



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

APRIL, 1974

HELEN KELLER HOUSE/ROUND TWO

The battle to preserve Helen Keller House, off Waimea Avenue, is now going into its second round.

It was just over a year ago that swift and decisive action by our association and others saved the Georgian-style building in the nick of time from the demolisher's bulldozer.

The Royal Blind Society agreed not to destroy it, and a committee was formed to preserve it.

The Society was prepared to sell its whole property, including both the Helen Keller House and the houses it owns in Woods Avenue and Waimea Avenue, to a developer.

We were quite happy with this solution, if the developer would leave the house intact and co-operate in its preservation.

But attempts to find such a developer have been bitterly frustrating — not because there are no developers about with a conscience, but because the Royal Blind Society would not come to terms with them.

The Society has its reasons. It claims that the trustees of the building are bound by different considerations from a normal commercial vendor.

If the trustees agreed to sell and somebody popped along next day with a better offer, the trustees would be bound to start talking to the newcomer.

In this climate the serious purchaser who was most sympathetic to our cause retired from the lists. A recent offer to sell the building by tender produced only one response, an offer so low that the Society could not be expected to accept it.

What we have now persuaded the Society to do is give the preservation committee itself an option to purchase the property for \$1,050,000.

The option will be open for six months, and it is clearly understood that the Society cannot negotiate with any other party during that time.

As part of the agreement, the preserv-

ation committee will make better temporary arrangements to preserve the building from the weather, probably putting on a galvanised roof and boarding up the windows.

The committee will then see if it has better luck than the Society in finding a co-operative developer to take over the houses in Woods Avenue and Waimea Avenue, and possibly use part of the Helen Keller site for redevelopment.

However, it is the committee's intention to try to keep the house for some purpose which will benefit the community as a whole.

One idea is to use it as a "museum of childhood" with displays of Victorian dolls, early mechanical toys and puppet shows.

Another suggestion is that the restored Helen Keller building should house a valuable collection of older keyboard instruments which would be made available to serious music students for practice.

The possibilities are endless, but there is much work to be done and a large amount of money to be raised before the work we began last year by halting the bulldozers can really be said to be accomplished.

When we went to press, final details of the option were being negotiated by a working group from the preservation committee, consisting of Leo Schofield and Robin Brampton (Queen Street Association) and Pat Thompson and Duncan Horne (Paddington Society).

They were proposing that a trust should be set up to take over the work of the preservation committee, and planning to invite a number of distinguished people to become its members.

IS THE BATTLE OF JERSEY RD. WON?

A resident who recently tried to sell a house in Jersey Road was surprised to find that for planning purposes, parts of the road are still "affected" by the plan

to drive Jersey Road into Queen Street from Rush Street.

In 1969, this plan was the subject of a spirited opposition campaign by the Paddington Society which believed it had been successful in persuading both the Department of Main Roads and the State Planning Authority to abandon it.

When John Barraclough, MLA for Bligh, recently took up the matter on behalf of Woollahra Council, the Minister for Planning and the Environment, Sir John Fuller, told him that there was to be "further consideration of the Jersey Road extension and the clarification of its status in relation to the Main Roads Development Plan."

Our Association has protested vigorously about this turnabout to Sir John, Mr. Barraclough and the Council.

Who said "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance"?

OUR MOST IMPORTANT MEETING OF THE YEAR

Members, prospective members, all who are interested in the area are welcome on

TUESDAY, MAY 7th

Congregational Hall, Jersey Road

*7.45 pm SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING
8.00 pm ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING*

The Special General Meeting is being called to consider three amendments to the Constitution of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association. These would extend the boundaries of the association's area to Edgecliff Road; allow for the election of a vice president of the association in addition to the president; and extend to May each year the period when the annual meeting can be held.

The Annual General Meeting will receive a report from the President on the Association's work during the year, and it is hoped we will have some spirited discussion on local planning.

HOW WE WOUND UP ON THE FAIR

The pictures on these pages, by Tony King, capture the spirit of the 1973 Queen Street Fair in November which attracted twice as many stalls and bigger crowds than the year before.

Its success as an event, a happening, an occasion is undoubted . . . but what of its financial success?

We get asked this question so often that at the foot of this column, we publish the reckoning.

Rightly or wrongly, the Fair has so far made little money for the association in relation to the overall size and success of the event.

Our 1973 surplus of \$857 was about the same as for the 1972 fair.

Although stall rental income was considerably higher in 1973, the association lost money on its own trading activities, especially the sale of "Queen Street Fair" rock candy.

Perhaps small visitors were more conscious of tooth decay than we imagined, but most of the candy was unsold and had to be given away to charities.

The following draft income and expenditure accounts for Queen Street Fair to February 1st, 1974, were prepared by M. P. Gilovitz and Associates, chartered accountants.

Income	\$	\$
Stalls	3922	
Commission from concessions	440	
Sales of stocks	446	4808
Expenditure		
Hire of tables, stalls and stage	408	
Hire of ferris wheel, labour & transport	126	
Hire of fairground organ	120	
Donation to band	35	
Hire of landau & driver	130	
Hire of costumes	24	
Stock purchased for resale — carrier bags, rock candy, balloons	908	
Insurance	270	
Planning — analysis	150	
Compensation	60	
Deliveries & labour	731	
Cash boxes	27	
Entertaining & presentations	47	
Loudspeakers, lights, banners	85	
Sundries	84	
Cleaning after fair	97	
	3302	
Advertising	649	
	3951	3951
PROFIT FROM FAIR		857

1974 STREET FAIR ON NOVEMBER 23

Subject to the approval of an application now before Woollahra Council, the 1974 Queen Street Fair will be held on Saturday, November 23.

A committee consisting of Vivienne Sharpe, Michael Magnus and Robin Brampton has been formed to run the Fair, and they will certainly be co-opting other people as the year goes on.

In our application, we have asked for the closing of Queen Street to be extended to Ocean Street, but with cross traffic flowing across Queen Street at Moncur Street.

We are not going to be so presumptuous as to start accepting stall bookings until we have Council's permission to run the Fair again.

When the time comes, all last year's stallholders will be sent an application form. If you were not in the 1973 Fair but would like to be sent an application this year, write to **Vivienne Sharpe**,

c/o Box 50, PO Woollahra, NSW 2025.

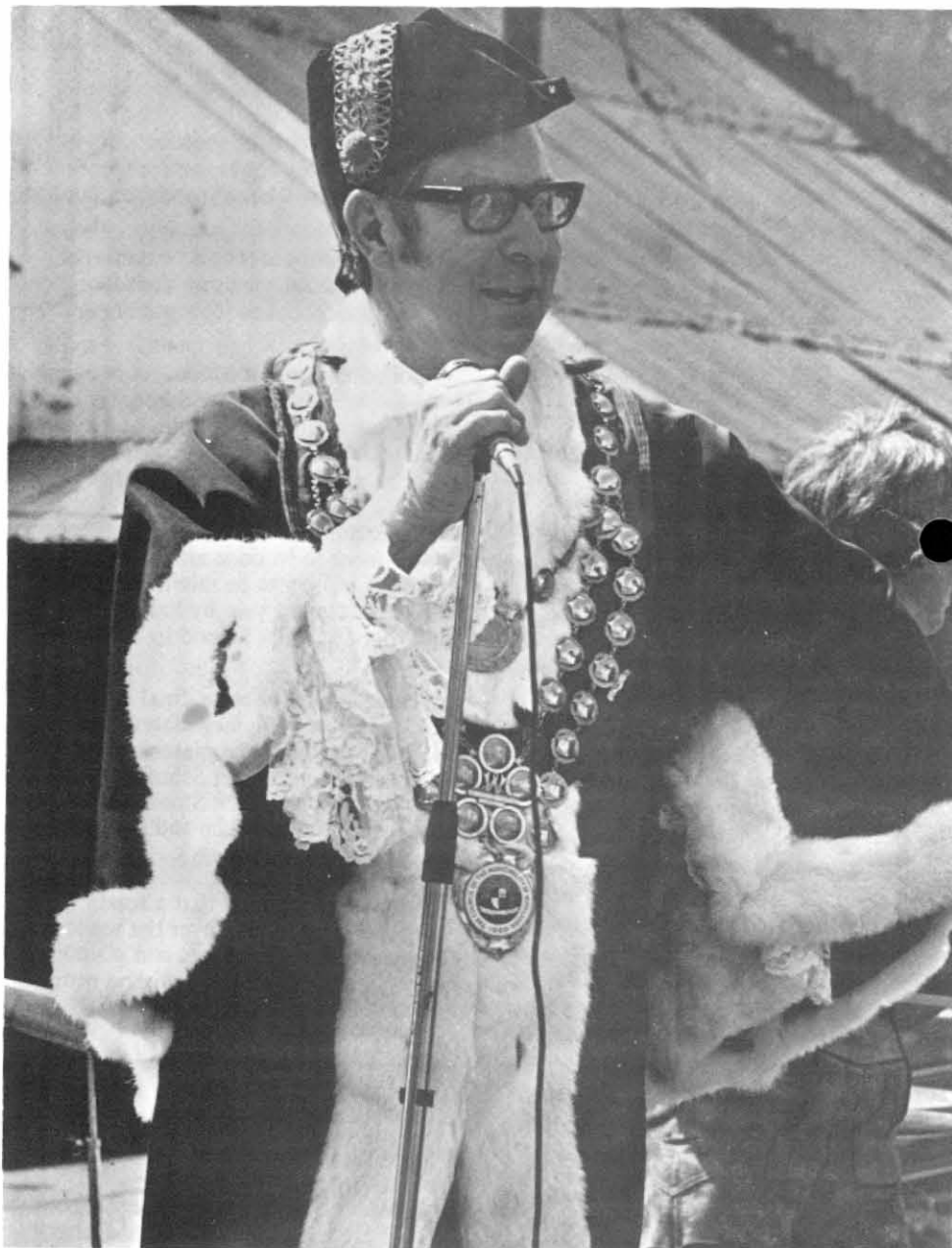
This year we will only accept applications from members of the Queen Street Association, but applicants who are not already members may join at the same time as they make their stall application.

The fair committee intends to plan the fair on the basis that it provides the greatest variety of appealing stalls.

This means that we are not going to work on a straightforward "first come, first served" basis in allocating stalls. If too many applications for certain types of stall are received, we may have to disappoint some applicants for the sake of the general balance of the fair.

The association's profit from the two previous fairs has been somewhat disappointing in proportion to the amount of organisation which went into it.

This year the association needs to make a sound profit from the fair to finance other activities, and we have therefore had to increase stall rentals to \$55 for island units, \$35 for kerbside units and \$20 for charity stalls.



NO SHOPS ON "SKID ROW"

At last there is a final resolution of the litigation which has been holding up the redevelopment of "Skid Row" — that nauseating collection of decayed shop premises in Ocean Street, near Peaker Lane.

Broadly speaking, the High Court of Australia has come down on the side of Woollahra Council.

It has ruled that Banool Developments Pty. Limited, which owned the properties, did not have the right to rebuild them as "neighbourhood retail shops".

An exception is that the site of the old service station, at 34 and 34a Ocean Street, may continue to be used as a service station for car repairs (including panel beating) and car sales.

The dispute over whether Banool could claim existing use rights for the other sites to rebuild them as neighbourhood shops began in 1969 when the Council refused the company's planning application for new shops with storage areas.

Banool appealed to the Supreme Court of NSW where Mr. Justice Hope ruled substantially in favour of the Council, holding that existing use rights had lapsed.

However, when Banool took the matter to the Court of Appeal, a majority of the judges took the opposite view and held that the company had established continuing use rights for "neighbourhood shops".

Woollahra Council refused to be beaten. It considered such an important point of principle was involved that it enlisted the support of the Local Government Association and took its case to the final appeal court, where it has now won the last round.

The Queen Street Association has a copy of the judgement which we would be happy to lend to any member interested.

Naturally, in forming their judgements, the courts were restricted to points of legal interpretation and could not consider the needs and grievances of local residents.

The Council and the Local Govern-

ment Association might have won some sort of moral victory, but it seems a pity that with so many local neighbourhood shops closing or turning into boutiques, not even a small part of this site can be used for its original purpose of serving local shopping needs.

However, it looks as though we must accept that "Skid Row" will eventually be redeveloped as low rise home units and/or town houses, with a service station on part of the site.

As the developers will need to reshape their ideas in the light of the ultimate rejection of their original plans, it will take some time before the new buildings appear.

As we went to press we heard that Banool had sold the site. May we appeal to the new owner, and Woollahra Council which must have influence, if not authority, with the developer, to get the old buildings demolished and the site cleared up.

Five years is too long for us to endure on our doorsteps a combination eyesore, fire hazard, haunt of derelicts and threat to the safety of adventurous children.



**THE QUEEN STREET AND
WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION**

A residents' action association covering the area bounded by Jersey Road, Ocean Street and Oxford Street, West Woollahra, N.S.W.

Address: Box 50, P.O. Woollahra, N.S.W. 2025.

Subscription: \$2 a year. Life membership \$25.

President: Leo Schofield

Vice President: Robin Brampton

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. Ericka van Aalst (32-1198)

Committee: Miss Rowan Beckett, Mr. George Freedman, Mr. Michael Magnus, Mr. Neville Marsh, Mr. John Newton, Mr. John Spatchurst, Mrs. Patricia Thompson.

Queen Street Fair Committee:

Mrs. Vivienne Sharpe, Mr. Robin Brampton, Mr. Michael Magnus.

Village Voice is published approximately every three months. Letters and other contributions on local topics are invited. The editor is Robin Brampton (357-1488 day, 32-4475 evening and weekends).

BEAT INFLATION – ACT NOW!

At the annual meeting of the Queen Street Association on May 7, a proposal will be made to increase members' subscriptions to \$3 a year.

Until then, we are accepting membership applications and renewals at the old rate of \$2. Better join (or renew) now and save money.

Simply fill in the form below:

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

ENCLOSED IS MY SUBSCRIPTION OF \$2 FOR 1974.

IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN A MEMBER, PLEASE PUT A TICK HERE

NAME

ADDRESS

POST TO: The Secretary,
Queen Street and West Woollahra Association,
PO Box 50,
WOOLLAHRA, NSW 2025.

COUNCIL, SPARE THAT TREE

Committee member Rowan Beckett, who devised the association's tree planting scheme, has written on behalf of a number of local residents, asking Woollahra Council to spare a tree at the north-west end of Victoria Avenue.

Council is believed to be considering removing the tree because the pavement has been raised by its roots.

Pleading for a reprieve, Miss Beckett points out that the well-grown attractive tree camouflages an ugly block of flats and screens its residents from the traffic and noise of Queen Street.

Instead of cutting down the tree, she suggests cutting back the pavement.

HOME SCHEME UP FOR APPROVAL

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has now submitted to Woollahra Council detailed plans of the old people's home which it proposes to build in Queen Street, opposite Holdsworth Street.

A previous scheme was rejected by the Council, and the Society is now planning that the main building should be partially hidden by trees, and have extensive gardens in front.

Vehicle access would be at the rear and because of the narrow access, this part of the plan is causing concern among some local residents.

Concern is also being felt that the plans do not provide adequately roomy individual rooms for the old people who will live in them.

Our view as an association is that we have no objection in principle to the use of the site for an old people's home.

However, we feel we must use as much influence as we can to ensure that the buildings and the use of the site are aesthetically pleasing and sympathetic with surrounding development.

The association's committee decided last month that the president, Leo Schofield, should seek to have a discussion with the chairman of the Council's building committee, Alderman Taylor, to analyse the new scheme and object to any parts of it which conflicted with the architectural principles which the association was formed to foster.

AMBITIOUS PLAN FOR PLAYGROUND

With great determination and enterprise, a group of local people are hoping to turn the Holdsworth Street playground into a true community centre offering facilities for all age groups.

This follows the success of the Christmas experiment in which about 370 children used the playground for a great variety of stimulating activity which relieved a lot of the strain on parents keeping them amused through the long holiday.

The committee which persuaded Woollahra Council to let them manage the playground for the holidays now plans to form the Woollahra Children's and Community Association.

This new association would appoint a full time professional director to run the centre. It would also seek to have it extended, at a cost of approximately \$55,000, with more covered space, both internal and external.

The broad aim of the centre would be to provide facilities for crafts, recreation social and educational facilities for all residents of the area, not only children, although the youngsters would still be especially catered for.

The committee says that the Christmas pilot programme showed that the playground's existing facilities severely limit its usefulness and point to the need for the extension of existing buildings, more grassed areas and facilities such as a splash pool.

The Queen Street Association applauds the embryo Community Association and its work. Robin Brampton, vice president of the Queen Street Association, has agreed to act as permanent liaison officer between the two bodies.

A public meeting will be held at the Holdsworth Street playground on Thursday, May 9, at 8 p.m. to actually form the Woollahra Children's and Community Association, adopt a constitution and elect a management committee. Local residents will be invited to join the new association at a subscription rate of \$2 a year.