Conference

I represented the Hunters Hill Trust at the conference held in August at Armidale. The tone was one of despair among the enlightened, but there was a good-humoured determination not to give in to the philistines.

I asked **David Yencken**, of the Heritage Commission, whether he thought the Commission would be given any powers in the future? He thought not, but Milo Dunphy (also of the Commission) said that he felt a sense of guilt that they had taken part in a confidence trick on the Australian public by being hopeful after the election of 1972 — very little has changed, nor will it until we can 'tell Mordialloc Council where to get off'.

I asked **Peter Moffit**, of the Planning and Environment Commission why the Trust's request that the Townscape Advisory Committee be specified in the Town Plan had been rejected and the provision deleted by the State, when the Heritage Council is precisely the same sort of body nine years later? He said he couldn't imagine why. On another issue, he said that green bans had stimulated thought, and that now society must regulate itself other than by unions, hence the legislation for the Heritage Council.

Judith Wright was the beacon of the conference, as poet-conservationist-pastoralist. She said that when we consider what we have done to this country we must keep in mind that Europeans brought a set of eye and a conventional way of perceiving things. Where have our priorities come from? Australia was settled at the end of the 18th century as a convict dump, and later by by-products of the industrial revolution; these were people who already had little relationship to their land as a spiritual background and little feeling for the soil. They knew nothing of how this land should be treated and there were many agricultural failures. The only way to make money was to get stock, move, harvest grass. The price of wool was dictated by English buying, so that prosperity was dependant on England. **Australia has never been a nation; it has been our quarry.** We have started with a serious handicap in developing a close spiritual relationship with our land, from which love and art come. We are rootless, and it is difficult for us to see the land with eyes as the aborigines see it. We have never developed an art relationship with the land. You cannot separate art and society; the problem is when you write in rage and despair.

She spoke of the early days of the conservation movement, of developing concern for the environment, reasoned appeals and petitions against entrenched legislation and economic priorities. The Barrier Reef was saved from oil mining by an offshore spill in California; sooner or later a major accident will toughen action on uranium. The uranium issue has the young concerned — the issue has hit them where they die. Conservation is now an outmoded word; the issue has radicalised the young.

With government and big business hand in hand, the small foot we gained in the door will be crushed and conservationists will be called the enemies of society. Only a dictatorship will be able to control a nuclear state. The prospects are apathy and conformity, or violence and police state or chaos. Our best hope is in a consensus of individuals to live poor. We see through eyes conditioned by what we think we need, and we live in a pre-Club of Rome cornucopia.

Alice Oppen

ACTIVITIES

BOOK CELEBRATION

The **Old Buildings of Hunters Hill** is now available at the Trust Centre (Hunters Hill Gallery, Alexandra Street), for \$4.95. We find that most members tender a five dollar bill and seem pleased at the low price. Reason: voluntary preparation on the book on the part of many of our members. To thank these people, the Hunters Hill Trust is organising a Book Celebration, to be held on February 5th, a Sunday, at 11 a.m. A restorative collation of chicken sandwich nibbles and champagne-orange juice will be served to those who helped to produce 'The Book' and those who wish to thank them. Come and turn the pages at ~~The Trust Centre~~, Hunters Hill. R.S.V.P. 89-5175; donations acceptable. *Figtree House*

Speaker: Tom Farrell

The Leather-bound copies should be available at the Celebration.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

The General Meeting was held at the home of Frank and Joan Croll on December 8th, 1977. It was followed by a Christmas Cruise, on the "Eve", which departed from Valentia Street Wharf for dinner, dancing and a harbour view of Hunters Hill and other foreshores. It has been suggested that this should become an annual event, and the Committee would like to hear members' opinions.

The Hunters Hill Trust wishes to record its deep regret that the Town Hall and old records of Hunters Hill were burned. It is an inestimable loss that that source of information about local history is gone.

Fortunately, the Historical Museum was not permanently damaged nor were its contents harmed. The Trust has offered to help in the cleaning and restoration of its exhibits.

Special thanks are now due to Trust researchers, especially Doreen Saunders, who pored over the early rate books to piece together the puzzle of land acquisition and building. The information that they, and others, compiled is all we have left of many early details.

TEN YEARS (continued from page 1)

When and if these hopes are realised, a great many of the Hunters Hill Trust's aims will have been achieved. Meanwhile, feature-building continues in Hunters Hill and

Council must wait for a Town Plan from which similar protective provisions have been deleted.

The Next Ten Years

In the past ten years, then, we have seen some improvement. Preservation sentiments are at least being voiced on all government levels — let us not forget that this is a great advance over the noises we used to hear. May the next decade of submissions, letters, statements and meetings bring us to the point where preservation and conservation bodies acquire teeth to go with the growl.



HUNTERS HILL TRUST CHURCH INSPECTION

The next Hunters Hill Trust Inspection will focus on historic churches and associated buildings in Hunters Hill.

The Villa Maria Church, graveyard, Quadrangle and Mission Grounds were built by the Marist Brothers, who arrived in Hunters Hill in 1847 to establish a recuperation centre for their South Sea missionaries. These buildings date from the 1850's and 1860's.

The early buildings of St. Joseph's College were built in the 1880's by the Marist Brothers. The grounds contain many fine buildings and exhibits.

St. Mark's Church was originally Figtree Chapel, built by Edmund Blackett in 1857. The land on which it stood was offered by the Joubert family for one shilling.. The church was moved in 1962 to make way for the expressway.

The Congregational Church was built in 1875, vestries added later. John Dobbie, first master of the public school across the street, was principal signatory of the letter inviting the first minister; the first organist was Mrs. Jeanneret.

All Saints Church was designed in the office of Horbury Hunt, architect. It was built on the site of the former Seymour Gardens, in 1885.

Further information, old photographs and records will be available at the churches.

Teas will be served at the Villa Maria Hall, where a patchwork exhibition and demonstration will be held.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30th

tickets \$2.50

\$4.00 family

12 until 4 o'clock

P.O. Box 85, Hunters Hill

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership: Single — \$2.00
Family — \$4.00
Pensioner \$1.00
Youth — \$1.00

The Hunters Hill Trust,
Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110

The Trust Centre
The Hunter's Hill Gallery