

# Hunters Hill Trust Journal

JULY 2022 ISSN 0310-0111 Volume 60, Number 1

## From the President's Desktop

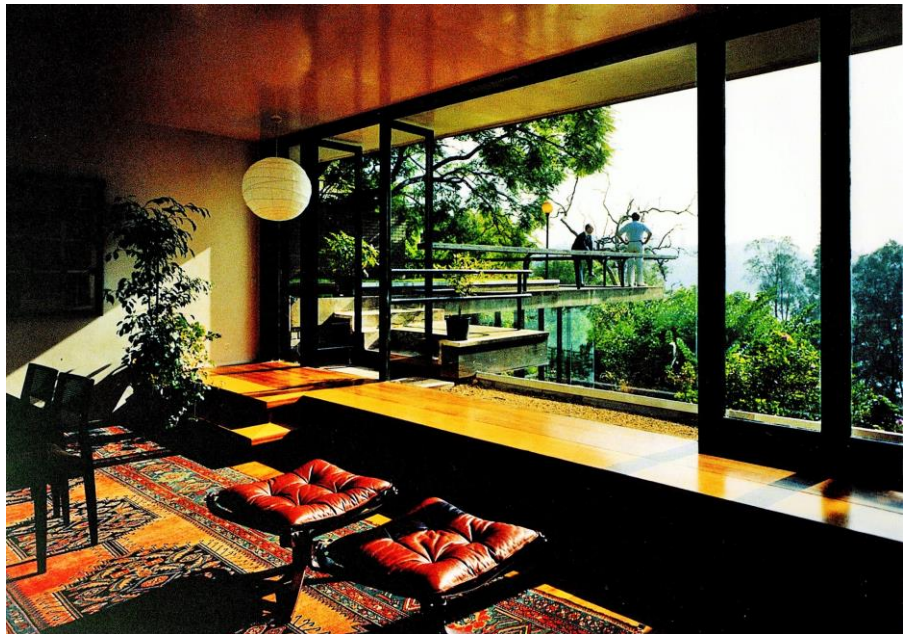
The Trust's AGM on 23 June, followed our members 'get together' which was a well-attended and lively evening with an attentive audience, including Council's General Manager Mitchell Murphy.

We are grateful to our two excellent speakers. Rev'd Michael Armstrong from the Anglican Parish of Hunters Hill spoke of the importance of 'Sacred Heritage' using All Saints Church as a case study, embodying the 5 principles of the Burra Charter. He was followed by Councillor Ross Williams, who attended in a private capacity as a member of the Trust, and had been invited to speak on his recent TWT article entitled: "Why Transparency is Paramount" which had resonated with the Trust.

One major theme of his talk was that it was vital that Local Government be open, inclusive and transparent to engender community confidence in the decision making processes. As an example, he referenced the recent adoption of the Policy for Disposal of Council Land, which omitted vital considerations and, despite he and Cllr Sanderson proposing that the policy be placed on public exhibition, Council resolved to adopt it without community consultation. After his presentation, he answered audience questions that evoked lively discussion.

Whilst the Trust has traditionally concentrated on the protection and preservation of our 19<sup>th</sup> century homes, we're increasingly aware of threats to our 20<sup>th</sup> century heritage. These generally low rise homes are gradually being demolished and residents are rightly shocked when they disappear almost overnight!

Some of this is due to speculative development as houses are bought,



View from the family room of the Healey House (see page 3) constructed 1972. Neville Gruzman, architect. Source: Goad, Gruzman: An Architect and his City, 2006

demolished and new builds erected to the fence lines covering a greater portion of the site, in spite of Council's 50% ruling for landscape, with the consequent loss of established gardens and trees. Most of the knock-down-and-rebuild construction is on land outside Conservation areas and falls under the laxer rules of Private Certification. This is having a real consequence on the character of our suburbs (see page 2).

In this journal, we're also featuring mid-century 'gems' like the one pictured above. The first of our special supplements (pages 3 & 4) highlights just two of a number of these houses, including Seidler homes, that we're lucky to have in our suburbs.

The Trust has started to build a register of our 20<sup>th</sup> century homes and we would welcome your suggestions of 'special' buildings that you think should be included. Please email us at [huntershilltrust@gmail.com](mailto:huntershilltrust@gmail.com)

Towards the end of last year we made detailed submissions on Council's three final Plans of Management and are concerned that elements of the rejected draft Property Strategy have been inserted into the PoM for Figtree Park.

We will continue to urge Council that this draft Strategy is reviewed and brought back to the community as promised, so that it does not become a tool to enable future developer-driven goals.

This year the Council is reviewing its Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP). We are concerned that any changes do not weaken the current restrictions on density and height and we will be keeping a close watch on the process.

On your behalf we will continue to ask the hard questions!

**Alister Sharp**



## SOME OF THE HOMES WE'VE LOST..... AND OUR CHANGING STREETSCAPE...



Over recent years the Trust's Journal has been noting the diminishing capacity of local government to retain control over their Local Environment Plan (LEP) and recording the changing character of our suburbs.

Since the advent of the State Government's Exempt and Complying Codes SEPP in 2019, it is evident that properties outside the Heritage Conservation Areas are being drastically altered or dismantled at an alarming rate.



Modest dwellings in leafy garden settings are replaced with larger two-storey houses or knock-down-rebuild project homes, often dwarfing the houses alongside and swallowing up former garden area. The previous conformity of the streetscape is disrespected and trees are inevitably cut down, often to make way for a double garage and concreted frontage.



While Hunters Hill Council's Consolidated Development Control Plan (DCP) is designed to protect the detail of existing built form and streetscape from new development, its constraints can appear powerless outside a Conservation Area, particularly when the build is managed by a Private Certifier, bypassing Council.



The Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) assesses and challenges Development Applications that are likely to be detrimental or unsympathetic to their historic surroundings but it has become harder over time to retain the unique quality and characteristics of our local government area.



CAP will be working with Council's planners on the current review of our LEP & DCP, which will come to the community for comment. It is critical that these instruments are not weakened in the face of continuing pressure for development and 'urban renewal' across our suburbs.

**Brigid Dowsett**





# HUNTERS HILL MODERN

## 4 Viret Street Hunters Hill

4 Viret Street, Hunters Hill was designed by Sydney architect Neville Gruzman (1925-2005) for the Healey family, and completed in 1972.

Architectural historian Philip Goad has described the house as “a demure brick box to the street containing a glossy white-walled interior of landscaped platforms that seems to soak in the water of the view without. It has a dappled interior made from its exterior.”<sup>1</sup> Constraints that previously saw steeply sloping sites such as this one on the Lane Cove River rejected for house construction have in the hands of Gruzman been turned into an opportunity. After descending from the street down a set of steep stairs to the front door, the Healy House unfolds inside as a series of interconnected spaces and terraces that follow the topography to take full advantage of northern light and views through trees to the water.

Gruzman was educated in architecture and town planning at the University of Sydney, and influenced by his travels to Japan and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Recognition of his work and the contribution it makes to the development of modern architecture in Sydney continues to grow, with his Gowing House in Castlecrag, also on a steep and rocky sloping site and constructed in the early 1970s, recently awarded local heritage status by Willoughby Council. Gruzman’s career is now well documented in the monograph *Gruzman: An Architect and his City*, and the inclusion of this house in that book is testament to its significance.

<sup>1</sup> Philip Goad “Healey House, Hunters Hill,” *Gruzman: An Architect and his City*, Craftsman House, Fishermans Bend, 2006, p. 160.



Above: View from dining room over living area to trees and the Lane Cove River. Source: Goad et al *Gruzman* (2006), p. 171.

Below: Leonard French stained glass. Photo: Max Dupain. Source: <https://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/pages/books/CL204-24/max-dupain-1911-1992-aust/healy-house-interior-hunters-hill-nsw>

4 Viret Street is constructed in blond brick and off-form concrete with a flat roof and dark-framed windows and doors. As Goad has noted, the rooms and spaces of the interior are organised into private and public zones, with access that pinwheels out from the entry hall. Spaces for informal family living, including a galley kitchen, are located slightly down from the entry with views to the north and access to a large roof top terrace (see image p.1). Bedrooms are quite separate and concentrated to the uppermost storey. Moving downwards from the entry through a gallery hall, the landscape setting of the house is revealed, with the formal dining and living rooms occupying a wing that projects outwards towards the river. High-gloss paint to walls and ceilings – hardly typical of housing of the period but a signature device of Gruzman’s – adds a sense of shimmer and glamour to the journey. Walls of thinly framed windows and doors open the high living space directly to its surroundings. The house also exhibits Gruzman’s practice of integrating artworks at key points, which in this case are four stained



glass windows by Leonard French (1928-2017), the artist best known for his dramatic ceiling installation at the National Gallery of Victoria.

The house is significant as an example of late Modernist architecture adapted both to the difficulties of a steeply sloping site and the opportunities afforded by orientation. Its merit lies not in its street presence, but how its interiors are formed to respond to its setting, shaping a house for family life and entertaining. The house appears to be in largely original condition.

– Lucy Creagh



Photo: Ross Heathcote.

Source: <https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/documenting-nsw-homes/ellesmere-avenue-house>

## 8 Ellesmere Avenue Hunters Hill

8 Ellesmere Avenue house was designed by architect Frank Kolos (1915-2000) for Martin (1921-2010) and Eve Pentley (c1922-2009) in 1959.

The house demonstrates a number of Modernist architectural features including a flat roof, asymmetrical site layout on the corner block and stone feature wall. Its open planned interiors, internal timber panelling, use of bright primary colours and large areas of glass demonstrate a good representative example of mid-century domestic modernist architecture. The house is one of the few known examples of Kolos' domestic work and is a rare intact domestic design by an émigré architect who combined their European modernist training with the influence of the Australian context and climate. Remarkably intact when sold by the original owners in 2011, the Pentley house was photographed for the Caroline Simpson Research Library 'Recorded for the Future' project.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sydney Living Museums, Recorded for the Future, Ellesmere Avenue house, Hunters Hill NSW, 2011  
<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/documenting-nsw-homes/ellesmere-avenue-house>



Kolos was one of many émigré architects trained in Europe and working in Sydney immediately after World War II. Kolos had studied architecture at the Royal Joseph Technical University, Budapest. Fleeing Hungary's postwar communist government in 1950, Kolos and his family had taken the considerable risk of secretly crossing the closed and patrolled border. He registered as an architect in NSW in 1954, aged 38, and after seven years as an employee, began his own practice around 1957. The house in Ellesmere Avenue and a block of home units in Henrietta Street, Double Bay, both designed in 1959, represent some of his first projects completed in private practice.

By the time the house was constructed in 1960-61, Kolos had been joined in business

by architect J.H. Bryant. Kolos, both with Bryant and in other later partnerships, developed successful practices responsible for numerous apartment blocks, motels, office towers, shopping centres and factories in Sydney and other parts of Australia. Kolos retired in the 1990s after three decades as the principal of one of Sydney's largest architectural firms.<sup>2</sup>

8 Ellesmere Avenue is a significant example of mid-century domestic architecture as practiced by the many émigré architects working in Sydney post-WWII, a group that went on to have a significant impact on the development of Sydney.

– Rebecca Hawcroft

<sup>2</sup> See Kolos obituary by JH Bryant, *RAIA Bulletin*, March–April 2001, p. 12.

## All Saints War Memorial Hall Hunters Hill

*Do you know anything about the design and construction of All Saints War Memorial Hall? c. 1958/59, likely designed by J.W. Thomson, NSW Government Architect, Thomas Barford Project Architect.*

Contact us at  
[huntershilltrust@gmail.com](mailto:huntershilltrust@gmail.com)



Photo: Max Dupain and Associates  
Source: Mitchell Library, SLNSW  
<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/digital/dEaKD-q5zG6jLp>



## THE CONTINUING LOSS OF OUR TREES.....

Even with our greater awareness of the need to retain and increase tree canopy to provide resilience against a heating climate, the cumulative effect of DAs from home owners for the removal of just 'one tree' resulted in at least 68 mature trees being cut down in the year Nov 2020 to Nov 2021. This followed the loss of 147 trees during the previous two years, and this year alone DA requests are already at 117.

While outcomes often favour judicious pruning instead, and trees removed are expected to be replaced, the extent of tree loss inevitably impacts on the amenity of our suburbs, gardens and public open spaces – see the pictures above from our *Dec 2019 Journal*.



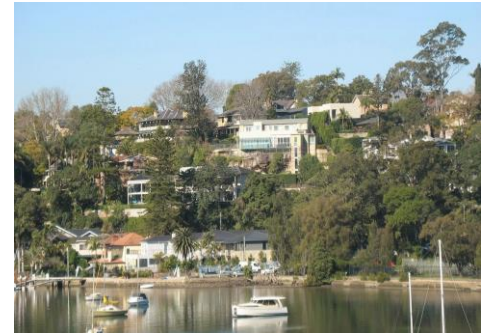
Some trees are quietly 'disappeared' if judged to be in the way or impeding a water view - as observed at Betts Park above - but the big numbers for removal are often requested by developers who factor in fines or even a visit to the Land & Environment Court as part of the cost of doing business.



Strong objection by many to losing the magnificent *Ficus microcarpa* var *hillii* (above) from its landmark position in High St, did not save it from removal but an adjoining Fig tree was spared.



Taken from Figtree Bridge August 2018

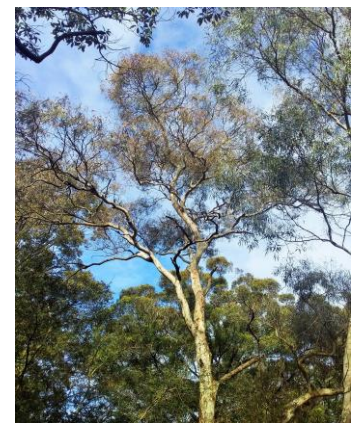


Taken from Figtree Bridge August 2019

Major renovations such as those proposed for The Priory, where originally 47 trees were slated for removal are also contributing to the loss. Trees including palm trees (below) relevant to the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the building and the Marist Brothers missionary work in the Pacific, plus Italian pencil pines, are all important elements of this historic site and need to be retained.



The removal of 3 or 4 healthy mature Eucalypts at Boronia Park (below) to make way for a Sports & Community facility on open green space is indefensible. Other siting options were available, preferred by a majority of the local community but rejected by the previous Council.



Council also has a responsibility to fully explain to the community why they are requesting removal of trees at Figtree Park, other than saying this is *to improve sight lines*. The consultant's design apparently involves removing 37 trees when only 5 are specified by the arborists. Why the remaining trees could not be pruned or incorporated into the final design layout is not explained. The removals include the Willow Gum above, endangered in its natural habitat and listed as 'consider for retention' by the arborists. For further information see our website at <https://huntershilltrust.org.au>

### SIGNIFICANT TREE REGISTER

In early 2021, for the first time since 2015, Council opened their Significant Tree Register to receive community nominations of favourite tree/s or street/group of trees. An impressive number of nominations were received but we have heard nothing further. Word is that funds have not yet been made available for expert assessment and decision which is very disappointing.

## POWERHOUSE UPDATE

It is six years since we first reported on the major campaign to retain the purpose-built and highly valued Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo. The Trust joined those opposed to the demolition of this award winning Sulman project, designed for a working life of 100 years and capable of housing large scale technology and extensive collections of historic importance. Opened in 1988 it was centrally placed as a cultural institution within an educational precinct. Premier Baird's determination to sell out to developers, without justification or a clear business case, and move its contents to Parramatta and beyond, created sufficient outrage that in July 2020 Treasurer Perrottet declared it "saved". But after only two years of further neglect, we have an EIS for a 'Concept Proposal for Renewal' effectively wrecking this unique museum's original purpose at enormous wastage and cost.

## DON'T BLOCK THE ROCKS

Keeping to the theme of vandalising our heritage, the Millers Point Community Resident Action Group is alerting us to the NSW Planning Department's (the consent authority) public exhibition of contentious modifications for Central Barangaroo by Infrastructure NSW (the developer and also part of the Government).

A proposed massive wall of over-development on the doorstep of Sydney's Old Town would triple the previously approved 'gross floor area' and obliterate historic vistas both to and from Observatory Hill. The residential tower of 20+ storeys on the northern edge of the waterfront would eclipse what has been the tallest building in Millers Point for over 100 years, The Palisade Hotel. As feared, yet more parkland on the harbour foreshore will be lost. It is reclaimed, but nevertheless Crown Land, intended for community open space, and not for a greedy land grab.

Submissions required by 22 August – just google Barangaroo Concept Plan Modification 9 for more information.

## VALE TONY COOTE



Tony Coote died peacefully in his home on 20 June, aged 78. Tony was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease two and a half years ago, and the disease took its toll on him. He has been a tower of strength for the Hunters Hill Trust, and we will miss being able to draw on his knowledge and experience. And we will miss him personally. At our AGM, David Gaunt gave us a moving tribute to a 'gentle man' and a 'gentleman'.

Tony harboured a deep and abiding passion for heritage, evident in both his work, and in his dealings, and in this article published in the SMH 21 Jan 2021 [http://www.tonycootearchitect.com/Tony Coote Architect/Talks and articles/Entries/2012/1/31 Heckler column Sydney Morning Herald.html](http://www.tonycootearchitect.com/Tony%20Coote%20Architect/Talks%20and%20articles/Entries/2012/1/31_Heckler%20column_Sydney%20Morning%20Herald.html)

Tony served for 50 years on Council's Conservation Advisory Panel, and was presented with a plaque of 'acknowledgement of service' by Mayor Ross Williams at the Council Meeting on 19 April 2021. Tony was on the committee of the Hunters Hill Trust for 21 years, serving 3 terms as President.

On his website Tony says '*I see myself as both a facilitator and a collaborator in working with my clients and I celebrate the fact that the needs and tastes of every client are different and that these differences will inform the building we plan together.*'

That's why, unlike the work of many 'big name' architects, you won't easily notice Tony's work in Hunters Hill. It is around us, but subtle, understated, and so simply appropriate to its setting.



### Preserving our heritage

PO Box 85 Hunters Hill 2110  
[www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

President: Alister Sharp  
[alistersharp202@gmail.com](mailto:alistersharp202@gmail.com)

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

### Why not join us?

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

Membership year Jan-Dec  
Become a member at  
[www.huntershilltrust.org.au](http://www.huntershilltrust.org.au)

To renew your membership email  
[members@huntershilltrust.org.au](mailto:members@huntershilltrust.org.au)

Single membership \$30  
Family membership \$50

Payment by cheque to  
above address or by bank transfer:

CBA Bank  
BSB: 062000 Act No: 16211909  
Acct Name: Hunters Hill Trust

### Publications

**The Heritage of Hunters Hill**  
Available at Hunters Hill Post Office  
HH Museum & Lost & Found Department  
Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill

### Or online at

**The Vision and the Struggle  
The Industrial Village of Woolwich**

Available at Hunters Hill Post Office

*We acknowledge the Wallumedegal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of all land and water of the Hunters Hill local government area and pay respects to their elders*