



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1974

ALL SET FOR THE FAIR

Bookings are now open for stalls at Queen Street Fair, to be held this year on Saturday, November 23, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

As we went to press, we were still not certain whether we will be able to have the Moncur-Ocean Street section of Queen Street closed to traffic as well as the Moncur-Oxford Street area.

Woollahra Council has approved the additional closure, subject to police and traffic authorities agreeing, but we had not got the official nod from them when this was written.

Interest in the fair among prospective stallholders is intense and if we get the additional street closure, it may be possible to squeeze in more than the 170 stalls we had in 1973. Last year many last-minute applicants were disappointed.

If there are again too many applications this year, in deciding who gets a stall we will be seeking to keep a balance between various categories of merchandise.

We will also give special priority to applicants proposing to sell original goods and/or planning imaginative displays.

This year the organisers will make two awards for the best dressed stalls, one for charity organisations and the other for commercial stallholders.

If you were a stallholder last year, you will automatically get an application to have a stall in 1974.

New chums can either write to the Queen Street Fair Committee at Box 75 (not Box 50), PO Woollahra, or call at Anne Schofield Antiques, 46 Queen Street where forms will be available.

This year we are going to be very tough on people who set up unauthorised stalls in Queen Street on the day, and we are also taking strong measures to ensure that people serving food do not breach regulations made under the Public Health Act.

Will the fair be any different this year?

We hope not. After only two years, Queen Street Fair has become a tradition. And you don't try and change tradition.

There will be bands, and exciting things to buy, and spontaneous entertainment in the street, and balloons and lots and lots of gaiety.

Oh yes, one little change. The lack of a suitable place to spend a penny (or whatever is the decimal equivalent) will be remedied this year with some cute little mobile toilets installed in the Halls Lane and Moncur Lane area.

We trust you appreciate the added convenience.

SKID ROW DISAPPEARS (ALMOST)

Dem walls finally came tumbling down on August 16.

That was the date a very efficient Massey-Ferguson tractor-loader moved in and at last began the demolition of that unhappy collection of long-abandoned shop premises in Ocean Street, near Peaker Lane.

The demolition was carried right the way through to Alton Street to include two weatherboard houses in an even more depressing state of decay.

Following the High Court's resolution of the question of existing use rights, broadly against the owners (as reported in the last *Village Voice*), Woollahra Council in May instructed its solicitors as a matter of urgency to issue demolition orders.

The grounds were that the properties were "in such an unsightly condition as to be prejudicial to the property in, or inhabitants of, the neighbourhood of such buildings". . . a view our association has been reiterating since it was formed two years ago.

Our relief that action has at last been achieved to start clearing the site is somewhat tempered by the fact that one of the buildings has been left standing and is even again being used for commercial purposes.

Apparently relying on the High Court's decision that existing use rights have never lapsed for a service station and panel beating facility, the owners are allowing the former service station to be used as a sales centre for cheap second hand cars.

The hurried application of a coat of dresden blue paint hardly makes the structure more appealing to the eye, and we hope the Council will press home its decision that all the "Skid Row" properties be demolished.

The entire site was sold this year to another developer who is working with an architect to produce plans for the site.

This will probably take some time, and meanwhile passing down Ocean Street you now have, instead of an eyesore, a novel vista of that beautiful piece of townscape at the corner of Peaker Lane and Alton Street.

MEANWHILE, IN A PALACE IN LIBYA . . .

The association recently wrote to the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Crawford, suggesting a meeting between our architectural sub-committee and representatives of the Department of Agriculture to discuss the future of Centennial Park which it controls.

The committee had a number of suggestions to put to the Minister or his representatives and felt the neatest way would be at a meeting rather than by correspondence.

The Minister replied with a most extraordinary letter, most of which simply congratulated his department on the splendid job it was doing in the park (there are, of course, other views on this) and ended by saying he saw no point in a meeting.

Almost immediately he took off for Libya where he was to advise the government on agricultural policies.

Let's hope the Libyan Government is more amenable to suggestions from experts than the government currently in power in New South Wales!

ACTION PLAN ALMOST READY

A report from the association's architectural sub-committee

The association's architectural sub-committee, which includes several distinguished local architects, has been very busy in the past few weeks preparing an outline action plan for Queen Street and West Woollahra.

In the next few weeks this will be submitted to Woollahra Council to guide the council's officers in preparing their own plan for the area.

It is hoped the Council will have its plan ready for public consumption by the end of the year.

The sub-committee is examining the recent proposals of the Paddington Society and the existing Woollahra Ridge Plan to determine their relevance to West Woollahra.

Most of West Woollahra is at present zoned 2F Redevelopment. Ways of drawing a balance between the need for conservation and the natural pressures of growth will be part of our outline action plan.

The sub-committee has also begun the work of documenting and photographing major groups of buildings of high townscape value for submission to the National Trust urban committee for classification.

A CAUTION . . .

A new owner of an unrestored terrace will take great pleasure in opening up the filled-in balcony and restoring the balance of the house and its relationship with its neighbours.

When he has done this, why does he have to reverse the process at street level by replacing railings with a solid brick fence?

The sub-committee reports that there is a real threat to West Woollahra from individual property owners, often acting with the best of intentions, who restore properties in a way unsympathetic to their neighbours.

"Genuine understanding of the nature of the area and the place of the individual property in the streetscape is not understood," the committee says.

The committee lists three main intrusions in terraces where individual buildings are closely related to their neighbours.

These are sparrow-picking of brickwork, out-of-scale fences, and new brick fences (plus extras) which destroy the rhythm of existing railings.

In certain instances, brick walls are necessary. In the hands of a sensitive architect, they can work well. But in areas where there is an established pattern of

railings and picket fences, they are a disaster.

Recent examples, one in Victoria Avenue and two at the top end of Queen Street (between Waimea Avenue and Nelson Street), have upset the balance of the surrounding street with little benefit to the houses themselves.

Iron fences are not hard to come by. ~~With~~ the present "carve up" of Grafton Street and the surrounding area, many good fences are there for the asking.

The sub-committee has suggested liaison with Woollahra Council to see if some formula governing restoration can be introduced, pending drawing up of the Council's plan for the area.

A CREDIT . . .

To the owner of 24 Holdsworth Street for restoring a fine picket fence in a street not obvious for sensitivity in renovation.

HELEN KELLER SITUATION HOPEFUL

What's happening at Helen Keller Hostel?

The option to purchase the property for \$1,050,000 mentioned in the last *Village Voice* has now been granted to the preservation committee, and energetic attempts are being made to find a purchaser who would guarantee to preserve this fine Georgian-style town house.

As might be expected in the current icy financial climate, it isn't easy.

However, we have had one very promising approach from a sympathetic developer and two leading real estate agents are taking an active interest in the problem.

It would be prejudicial to say more at this stage. We hope to have more news in the next *Village Voice*.

Meanwhile a group of members of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association and sympathisers spent a very energetic afternoon early in August clearing up the building (see pictures above and on next page).

The awning which had lain twisted on the ground after the sudden retreat of the demolishers was cleared away and the windows covered with galvanised sheeting.

The next stage will be to cover the roof with galvanised sheets to prevent the elements doing any more damage to the fabric of the building.

Demolisher Keith Whatman has very generously given us his cooperation by donating the sheeting for the job, and offering free labour and transport.

It's very refreshing to find a demolisher with a sensitive interest in the cause of preservation. Many thanks, Keith.



OLD FOLKS HOME GETS THE NOD

We protested right until the last moment, but the association and local residents were unable to secure any significant architectural improvements to the proposed old people's home at 121 Queen Street.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul's plans have now been approved by Woollahra Council.

Again let us make it clear that the Queen Street Association has never had any objection in principle to the use of the site for an old people's home.

Our sole concern was that the home should harmonise aesthetically with its neighbours.

In our view the stark, institutional building planned by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will not do this, and another cause of concern is the narrow access planned at the rear of the home.

Our only consolation is that the building will be well back from the road, with gardens in the front, and its severe lines may be softened by the trees which will remain on the site.

Having lost that battle, the association is categorically opposing a proposed redevelopment for 75-81 Queen Street where a row of cottages would be replaced with a series of medical surgeries.

From the plans we have seen, the architect has made an honest attempt to produce a design in harmony with the semi-residential character of this part of Queen Street.

However the proposal is contrary to the zoning and as no parking facilities are included, we consider it would add to the already congested parking situation in Queen Street.

The association is also watching very carefully proposals for the redevelopment of the service station on the corner of Queen Street and Victoria Avenue.

When we went to press, this matter was in the hands of our architectural sub-committee who were examining the plans.

PLEASE BE KIND TO OUR TREES

Very little has yet been done to implement the tree planting scheme evolved by one of our staunchest members, Rowan Beckett, and adopted by Woollahra Council two years ago.

The association is continuing to press for action, but we realise that the Council needs the support of residents in the matter of preservation and upkeep.

"Many West Woollahra residents, once trees have been planted outside their properties, have left it at that," said the

association's president, Leo Schofield, in his annual report.

"Other people have seen that trees have been watered, fertilised and in some cases planted around with annuals.

"This effort on the part of a few civic-minded residents has resulted in a fine show and rapid establishment of newly planted trees.

"I would like to urge all residents, and especially members of this association, to greater efforts to improve the streetscape, to deter vandals, and to supplement the Council's work with a little effort and imagination of their own."

ASSOCIATION SPREADS EAST

It's rather late to be mentioning our annual meeting in May, but *Village Voice* would like to welcome three new committee members elected on the night.

They are Marion Cowper, Robin Broadbent and Marcel Piat.

The meeting passed unanimously three resolutions to amend the association's constitution, the most important of which extends the area covered by the association to Edgecliff Road.

We are now campaigning actively for new members in that area. To those who have joined us since the annual meeting, we also say welcome.

OH (POOH!) CALCUTTA!

We could fill a whole newsletter on the subject of garbage. Last Christmas, Smith Street constituted a scene which would rival a street in Calcutta with the amount of garbage dumped there, and a considerable health hazard was caused.

Earlier this year we wrote to Woollahra Council pointing out some specific inefficiencies in garbage collection and requesting that, if possible, more forceful action be taken to prevent unauthorised dumping of rubbish.

We appreciate that it is a problem to catch the "phantom dumper" who lurks in the night. Nevertheless, his existence is a fact of life, and when he has struck we can look only to the Council to tidy up after him.

A difficult garbage disposal problem is always caused by Queen Street Fair, accentuated this year by the fact that the new incinerator being used by the Council will be out of action for some time, due to technical trouble.

We appeal to everybody connected with the fair to minimise the amount of rubbish created, and to see that rubbish is disposed of in the bins provided and not left on the street.

This year every stallholder will be issued with a chaff bag to collect the rubbish and waste they wish to leave behind after the fair.

**THE QUEEN STREET AND
WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION**

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

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

Subscription: \$3 a year. Life membership \$25.

President: Leo Schofield

Vice President: Robin Brampton

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

Treasurer: Neville Marsh

Committee: Robin Broadbent, Marion Cowper, George Freedman, Michael Magnus, Marcel Piat, John Spatchurst.

Queen Street Fair Committee: Vivienne Sharpe, Robin Brampton, Christopher Deans, Michael Magnus, Marcel Piat.

Honorary Auditor: Michael Gilovitz

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).

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US

Every home in the area covered by the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association gets a copy of *Village Voice*.

If you're reading this and you're not a member of the association, please join us by filling in the coupon below.

We need your support, both moral and financial, in our constant fight to preserve the architectural heritage of our area and ensure that it always remains a pleasant place to live.

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

ENCLOSED IS MY SUBSCRIPTION OF \$3 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.**

OLD ROAD SCHEMES NEVER DIE!

By a Correspondent

It is a source of constant amazement that the Government of New South Wales can function at all.

Any decision which emerges from its bureaucratic bumbling should be greeted with acclaim; not for the decision itself but for the mere fact that it was ever made!

Despite all that has been said over recent years about the Jersey Road extension, the Government continues in its ponderous way to consider and reconsider the matter.

When he was asked to consider the widening of Brown Street, Paddington, Mr. Commissioner Bunning not only advised against it, but also recommended against the construction of any major roads in Paddington.

Nevertheless the Jersey Road extension was inserted in the Woollahra Planning Scheme at the request of the Department of Main Roads. The Government appointed Mr. Commissioner Abraham to report on this proposal and in 1969 he recommended that it be abandoned.

The Department of Main Roads has now reversed its original thinking on the proposal and has indicated that it will do nothing to further it.

The Department is of the opinion that the extension, if built, is unlikely to be proclaimed as a main road and has said that the resumption of properties and construction of the road are the responsibility of the Woollahra Municipal Council.

Woollahra Council has consistently opposed the proposal and has requested successive responsible ministers to delete it from the Woollahra Planning Scheme.

In March this year the now responsible Minister, Sir John Fuller, Minister for Planning and Environment, informed the Council that "discussions have recently

been held at senior level, between the State Planning Authority and the Department of Main Roads concerning the protection and responsibility for acquisition of land shown as required for County Road or County road widening in Planning Schemes.

"It was agreed that all County road proposals indicated in Planning Schemes but not so accepted by the Department, be examined and reported on by the Department in the light of the Sydney Area Transportation Study Report.

"This will involve further consideration of the Jersey Road extension and clarification of its status in relation to the Main Roads Development Plan."

Woollahra Council was so alarmed that it immediately sought an interview with the Minister. The council's representatives and Mr. John Barraclough MLA were ultimately received by Sir John and the chairman of the State Planning Authority on June 18.

Both the Council and Mr. Barraclough put their views quite strongly to the Minister.

And his decision?

What else but another enquiry!

The Minister decided that the Chairman of the State Planning Authority should confer with the Commissioner of Main Roads and report back to the Minister before any decision is made.

Unbelievable as it may seem, our indigenous version of the Imperial Chinese civil service will now re-examine and reconsider at interminable length and considerable public expense this orphan of a scheme which two previous public enquiries have recommended against and which is opposed by both Woollahra Council and by the residents of Paddington-Woollahra.

The whole thing defies commonsense. Would it be too much to ask the Minister not to make a decision - God forbid - but to tell us why he won't make a decision?

HAVE YOU ANY OLD PICTURES?

The association would like to start collecting material relating to the history of the West Woollahra area, particularly photographs.

In published work there is a great lack of pictures of Queen Street in earlier times, and any help members and friends can give would be appreciated.

Photographs can be lent to us for copying and returned. We would also only seek to borrow documents such as old press cuttings for copying and then return them.

Any offers? The person to contact is the editor of *Village Voice*, Robin Brampton (357-1488 day, 32-4475 after hours).