



Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

Volume IX No. IV

February, 1981.

RESCUE SOUGHT

The Hunter's Hill Trust, with the support of the National Trust, is requesting that the Heritage Council protect Hunter's Hill in the continuing absence of the Town Plan.

The Hunter's Hill Trust can no longer tolerate a situation of steady deterioration of historic districts and river foreshores. The Hunter's Hill Trust can no longer be pacified by assurances that the Town Plan will be ready "soon". The Hunter's Hill Trust can not see how it can take this long to provide a town plan, nor that the delay can be justified in relation to what is being lost in the interim.

The Municipal Council's authority is being undermined by the Department of Environment and Planning and the appeals and court systems. In cases where Council has ruled according to the Certified (but not prescribed) Town Plan, owners have won on legal appeal. Will the Department of Environment and Planning, which has not finalised the Town Plan but says that Council should rule according to it, help Council in court cases? No. The Department has a new policy of not becoming involved in local matters.

Whose fault is the thirteen year delay? In negotiations between the two tiers of government, it seems to be "the other one's". Certainly, the local Council is disadvantaged at the moment; the uncertainty, the bluffing on who can best afford court cases (developer or Council), the lack of proper legal protective provisions all benefit the private owner who wants to build something bigger and showier than anything in the neighbourhood. Most Hunter's Hill residents do not want Hunter's Hill open to this kind of development and resulting real estate speculation.

Hunter's Hill appears to be in the Department of Environment and Planning's 'too-hard' basket. Until a town plan which will protect Hunter's Hill's special features — historic groupings of Colonial and Federation houses from the grand to the minute, stone-walled narrow streets, huge trees, expanses of foreshores — can be devised, the Heritage Council should protect Hunter's Hill. Most of the area has been declared an historic area, both by the National Trust and the Heritage Commission (a Federal body). We plead, then, for help at the March 5th meeting of the Heritage Council.

Excerpts of letter sent December 11, 1980:

"..... writing to request that the Heritage Council place an Interim Development Order on the attached lists of areas and buildings in Hunter's Hill.

Hunter's Hill does not yet have its own town plan, with provisions tailored for its special need, protection of groupings of old buildings, the foreshores and other landscape features such as stone walls and rock outcrops.

The Hunter's Hill Trust was formed in 1968-69 to counter the Municipal Council's plans for a vast increase in home unit and commercial areas. The Hunter's Hill Trust prepared its own detailed suggestions identifying the planning protection needed. In 1971 a draft Town Plan was submitted to the State Planning Authority. In 1973 the Plan was returned in an emasculated state, with the concept of area preservation removed; the Plan placed little obligation on Council to consider the historic character of the former "French village". To its credit, Council implemented our

suggestion of a Townscape Advisory Committee to be consulted about contentious changes to old buildings. The existence of this Committee must be made permanent and its consultation automatic.

Eleven years after the formation of the Hunter's Hill Trust, we still have the County of Cumberland Planning Ordinance and the Appeals system making the final decisions as to what happens in Hunter's Hill when a developer is determined.

Deterioration was made public with the loss of St. Malo and the embellishment of Passy. It has continued with the degradation of the historic area around the Town Hall, where on the east side two new large houses of differing architectural style partially obscure a listed building; instead of acquiring that land before it was built upon, Council resumed land from the rear of properties behind the Town Hall, in one case diminishing the site of a listed cottage, and expanded its works depot and storage area for large machinery and road materials. To complete the change, the Council rebuilt the burnt Town Hall as a modern building, retaining only the front facade and inserting aluminium windows in that. The Townscape Advisory Committee was not consulted. On the block of land to the west of the Town Hall, the Congregational Church has been permitted to build home units for the aged, and now a hostel will cover the land to its maximum use; Council is attempting to force on-site parking between the listed sandstone Church and Manse, necessary because the siting of the Council works depot means that staff cars park in the surrounding narrow streets. It is the Hunter's Hill Trust's contention that area preservation is essential to protect other areas from this progressive degeneration of an historic townscape into a conglomeration of buildings and vehicles.

(Other examples given) ... The attached copies of correspondence and publications will explain the above examples and our view more fully. It would be impossible to detail the many losses which occur each year. A great burden has been placed upon voluntary workers who act as watchdogs and try to slow the erosion of Hunter's Hill's historic character by objecting to individual developments when they become evident. Hunter's Hill merits a town plan with effective preservation provisions.

The Hunter's Hill Trust, therefore, requests an Interim Development Order for the protection of its important features and groups of features until such time as the Town Plan is gazetted. We do not know what changes have been made to the Plan since 1975, when it was last available to the public, and would appreciate the Heritage Council's evaluation of its provisions in the light of the needs of Hunter's Hill."

THE TRUST REGRETS

TOWNSCAPE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Hunter's Hill Trust regrets that Council has not added the Trust to its list of bodies invited to provide a member for the Townscape Advisory Committee.

The concept of this Committee originated in the Trust, and has been fostered for thirteen years in Trust publications. The Institute of Architects and the National Trust among others, have been entitled to representatives, and the Committee has benefitted greatly. However, presumably because of local politics generated by differing interest groups, the Hunter's Hill Trust has been excluded, even though "citizen representatives" have been included.

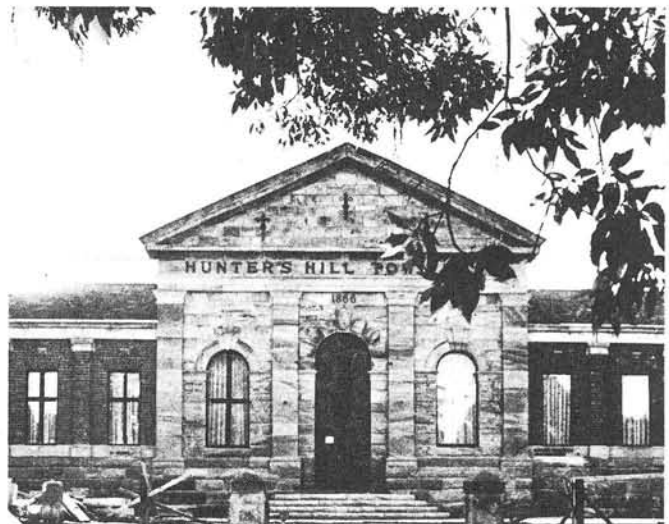
As the Hunter's Hill Trust has been the chief body responsible for research and evaluation of historic buildings and their surroundings in Hunter's Hill, and as its findings have been accepted by the National Trust, the Heritage Council and the Heritage Commission, the exclusion seems a negative one.

In the weeks before the September municipal election, a majority of aldermen expressed interest in the Trust's views and expertise. The Trust wonders if a conscious decision was made by Council to continue the adversary system, where the Trust criticises what Council has done rather than proffering advice in advance.

TOWN HALL WINDOWS

Hunter's Hill Council has decided not to replace the modern windows in the front facade of the Town Hall with ones in keeping with the original building. No doubt the cost had risen greatly since the Trust suggested appropriate windows when the first new ones were put in, a year ago.

If the Town Hall rebuilding had been referred to the Townscape Advisory Committee, and if the Hunter's Hill Trust had been represented on it, what would the building look like now?



Which side suits?

VINCENT SERVENTY WRITES

"If Australia could ever admit it really had an urban aristocracy, Hunter's Hill would be called its home." So wrote Richard Roddewig of the Conservation Foundation of Washington in the United States in his book *Green Bans*.

If we regard as an aristocrat as one who is in pursuit of excellence, it is a term of which Hunter's Hill can be proud.

In our voyage around the foreshores of Hunter's Hill, I pointed out some of the natural beauty that still remains, the work done by the Council to restore Clarkes Point and other reserves on the southern shores of the peninsula and their educational efforts shown by the nature trail along the banks of the Lane Cove River. I also pointed out some present deficiencies.

Two of these included reserves on the north bank which are inadequately signposted, lack rubbish bins and other facilities for visitors and in some cases, pedestrian access. Board-walks just above high water mark would allow such access with little cost and no land acquisitions, with stiles built across jetties and other private structures.

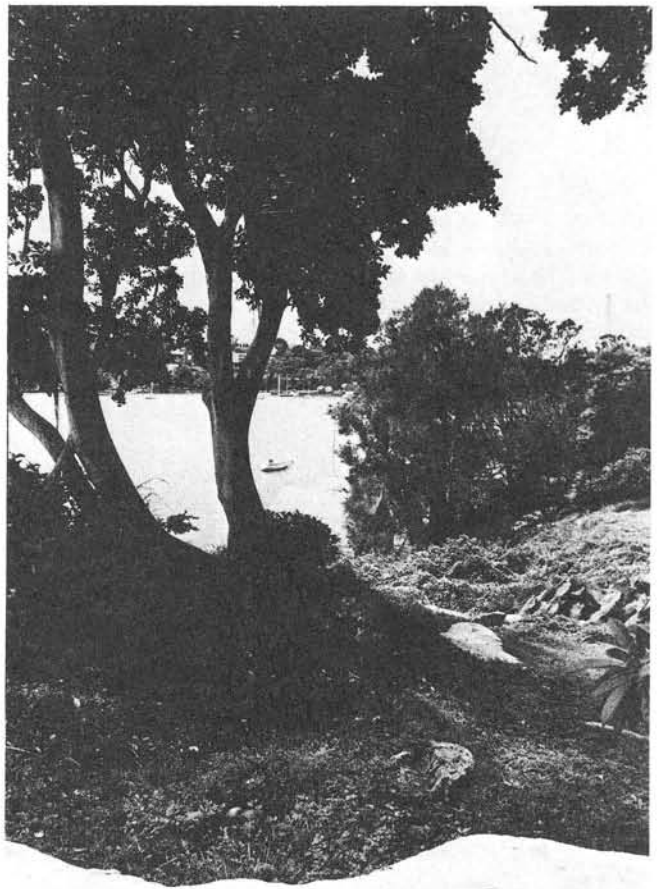
These are simple problems to solve. A major one still remains — Kelly's Bush. Already some progress has been made to have this historic site set aside as a nature reserve. The State Government has made its offer towards the cost. Surely A. V. Jennings Pty. Ltd. have enough public spirit to be equally generous. Already they have received some return through State Government purchase of the foreshore and it is time they took a modern view on industry's debt to the environment.

The rest of the money is a duty owed by the Hunter's Hill Council towards this piece of bushland which has become an Australian symbol. Here began the resurgence in Australians of a belief that real progress consists of improving the quality of living, rather than the numbers of things we possess. And that the old can be merged with the new to create a harmony.

Once the land is secure we should plan for its management. Pride of place would be for a memorial to those "battlers" who showed Australia that given the will there is a way. With good humour, tenacity, a seeking out of expert help and by including the majority of Australians who belong to trade unions, they formed a new conservation road.

The reactions to their work have now gone around the world. We should be proud of these housewives who exemplified in its best meaning, the term "aristocrats".

(Editor's note: Since Vincent Serventy wrote this article for the Journal, there has been publicity revealing A. V. Jennings Pty. Limited's offer to pay for the removal of radioactive waste from Kelly's Bush. The Trust is investigating the cost of such removal, the margin of profit likely, appreciation in the value of the land, and the State Government's attitude in relation to previous assurances.)



THE GENERAL MEETING

CRUISE

On November 23rd, the Trust Cruise brought members together on the "Royale" to view the foreshores from the water and listen to speakers on aspects of the management necessary and desirable.

Vincent Serventy explained the need for an inter-tidal zone (mud flats and rock pools) to provide living space for the organisms on which creatures such as birds feed. He pointed out particular birds and the sorts of trees which would allow them to live in the area.

Caroline Burke suggested that the neglect in landscaping of school surrounds, as demonstrated by the shoreline of the High School, is being overcome in other areas by co-operation between the local P. & C. Association and the school and Education Department.

Alice Oppen contrasted areas where land and water meet in irregular, picturesque shapes (along reserves and some private properties), with the encroachment of reclaimed land, vertical walls, and houses instead of foliage. She stressed that a high foreshore building line and a town plan are needed to prevent further deterioration of the water-scape.

The Cruise revealed much about the varying treatments the foreshores have been given over the years. Suburbanised land, flat and edged with wall, and obtrusive bright buildings have taken the place of natural bush screening and water-moulded sandstone in the worst areas.

DINNER

Because of the large number of advance bookings (*Thank you, members!*), the dinner was held at "Wyaldra", home of the Oppens, instead of at the Tennis Club. The Trust is grateful to Conrad Oppen and Richard Rees, who shifted half of the Tennis Club to "Wyaldra". Trust chefs again produced excellent fare, and the evening was a most enjoyable one.

ACTIVITIES

HOUSE INSPECTION

The next Hunter's Hill Trust House Inspection will be held on Sunday, April 5th, between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Houses have been selected from different areas and styles of architecture. For information and tickets, write with self-addressed envelope to P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110. Tickets are \$5 for non-members, \$4 for members and \$2 for pensioners and students.

HERITAGE WEEK

Heritage Week is being jointly sponsored by the National Trust and the Heritage Council. It is a week when areas and groups will provide information about their heritage and activities to focus upon it. The Hunter's Hill Trust will conduct walks starting at the Town Hall:

Saturday, March 28th	1.30 - 3.00 3.30 - 5.00
Sunday, March 29th	11.00 - 12.30 2.00 - 3.30

ST. JOSEPH'S CENTENARY

St. Joseph's College will be conducting tours of the College to celebrate its centenary year, on Sunday, July 12th, between 2.00 and 4.30 (finish at 5.00). Those interested are asked to enter by the main gate, at Ryde Road, and gather at the College vestibule (there will be signs). The tour will include the parlour, main corridor, the marble staircase, chapel, tower, the original building (1878) as well as more recent additions. A souvenir booklet will be available, and a book on the history of the College, by Brother Michael Naughtin, will be launched. For information, telephone Mrs. Cochlan, 86-3834.

COMING PUBLICATIONS

The Hunter's Hill Trust Activities Committee has scheduled the publication of two pamphlets to coincide with Heritage Week at the end of March.

Keeping Hunter's Hill Alive is a description of the reasons why restorations, additions and new buildings should be designed to blend with the best of historic Hunter's Hill. Principles of architectural design are mentioned, and illustrated by both colour and black and white photographs. Sections on car accommodation and swimming pools are included, and a major feature is the listing of organisations and books where readers can pursue topics further, find professional advice and suppliers. The pamphlet has been written by Beverley Sherry, and photographs are by Douglass Baglin.

A Glimpse of Hunter's Hill, A Short Walk Through History, is a guide and map for a walk in the Alexandra Street, Stanley Road, Madeline Street and Ady Street area. The walk begins at the Town Hall and ends at the Hunter's Hill Gallery. It is the first of a projected series, and has been prepared by Joe Rees.

Old Buildings of Hunter's Hill needs to be revised for a new printing. The new addition will incorporate corrections, additions and a section on Federation houses. The Activities Committee would welcome information and offers of help (telephone Alice Oppen - 89-5175, Marsha Martin - 89-1608, Beverley Sherry - 816-2107; or write to P.O. Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.)

HARBOUR CRUISE

The Sydney Harbour and Foreshores Committee and the Australian Conservation Foundation will conduct a tour of areas of the Harbour, on March 22nd, starting at 9.15 a.m. and finishing at 4.00 p.m. Last year's cruise was extremely successful and informative; it covered most of the Harbour, with speakers from resident conservation groups explaining the significance of land forms, development and government roles. This year's cruise will concentrate on areas west of the Bridge, and a picnic stop will be made along the way, at Rodd Island if possible. For tickets, telephone Alice Oppen - 89-5175.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership:	1981-82	Due March 1
Single	\$ 5.00	
Family	\$ 10.00	
Pensioner	\$ 1.00	
Student	\$ 1.00	
Life Member	\$ 75.00 100.00	

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

The Trust Centre
The Hunter's Hill Gallery