

Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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THE NEW HUNTERS HILL COUNCIL

As noted in the August 2017 Journal, the Berejiklian government somewhat surprisingly abandoned its plans to push forward with the amalgamation of those Councils that had pending court challenges against the move.

Hunters Hill, with 13,199 residents and 9,300 electors remains the smallest Local Government Area in metropolitan Sydney (half the population of Lane Cove – the next smallest). The residents elected a new Council on September 9th and The Trust welcomes the new mayor, Mark Bennett and new and re-elected councillors Ben Collins, Elizabeth Krasso, Ross Williams (also deputy mayor), Jim Sanderson, Justine McLaughlin and Zac Miles.

The State Government's decision means the anti-amalgamation fight is over, although it would be a mistake to think that forced amalgamations have gone from the Coalition's agenda, despite assurances from premier Berejiklian to the contrary. As a result of the increased attention, Council's performance has come under the spotlight and, as noted in The Trust's Rough Guide to the Impact of Amalgamation, compared to a number

of councils including Ryde and Lane Cove, Hunters Hill lags somewhat behind in the services it provides. Those residents who worked so hard to preserve the Council as a stand-alone entity and all those whose rates were used to finance the fight will now expect the new Councillors to work to improve the services that Hunters Hill Council provides. The Trust hopes to be able set up a meeting with the Council to discuss a number of issues and to see how Council might more effectively work with the community to make things better. In particular the new councillors might consider the following:

The provision of online access to development application plans for both residents and councillors (councillors generally make decisions on planning documents that have been reduced to A4 size and are almost impossible to read).

Webcasting of Council meetings. This provides the opportunity of the community to view proceedings without the need to attend in person.

An upgrade of Council's website to a similar level to Lane Cove Council's website.

Improved times for the processing of Development Applications (DAs).

Improved communication with Council officers, for example the ability to leave a voice message on their phone extension.

Improved level of maintenance of footpaths, roads and public areas, playing fields, parks and bushlands.

Connection of the Ryde, Hunters Hill Library to the Shorelink Library Network.

The establishment of a Sustainability Advisory Committee and a Sustainable Action Plan.

An upgrade of the Schedule 5 heritage listed items, to include those items worthy of listing, particularly 20th century buildings that are not currently listed.

The resolution of a number of long standing issues like, for instance, the problems of car parking in Bonnefin Road.

The need for a budget for Aboriginal Heritage.

IHAPs

On the eighth of August this year, the Minister for Planning and Housing, Anthony Roberts, announced that Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs) will become mandatory for all councils in Sydney and Wollongong in order "to guard against corruption and lead to better local planning decisions."

It is proposed that the new law will come into force next March. Mr Roberts said the panels will bring "expertise, transparency and integrity to the assessment of DAs at the local level". He also said, "It is essential the Government has a transparent and accountable process in place when assessing DAs of significant value, when there is a conflict of interest for the council or developer, or when they are of a sensitive nature."

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Publications

Heritage of Hunters Hill \$15
The Vision and the Struggle \$15
The Industrial Village of Woolwich \$15
 Members discount 25%

MEMBERSHIP

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

Single membership \$30
Family membership \$50
 Contact the secretary to join or download a form from the website.

IHAPs continued from page 1

He pointed out that there are 15 Sydney metropolitan councils already using IHAPs on a voluntary basis.

The new Bill will propose a standard model for IHAPs comprising three independent expert members and a community member. The community member will represent the geographical area within the LGA of the proposed development, to provide a local perspective.

IHAP members will have to be expert in

one or more of the following fields: planning, architecture, heritage, the environment, urban design, economics, traffic and transport, law, engineering, tourism, or government and public administration.

Local councils will still process most applications for individual houses or alterations to existing houses.

What will local planning panels decide?

Value - DAs with a value of between more than \$5 million but less than \$30 million.

Conflict of interest – DAs for which the applicant or owner is the council, a councillor, a member of a councillor’s family, a member of council staff.

Contentiousness – DAs that receive 10 or more objections from different households.

Strategic Importance – DAs accompanied by a proposed voluntary planning agreement.

Departure from development standards DAs seeking to depart by more than 10% from a development standard.

High-risk development types – DAs associated with a higher risk of corruption, including demolition of heritage items, licensed places of entertainment and sex industry premises.

On the face of it, this proposal from the State Government can be seen as yet another attempt to move planning powers away from local government. The new Hunters Hill Council voted 5 to 2 to send a ten-point letter of objection to Planning Minister Roberts opposing the new planning panels. The panels will also have an impact on Hunters Hill Council’s budget because its members need to be paid by Council.

Deputy Mayor Ross Williams raised the issue of a Hunters Hill Trust member being ineligible to appear on such a panel because of a potential conflict of interest. This seems odd – the only interest a Trust member would have is the protection of the heritage value of the municipality.

Because of its small size and because most of Hunters Hill is zoned for low density housing, the majority of DAs submitted will be under the \$5 million threshold that would trigger a referral to the IHAP. It’s not all bad - there is something to be said for a higher level of professionalism and expertise being

applied to the assessments of larger projects. It’s often quite difficult for part-time Councillors to get their heads around larger projects in the limited time available and, in the absence of online documentation in Hunters Hill for example, a restricted ability to be able to analyse plans in detail.

11 MARK STREET



11 Mark St under construction with the rebuilt cottage element in front

The Hunters Hill Trust Journal’s lead story of April 2014 was on the demise of the timber cottage at 11 Mark St, Hunters Hill headlined: “Heritage vandalism or demolition by neglect?”.

In June 2014 The Trust wrote to the headmaster of St Joseph’s regarding the state of the building, which had been revealed during an inspection by Council’s Conservation Advisory Panel. We expressed our dismay at the appalling condition of the heritage-listed cottage and our hope that the college would be doing something about it.

The College responded in July 2014 that they had received advice from their architects that “Due to the low intactness of the place” they recommended that Hunters Hill Council should approve:

- *Demolition of the structures on the site following archival recording;
- *Redevelopment of the site for a landscaped parking area; and,
- *Interpretation of the retained chimneys and lost significance of the site in the redeveloped landscape.”

The Trust Journal story gained wider distribution via the Northern District Times, whose reporter spoke to St Josephs about The Trust’s concerns. The Trust also wrote to Council about our concerns. We made the point that “the community looks to its institutions, particularly educational institutions, to set the bar for best practice when it comes to the preservation of the unique character of Hunters Hill, so it is

doubly regrettable when our most widely known and respected institution lets the side down.



11 Mark St prior to demolition with its double pitch roof

Around this time, plans for the complete demolition of the cottage and the construction of a carpark were abandoned. The new plans, which involved substantial demolition and rebuilding were approved by Council.

This was despite the negative assessment by its own Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP), which noted that “the double-hipped form of the cottage, and the fact that its south-eastern flank is available in street views is a distinguishing feature of the cottage. CAP also noted that “the scale of the proposed addition is excessive, and will overwhelm the street presence of the cottage. An approach that entails a lesser magnitude of accommodation by tighter planning, and reduces the height through a “rooms in the roof” configuration should be considered to reduce this effect.”

As noted in the August 2017 Journal, the cottage was not exactly restored. Rather, following a submission to Council about its poor state, it was completely demolished including the two existing stone chimneys. The ugly front brick fence was also removed, which allowed the cottage to be properly viewed from the street.

The building program is now moving towards completion and CAP’s fears about the scale and extent of the demolition have been well and truly realised. Because of the lack of separation of the new building from the old, the overall impression is of a tiny cottage being overwhelmed by a project house clad in fibrous cement sheet and sporting aluminium windows.

A lack of attention to detail in the rebuilding of the cottage has meant that it has lost a number of original features, including the fanlight over the front door, the stop chamfers on the timber columns and the non-beaded weatherboards along

the sides. The use of Colorbond Manor Red on the roof is way out of character with the original.

Whether or not The Trust can take any credit for the college changing its mind about the removal of the cottage altogether for a carpark is a moot point and despite its multiple shortcomings at the very least it does allow a little piece of old Mark St to remain.

Tony Coote

FIGTREE CHAPEL RELOCATION
Explore, See, Learn



St Marks Figtree Road, relocated and renamed

When you next visit the Hunters Hill Hotel, stroll across the road to the Moreton Bay Fig tree and small garden opposite the shops. You’ll discover underneath the shade of the tree a sandstone plinth with a plaque. This marks the original entrance to Figtree Chapel, the oldest public building in Hunters Hill, which was saved at the 11th hour from total destruction.

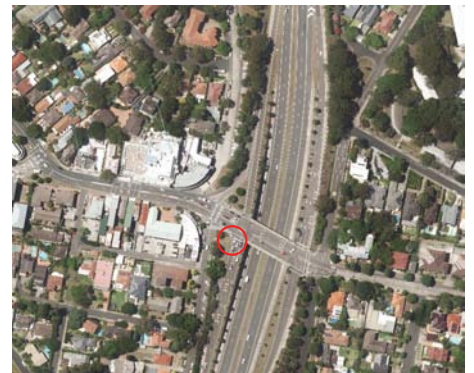


Early photo of Figtree Chapel

The sandstone church was relocated locally to Figtree Road, where it resplendently stands today as St Mark’s Church. After it was moved, the congregation added stained glass windows and other traditional features which have enhanced this lovely and quaint church. The two aerial photos clearly demonstrate the impact of the new freeway built in the late 1960s on Hunters Hill, which effectively cut Hunters Hill in half and was a major factor in the formation of The Trust to fight such development.



The 1943 aerial showing the location



The current aerial showing the same location



11 Wybalena Road

The unusual roof tiles taken from the chapel were reused in the construction of this tiny cottage at 11 Wybalena Road.
Karen Presland and Tony Coote

SYDNEY MODERN



Aerial of The Art Gallery of NSW

There is growing concern about the location of the Art Gallery of NSW's controversial Sydney Modern Project. The proposed design involves a series of pavilions on the open space within the Domain lands at the entry to Mrs Macquarie's Point, with the new entrance plaza and parts of the main buildings positioned over the landbridge across the expressway. The Domain land is Sydney city's most historically significant remnant green space and the proposal would permit a substantial alienation of land.



Plans and sketch of the proposal by architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa

The Trust Committee has given its support to those objecting to the project proposal and we share their concerns regarding:

- *Loss of public open green space, particularly when Sydney's population is so rapidly expanding.
- *Adverse impacts on district views, pedestrian and vehicular access and parking.
- *Lack of analysis of potential for alternative sites such as Headland Park at Barangaroo, Parramatta (instead of uprooting the Powerhouse Museum), or on the area south east of the Gallery bounded by the railway and expressway.
- *Lack of informed consultation with all stakeholders and the public.

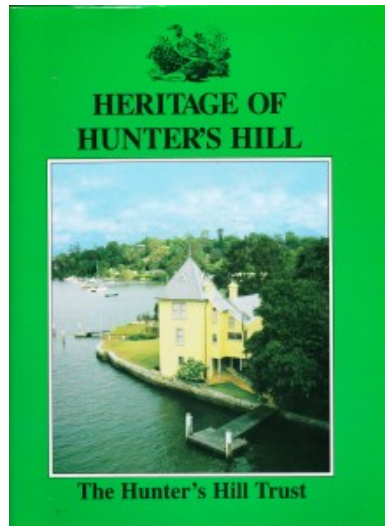
Kate Russell

GREEN BOOK UPDATE

In honour of the Hunters Hill Trust's 50th anniversary next year, we are improving our key publication the 'Heritage Of Hunters Hill' (the Green Book). The Green Book has helped to protect many houses that faced unsympathetic

development over the years. In addition to the 270 houses already listed we will be including buildings constructed up to the 1920s. We will also take the opportunity to ensure that any valuable heritage buildings that were missed last time are included.

Recently we have partnered with a local publisher and we are currently working through the timelines and budget requirements to meet the Spring 2018 publishing deadline and launch an online version. We have applied for heritage grant funding from the NSW State government. If you have additional information about the heritage of Hunters Hill that could be included in a new print and/or online version, we would love to hear from you.



Karen Presland

18 RICHMOND CRESCENT

The Trust acted in support of retaining the WW1 cottage at 18 Richmond Crescent and Council's refusal of a Development Application to replace it with a building entirely out of scale and character with the Conservation Area.

Council's Conservation Advisory Panel had advised Council that, in its view, the existing cottage should be retained as a largely intact example of homes built by NSW Department of Housing in the early post-WW1 development of the area.

The Panel also considered the proposed replacement house to be inappropriate in its response to the streetscape, which is typified by asymmetrical facades.

The Trust also wrote objections for the Land & Environment Court hearing held onsite on 28 September specifically in the

context of the negative impact on the adjoining remnant bushland should the DA be approved. We also made a submission to the on-site sitting of the Court. The Court has yet to deliver its decision.

With Sydney's bushland and biodiversity under increasing threat from population increase and development pressures, these high quality remnants become even more valued. Residents appreciate having a bushland setting and this natural asset should be taken into account as a vital component of the character, precinct streetscape and local heritage when assessing contentious development proposals.

This bushland above Riverglade Reserve is mainly Sydney Sandstone sclerophyll forest with good structural resilience. It contains several important ecological communities and provides a wildlife habitat corridor, which supports a colony of Grey Headed Flying Foxes and a range of birdlife including Powerful Owls. The Tarban Creek Community Action Group, including some local residents, has worked for two decades to maintain the diverse ecological values of this significant remnant. The Group has also been successful in gaining grants to assist the long-term remediation by professional contractors employed by Council with impressive results.

The mature *Eucalyptus Pilularis* (Blackbutt) positioned directly opposite No18 is listed for inclusion on Hunters Hill's Significant Tree Register. The proposed excavation for underground parking will disrupt stormwater hydrology and compromise the root system of this healthy tree. It needs protection from major development at this site and the threat of removal.

The Trust continues to be concerned that we are at risk of losing so much of our natural heritage, including tree canopy, across the LGA.

Brigid Dowsett & Sally Gaunt

CYCLING AND HERITAGE

**The President asks:
Do they go together?**

Do cycling and a concern for heritage go together? I know they do for me, and I've been pondering what they have in common that makes me passionate about both. Maybe it's my upbringing?

I grew up in a slightly grand, 19th century house in Kew, Melbourne, which would

certainly be heritage-listed now had it and its extensive gardens not been demolished for a developer's ruthless money-making scheme. That house had been designed by an English architect who overlooked the fact that in Australia the sun is in the north, with the result that our house had a wide verandah on the southern side! Later owners corrected this, adding northern and western verandahs, which were a lot more useful.



The bike outside Alister's house

Coming to Sydney, I lived in several 19th century houses in Balmain before moving to my present 1890 cottage, 'Wairoa', in Hunters Hill. I spent years working on these houses, and loved bringing them back to their original heritage by correcting design errors and removing unfortunate alterations, as well as making them fit for today's living by incorporating modern bathrooms and kitchens.

As for my passion for cycling, I got my first bike when I started high school. I cycled to school most days for four years, and on weekends my bike gave me the freedom to visit friends and explore near, and not-so-near, suburbs. Then, after a 20 year infatuation with cars, scooters and motorbikes, I rediscovered cycling during a sabbatical year in The Netherlands in 1978. And I've been cycling ever since, as a commuter, riding with friends, and cycle-touring in Australia and Western Europe.

Heritage buildings

My attraction to heritage buildings is partly that they speak of the people they were built for. At primary school I was fascinated by a visit to Captain Cook's Cottage (rebuilt, brick-by-brick) in the Fitzroy Gardens, with its low doorways and tiny rooms. Australia's own earliest buildings are younger than this, but continued the tradition of using local materials (being at the end of the world, they didn't have much choice) to replicate designs familiar from Europe: stone, lime mortar and local timber.

Originally timber simply meant felled trees, used in the round or roughly split into

slabs, with roofs of bark or split shingles. Indeed, there are still houses in Balmain with shingle roofs, although currently covered with corrugated iron. My father recalled the annual task of re-papering (with newspaper) the interior of the raw timber walls of his family's house in remote NE Victoria. He didn't find candle-lit dinners romantic, having grown up with candle or kerosene lighting! Working on old buildings, it is easy to forgive their constraints when being distracted by ancient newspapers found beneath the old lino, the colours of previous layers of paint, or an old postcard or letter that has slipped down behind the skirting board.

We don't have many of Sydney's very early houses left, perhaps because they were often built by people untrained as carpenters, without knowledge of local timbers or termites. It's interesting to ponder over how long it took to discover that Angophora is too brittle to be useful but Casuarina can be split into shingles to make a roof more durable than by using bark, or that the oyster shells from Aboriginal middens could be burnt to make lime mortar. Some of us are slow learners: it's still common to hear people complain that cockatoos are chewing the soft timber window frames made of Western Red Cedar!



The buildings that remain tend to follow standard English patterns: the terrace houses of Paddington, and, in Glebe and Hunters Hill, the larger houses of the middle and upper classes, dependent on domestic help for their operation.

As Australia became wealthier, and an exporter of wool and wheat, freight costs to import materials from Europe became very low; on return voyages ships required ballast, so if no paying-cargo was available, ships were loaded with rocks. This made it economic to import the glass, slate (for roofs and door sills), corrugated iron and cast-iron stoves, even whole prefabricated buildings that we can still find today. Hunters Hill is lucky to have houses representing much of the settlers' history of Australia, although at present only the earlier ones have the protection of heritage listing. It's time that later ones,

such as the Californian Bungalow, also receive this protection.

But what is common to my attraction to heritage buildings and cycling? I think it's because both are essentially based on function. Of course some of our heritage buildings were also intended to create a sense of awe and some bicycles are more beautiful than others, but awe and beauty can also be seen as functions.

So 'do cycling and a concern for heritage go together?' I can only conclude that they do for me!

Alister Sharp, President

WALKS AND EVENTS



Cockatoo Island – photo Karen Presland

Our program of walks and events has continued during the year with a feast of interesting adventures.

The tour of Cockatoo Island in July was an eye-opener for many of us who had only visited the main sites. A professional guide treated us to the full history of this, the largest island in Sydney Harbour, which was off-limits for more than 100 years. The 2-hour tour informed us of the Island's role in Australia's convict, shipbuilding and industrial history including the harrowing stories of the harsh living and working conditions for convicts and child prisoners alike, in what has been a prison of one sort or another for almost 70 years!

The vitally important shipbuilding history was also a fascinating story told in photos and film footage housed in the historic Biloela House.

Our August walk in the Field of Mars led by Brigid Dowsett, showcased this important bushland, a remnant of the extensive original Commons of over 5000 acres. Today it is a Wildlife Refuge and Ryde Council's largest bushland reserve with a diverse range of vegetation communities from coastal saltmarsh and mangroves to ridgetop eucalypts and open forest. In spite of the dry winter there were many wildflowers. We also heard

about the 1960s local activism that resulted in the Field of Mars and Buffalo Creek being protected from further landfilling and degradation. We learnt how the reserve is being maintained by dedicated volunteers as a vital natural asset of good quality bush and wetlands. It also provides an important place of learning with the Environmental Education Centre hosting over 15,000 students a year.

Our September walk allowed us to take another look at the history of Morts Dock and its notable founder, courtesy of Chris Schofield, President of the HH Historical Society, who led us through the fascinating story of both.



Morts Dock

We also explored some of the little known secrets of Clarke’s Point including the story of the granite stone blocks (some of which are still there) quarried at Moruya on the NSW south coast, dressed at Clarke’s Point and then ferried over to the city to become the stone pillars of the Harbour Bridge!

The final destination for the walk lay up the hill from the Horse Paddock at the Alfred Street entrance to Kelly’s Bush, once the site of the residence built for the Manager of the Sydney Smelter Company in the 1930s. Due to the depression the workforce at Cockatoo Island dropped to 500 from its peak of 4000. This allowed spare smelter workers to be employed in the building of this house in what is now Kelly’s Bush.

According to Connie Ewald’s book, *The Industrial Village of Woolwich*, the home “boasted a dairy, fowl yard and orchard to the west of the house” as well as a tennis court on flat land above.

Kelly’s Bush Regeneration Group has been working around this overgrown area for a couple of years and think they have now identified the site of the house as well as its ‘secret garden’, lying underneath more than a metre of weeds including Morning Glory and Lantana. Once cleared, a set of sandstone steps emerged plus the beautiful sandstone walls of



Sydney Smelting Company 1912

terrace gardens built on either side of the path leading down to Alfred Street.

Once the last Manager of the Sydney Smelting Company left the house in 1967 it gradually fell into disrepair and in the 1970s, sometime after the Battle for Kelly’s Bush, it was demolished.

Thank you again to all our dedicated leaders, Alister Sharp, Brigid and Len Dowsett and Karen Presland for their commitment to making our walks informative and enjoyable.

Maureen Flowers

FROM THE ARCHIVES 3 November 1997



We thought it would be interesting to take a look at our archives and see what was being written about 20 years ago this month!

Lo and behold, we found, on the very first page, an article on our ‘Forgotten Heritage’. This documented the work of an organisation called the Voluntary Workers Association founded early in WW1 whose aim was to “provide homes for war widows and partially disabled soldiers, using voluntary labour.” It went on to explain that, “Working parties gathered each weekend, men with trades providing appropriate expertise, while men like Mr Windeyer, mayor of Hunters Hill and a solicitor, served as labourers”! By June 1920, the organisation had built over 400 homes in NSW, including a cottage in Gladstone Avenue and one in Earl Street, Gladstone (pictured above).

Part of our work on updating the Green book next year will be to try and include some of these wonderful early 20th century properties (see www.huntershilltrust.org.au ‘new Green Book’ for more information).

In light of our concern to save 18 Richmond Crescent - a largely intact example of post-WW1 housing, built for returned servicemen by NSW Department of Housing – the Trust considers that retaining properties built during this period of our history, is vitally important.

Speaking of things archival, we are glad to hear that Arthur Mashford, surely our oldest member, is still going strong aged 104. Arthur provided the photo.

BORONIA PARK UPDATE



Following representations from The Trust and after consultation with Council’s heritage advisor, the woodwork on the new shelter sheds has been painted “olive drab”, a much less intrusive colour than the cream it was first painted.

HUNTERS HILL TRUST CHRISTMAS PARTY



Over 70 Trust members enjoyed a wonderful night on November 30th at Elizabeth and David Dossetor’s heritage listed house at 2 Futuna St. Thanks so much to our generous hosts for sharing their fine house, garden and magnificent art with the rest of us.