



# Hunters Hill Trust Journal

DECEMBER 2019 ISN 0310-11 Volume 57, Number 2

## From the President's Desktop

### The updated 'Green Book'

2019 has been dominated by the work of the HHT committee in finalising the 5th edition of 'The Heritage of Hunters Hill' still known as the Green Book, although the new cover is more blue than green!

Very late in its development, we found we could afford to print the publication in colour which was an added bonus with clear appeal to a wider audience. The use of colour enhances the range of houses in our suburb and helps to distinguish between old and new, particularly where we've been able to include both historical and contemporary photos.

Of course the website version of the book at <https://greenbook.huntershilltrust.org.au> can be searched free of charge and has been in colour since its launch a year ago.

### New Plans of Management

With the latest Crown Lands legislation handing greater control of public land to Councils, the State Government has called for new Plans of Management for all parks and reserves, and Hunters Hill Council has appointed two consultants, one for Boronia Park and one for Riverglade Reserve. The Trust has a representative on the community advisory groups for each.

Boronia Park's Plan of Management is only four years old, but a draft of the new Plan is now on Council's website. As you will



*Some of this year's wonderful jacarandas, The Priory, Salter Street*

see from our article on pages 2 & 3, we have many reservations and are requesting more weight be given to heritage and environmental issues.

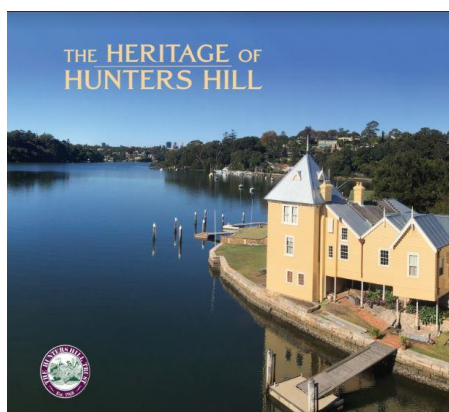
The current Plan of Management for Riverglade Reserve dates from 2013, and initial consultations have resulted in many suggestions, including additional seating, shade trees along the paths, formalised parking off Waruda Place and a children's playground and cafe (both proposed to be

sited near The Priory). We await the release of Council's draft Plan.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the journal which focuses on our beautiful trees and parks.

Wishing you a peaceful festive season and we look forward to another year of your company in 2020.

**Alister Sharp**



Our updated publication  
**'The Heritage of Hunters Hill'**

is now available!

**\$55**

Printed in full colour and featuring nearly 500 homes, you can buy direct from the Trust by emailing [members@huntershilltrust.org.au](mailto:members@huntershilltrust.org.au) or get your copy from the following local outlets:

**Hunters Hill Post Office**, 32 Alexandra Street  
**Hunters Hill Museum**, 22 Alexandra Street  
**The Lost & Found Department**, 39 Alexandra Street

**The perfect gift for friends and family!**

## Our Heritage Listed Boronia Park



### An update on the Plan of Management

Readers of the June journal will recall that Hunters Hill Council has been revising the 2015 Boronia Park Plan of Management (normally reviewed every 10 years or so) due to changes in the Crown Land Management Act 2016 and subsequent Regulation. All local governments across the State are now obliged to review their Crown land reserve Plans by June 2021 to align with NSW legislation.

The draft Plan has been on public exhibition (now extended to 14 February 2020) and submissions and comments (with your name and contact details) should be sent to Council's consultant Alan Ginns [gwanacon@tpg.com.au](mailto:gwanacon@tpg.com.au)

As you will see, we have many concerns as to the Plan's direction and intent.

Hunters Hill Council has taken the opportunity to allocate expenditure from two grants totalling \$1.5 million received from State & Commonwealth governments for a 'Sports Precinct Upgrade Project' within the municipality, towards a new oversized clubhouse, long mooted by the Rugby Club. There has been no business case or proven need or demand for this proposed 'sport/community facility' from

local residents. The Trust is disappointed that Council has actively promoted use of these funds for such a purpose, primarily for use by the Rugby & Cricket Clubs.

Should the draft Plan be adopted without amendment, construction is automatically authorised for a building measuring up to **525 square metres** - around 25% larger than the Hunters Hill Sailing Club. Placed in the wrong location, the character and inherent natural and cultural values of this historic Park will be permanently altered.

The construction appears pre-determined by Council as there is no option for not building it, and four sites are included in the Plan as the options for its location.

The only supportable location would be next to the grandstand alongside Ryde Road (Site 1 in the draft Plan). The grandstand pavilion can be retrofitted (as proposed in the 2015 Plan) and even slightly enlarged to accommodate the storage, change rooms and other needs of the sporting interests. This would allow for a building with a much smaller footprint adjoining it to cater for other functions, with easy level access from the carpark. We feel strongly that the integrity of the

open playing fields and green space should not be alienated or marred visually and physically by large structures mainly benefitting one user group.

Adoption of the draft Plan would also authorise a 20 year lease (with 10 year extension) for the facility. A lease to any organisation of longer than a year is inappropriate and was expressly not requested by the representative of the Rugby Club at the Boronia Park Community Advisory Group of which the Trust was a member. Currently the Club has an annual roll-over licence.

Taking into account changing demographics and sporting needs (such as the rise of women's sport, and drift from rugby to soccer and AFL), a long lease may lock out organisations that later have greater support. The grant to help fund the upgrades avoids specifying that it will be used for either rugby or cricket.

A lease or licence should be primarily concerned with appropriate use of space by all users and remain operated and controlled by Council. A long term lease is unacceptable.

contd.....



**The existing heritage grandstand - long overdue for an upgrade**



**Area adjacent to the grandstand could accommodate additional facilities**

As well as a clubhouse, our Council wishes to position a new playground of 2,000 square metre within Boronia Park, for which a grant of \$200,000 was successfully gained. However, the grant application was for Riverglade Reserve, where it is needed. The current PoM for Riverglade Reserve envisages a 'District level playground', and adjacent 'Family picnic area' on the grassed area below The Priory. This site is served by car parking in Manning Road and Council are currently negotiating a long lease for The Priory which could include a cafe.

Boronia Park already has two playgrounds which can easily be improved to suit a range of ages. Again, we are disappointed that Council is actively promoting this playground within Boronia Park with little consultation or consideration of genuine need, environmental impacts or long term maintenance costs to residents.

A BMX circuit of up to 4,500 square metres is now also proposed - added to the draft Plan at the very last minute! Once again, with no consultation for placing this major undertaking in a heritage-listed Park in proximity to significant bushland.

There is a plan to add floodlights to Oval 3, even though Ovals 1 & 2 already have floodlighting for evening training. Floodlighting is currently not permitted on Oval 3 due to deleterious impacts on nocturnal wildlife and local residents.

The formation of a Community Advisory Group for reviewing the Boronia Park Plan of Management was welcomed and the Trust engaged in good faith.

However, it was poorly managed by Council with a lack of meeting preparation and follow up, little willingness to listen and failure to disclose vital information on which to make judgements on significant projects or assess the results of the June online survey. Details for proposed major developments - sporting facility, BMX circuit and playground - were never presented and only revealed when the Plan of Management was open for public exhibition.

The mismanaged re-construction of Oval 3 some years ago by the Rugby Club has left an environmental legacy of dead trees, polluting sediment run-off into the wetlands and ongoing impact on the E2 conservation zone and the overall integrity of the Park. The failure of that project to install drainage, rendering Oval 3 often too wet for use, has transferred considerable costs for remediation to the ratepayers.

Public confidence in Council's stated commitment to maintaining the balance between general public access and intensity of sporting use, as well as fully protecting the Park's natural areas, is undermined by the clear intent of the draft Plan to accommodate the demands of the two sporting clubs and the past history of infrastructure built on Boronia Park.

Boronia Park is a highly valued community parkland - proclaimed a Public Park on 16 December 1887 - which needs our support to preserve its special character, its endangered native species and shared open spaces for both passive enjoyment and active recreation. It will become an even greater oasis in our ever-growing city for generations to come and deserves thoughtful and equitable management.

**Brigid Dowsett**



**Option 3 above between Ovals 1 & 2 is one site proposed for the 525 metre clubhouse**

## DA UPDATES

### 1 & 3 RYDE ROAD

As you will no doubt have seen, the developer of the above site, had two 'stop work' orders issued to him for contravening the DA regulations which delayed the progress of this development.

The original timber framework was riddled with termites and had to be replaced. Unfortunately, the cladding used is a composite material and not the timber weatherboards which would have been expected for renovating these very visible cottages.

The appearance we now have is of two newly built 'replicas' of the original cottages which is a betrayal of the spirit of heritage restoration and a poor substitute for the genuinely heritage dwellings they should have been.



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### THE LOST & FOUND DEPARTMENT 39 Alexandra Street

The latest DA to be put forward by the owner of this important heritage building is a change of use application for *"a long day care centre"*.

This is yet another example of an incongruous and unsympathetic adaptive re-use for these premises. We believe this is out of synch with the requirements of the immediate neighbourhood.

Traffic and parking have obviously not been considered as there is the potential for some very serious problems dropping off and collecting young children in such a crowded position, with the premises directly on a sharp bend of an already congested road system. The site would need extensive parking facilities which are not currently available.

Congestion in the area can be problematic for locals, with commuter traffic and daily queues of cars along parts of Alexandra Street trying to access the primary school.



The current leasee provides an attractive homewares outlet that is unique in Hunters Hill and appreciated by locals who tend to use it as a community hub.

The DA no. is 2019 1119 and submissions are due by 6 January 2020, if you would like to make your views known to Council [customerservicehuntershill.nsw.gov.au](http://customerservicehuntershill.nsw.gov.au)

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### THE SORRY SAGA OF 'Windermere' 25 Ernest Street

As you may have seen, the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 16 November 2019, featured the sorry saga of the heritage property of 'Windermere' at 25 Ernest Street.

The article recounted the story of the sale of this historic estate in 2014 for \$11.4m to Chinese billionaire Kuizhang 'Sam' Guo (known as the Chinese Gatsby due to his lavish parties). His neighbour at the time, Joe Hockey, referred him to the Foreign Investment Review Board after becoming suspicious of the circumstances surrounding the purchase of an established property, as foreign buyers are generally restricted to buying only new homes. Extracts from the article are below:

*"After Mr Hockey's referral to the FIRB, Mr Guo's lawyer said her client was granted approval to buy Windermere on the condition he "contribute to housing stock" by carrying out an approved 2013 development application to build a guest house on the property. At the time, Mr Hockey slammed the deal – to be*

*undertaken within two years of the purchase date – as "spurious" and "ridiculous".*

The article went on; *"the property developer also began clearing bush land on a neighbouring public reserve, spray painted over Indigenous artwork and constructed a structure "seven times" the size of a jetty in the Lane Cove River. To top it off, he built a bar inside a heritage-listed Aboriginal rock cave.*

*But despite his busy building program at the property, it appears Mr Guo never built the one structure he was required to in order to be allowed to buy the property in the first place.*

*"The number of breaches he had, it was just unbelievable," a council source told the Herald. "He just thought he could do anything he wanted..."*

*The "illegal" works sparked a lengthy battle in the Land and Environment Court with Hunters Hill Council, beginning in 2016, after it discovered they had been carried out without any approvals on land Mr Guo did not own...*

*An expert in Aboriginal heritage told the court the cave contained "extensive and relatively well preserved" red-painted Aboriginal artwork and the disturbed remains of an occupation deposit...*

*Outside, floodlights had been installed, exotic species planted and a small kitchen was discharging wastewater directly into the Lane Cove River...*

*An expert in bush land ecology told the court that the works had resulted in the removal of an endangered species of tree and a loss of habitat for native wildlife in a regionally significant corridor.*

*In November 2016, a deal was brokered... with Mr Guo agreeing he would cease his illegal works and plan to demolish what had been built and rehabilitate the reserve. He failed to comply with the court orders... The matter was finally resolved this year in May, with the court orders complied with and Council receiving \$50,000 in costs."*

The Trust has made enquiries of Council to check that the remedial works on the Aboriginal cave have now been carried out. Council confirmed these works are still in progress - overseen in the first instance by the RMS - with two additional levels of oversight in place. We will be maintaining a watching brief on this situation and in the next journal will report on the conclusion to this sorry saga!

## Every picture tells a story.....

These two photos, taken just over a year apart, were shot from almost the same spot on the eastern walkway of the Figtree Bridge.

They show the hillside that runs up from the bottom of Mount Street to Ferdinand Street. On the bottom right of the photos is the walkway running along the edge of the high school oval and tennis courts.

The difference between the two photos is startling. The later photo is now dominated by the appearance of an ugly building with a bizarre blue-glazed structure along its bottom left above a cliff that was not previously visible and which is now in centre frame.

This building dominates the whole vista, whereas a year before, all one could see was greenery, which included a number of mature trees, now gone.

As well as the removal of much of the tree cover, the mangroves that ran along the foreshore at the end of Mount Street have gone. Again, where previously greenery dominated the vista, buildings are now prominent.

Whether these changes happened with Council consent is not known but the photos demonstrate how "the price of beauty in Hunters Hill is eternal vigilance".

**Tony Coote**

The above is just one example of the effect of the loss of trees on our suburb. Many of the individual DAs submitted by householders to Council are for 'the removal of one tree'. Sadly this results in these missing trees collectively reducing the green canopy on our streets and foreshores.

***But there is something we can do.....!***

We can preserve our beautiful mature trees by having them listed on the Significant Tree Register. Please exercise your right and list your favourite tree by going onto Council's website at [www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au](http://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au) click on 'Development' and 'Plans, Policies & Controls' where you'll see the heading 'Significant Tree Register'. Please complete *The Significant Tree Nomination Form* and return to Council.



Photo taken from Figtree Bridge **August 2018**



Photo taken from Figtree Bridge **August 2019**

## Christmas Party & Book Launch

We had a very enjoyable Christmas Party and Book Launch on Thursday 28 November and were delighted with the positive feedback to our updated 'Green Book'.



**Alistair Sharp, Maureen Flowers, Karen Presland, Brigid Dowsett & Kate Russell – members of the committee responsible for the updates - cutting the celebration cake**

Amongst the many compliments we received were these kind words from two of our living treasures and local identities:

*Warmest congratulations on a wonderful achievement and an altogether beautiful product! It's so impressive in every respect – the format, the layout, the design, the type face, the binding, the careful research, the lucid text, the photographs ... and the expanded scope (eg a lovely section on Hillcrest Avenue, the sections on stonework, trees et al).*

**Bev Sherry**

*I am delighted, plunging into The Heritage of Hunter's Hill, convincingly shown. The areas are integral, the photos a pleasure, varied in size and style, surprising with history, a dock or a tree study. This will be valuable in years to come, defending, proclaiming the best of Hunter's Hill. As time passes, beyond our boundaries we see trees replaced by hard-edged buildings, foreshores lost. This book gives a chance to demonstrate other values, other mores, so well. Congratulations on a superb product – coffee table, yes, but a serious case for our place.*

*Thank you!*

**Alice Oppen**

Of course the website version of the book can still be accessed for free at <https://greenbook.huntershilltrust.org.au>

The books have been flying off the shelves and we're delighted that we may now have to do a reprint!

In this eventuality, we can take the opportunity of correcting any omissions or carrying out alterations that may be necessary to ensure we have the best information possible.

So if you know of any historical information that can be added to the listings or have a good quality high resolution image that could replace an existing photo, please don't hesitate to email [members@huntershilltrust.org.au](mailto:members@huntershilltrust.org.au) or write to the PO address opposite.

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And finally – with the focus on our green heritage in this journal - here's a piece of history which sadly shows that indifference to our unique trees is not new:

From the **Sydney Morning Herald November 1960:**

### "St Malo Trees for Mousetraps"

**"The old landmark which gave Fig Tree Bridge its name at Hunter's Hill was destroyed yesterday.**

The landmark, a 70ft high Moreton Bay fig tree in the grounds of the historic St Malo, has been sawn down to make way for approaches to the new Fig Tree Bridge.

St Malo, the handsome stone house in Joubert Street will be moved to make way for the approaches.

Last night the sawn remains of the fig tree were smouldering about the 8 ft wide stump.

Lofty Norfolk Island pines in the grounds of St Malo have also been felled.

The timber will be used to make mousetraps, according to a spokesman for the contractor.

He said a small amount of the timber from the St Malo trees was suitable for floor joists. A load of other timber had been sent to a factory for mousetraps."



**Preserving our heritage**

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### **Why not join us?**

and help swell the number of voices speaking up for our unique municipality

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[members@huntershilltrust.org.au](mailto:members@huntershilltrust.org.au)

or download a form from our website under *Get Involved* at [www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

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