

THE
BEECROFT
CHELTENHAM
CIVIC TRUST
STORY

THE BEECROFT CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST STORY

CONTENTS

THE CIVIC TRUST STORY

THE BEECROFT CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST:

How it Began
Why it was Needed
How it Works

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

WHY YOU SHOULD ACT THE TIDE IS TURNING

APPENDICES:

Constitution of the B .C .C .T .
B.C.C.T. Foundation Committee 1964/5
B.C.C.T. Committee 1968/9

THE CIVIC TRUST STORY

Since the first white man landed here, the natural beauty of the Sydney area has been subject to a process of creeping destruction; destruction of what has been described by a prominent visiting geographer as "the most pleasant place in the world to live."

During the past ten years, this destruction rate having changed from "creeping" to "galloping," many citizens realise that they must act and fight vigorously to preserve the remnants of what was an unbelievably rich heritage.

This booklet has been prepared to tell the story of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust, formed in 1964 by the residents of the area to help themselves in the fight against developers, government instrumentalities and any others who attempt to spoil the amenities and beauty of the Beecroft Cheltenham district.

It is hoped that this publication will not only encourage more residents to join the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust, but will assist other Australians to form similar associations in many places throughout our country.

The Civic Trust movement in the U.K., now only ten years old, has over 600 individual local associations and societies throughout Britain contributing to its success. The knowledge of its achievements and aims together with information willingly supplied by the British Civic Trust was of great assistance in the formation of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust.

The more Civic Trusts and Civic Trust members we have in the Sydney area, in N.S.W. and in Australia, the more the wishes of those seeking to preserve natural beauty will be respected by Governments (Local, State and Federal) and public bodies.

The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust will be pleased to answer any questions from prospective members and assist in every way possible the formation of similar organisations in other areas and to co-operate with those existing bodies which have similar ideals.

THE BEECROFT CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST

THIS IS HOW IT BEGAN: On one fine Spring day in 1963, residents of one of Beecroft's many attractive tree-lined streets noted a number of very large poles laid on the road verge, and a number of very deep holes dug ready to receive the poles. Several engineering-wise residents of the street realised that the poles were for high tension electricity mains, the erection of which would mean cutting down, or at the least, ruination of a number of Fine gum trees lining the street.

Overnight the affected residents were alerted and the Sydney County Council, the electricity supply authority concerned, was inundated with requests to divert its supply line to save the trees. Local Members of Parliament became involved, the press sent its reporters and photographers, and feeling ran so high that Departmental engineers held a street meeting with the residents on the site.

The result - a simple solution. It was found that with very minor variations to cable lay-out, and the lopping of only a few branches, the line could still go through as intended, sparing the trees and the character of the street - and the expense of tree felling was saved.

The experience gained on this occasion, and the train of thought then started led to the formation of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust. It was realised that with community vigilance and organisation, the co-operation of the administrative and engineering departments of the various public utilities could be enlisted to prevent often needless casualties to civic amenities.

In many instances, since the formation of this Trust, it has been found that by merely drawing the attention of senior administrators to what appear to be impending ravages, co-operation (and often most sympathetic co-operation) has been forthcoming.

Following representations by the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust, the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board has co-operated when running service mains through the district. In some cases removal of tress could not be avoided, but in others this authority has gone to exceptional trouble to conserve bushland, leaving areas little the worse for its operations.

The Electricity Commission of N.S.W. has also co-operated with the Trust by diverting a high tension power transmission route to avoid a bushland picnic area.

These three authorities, the Sydney County Council, the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board and the Electricity Commission of N.S.W. have established valuable examples and precedents in co-operation of public utilities with community wishes and this Trust is pleased to be in a position to pay them this tribute.

THIS IS WHY IT IS NEEDED

Almost too late, many residents of Sydney suburbs to-day realise that they are being overwhelmed and their natural amenities are being destroyed by the modern juggernaut - the "developer."

The community's only defence against this onslaught is through its Government and Local Government representatives - Members of Parliament, Aldermen and Councillors; elected leaders, who too frequently are either apathetic, contemptuous or misguided in appraisal of losses suffered, or about to be suffered, by their constituents - in the "sacred" names of - "Progress and Development"

It is an unfortunate feature of our system of government that the lines of communication from citizen through Parliamentary or Local Government representatives to the staff in whom administrative power is vested, are often so tenuous that it can take years for an urgent protest to effectively reach the right quarter - and the protesting citizen frequently does not know of the particular onslaught against which he could endeavour to act before an irrevocable Government or Local Government approval has been given.

The developer, however, well schooled in "Public Relations", is frequently on intimate terms with those who influence, as well as those who implement, Government and Local Government policy.

But the developer is not the sole destroyer. He is usually denied opportunities to profit from the "Development" of public reserves and parklands. However, Government Departments, to an ever increasing extent, alienate these parklands to "profit" by saving the costs of acquisition of land for roads, power lines etc.

At a recent national conference in Sydney of the Australian Institute of Park Administration, Mr. K.G. Hunter, Perth's Director of Parks and Gardens, said: "Too often freeway builders take the easy way out - straight through parkland. They don't have to pay compensation, but money cannot buy this land in terms of its worth to the people. Only public pressure can save bushland areas when outside bodies including the Commonwealth Government, treat them only as building sites."

Pressures, to which our State Government yielded, resulted in abandonment of the Cumberland County Council's Green Belt -- a crescent of open space with minimum development linking Kuringai Chase with National Park.

The pressures in Britain are not so persuasive - or the Civic Trust and similar movements more militant - for in November, 1967, the English magazine "Time & Tide" stated: "Between Greater London and the Outer Metropolitan area there is the green belt, and in areas up to the outer south-east are green sectors and country zones where it would be of little use developers casting eyes in future years."

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

On its inception, the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust had "teething" troubles, primarily due to the great number of matters on which it was compelled to act immediately - obviously because the Beecroft and Cheltenham community had not previously been served by an organisation with similar aims.

During the four years since formation the movement has consolidated, gained strength and experience, and now, we believe, has justified itself to the community which it serves and won respect in Government and Local Government circles.

It is always kept in mind that the Trust is not an end in itself, but a means to an end - a piece of machinery for the preservation and improvement, in the aesthetic sense, of our neighbourhood and its amenities.

In earlier days, with ample land and (apparently) unlimited native bushland around Sydney, there appeared to be no need for such a movement. Now with the tremendous growth in metropolitan population and with government planning aimed at further and greater future increases, land has become scarce and valuable.

The Civic Trust Movement is now of utmost importance, if only to ensure that the small amount of open space now remaining in the Sydney environs, inadequate as it is for present needs, is preserved for the multitude which it is planned to house in this metropolis in the future.

POSITIVE ACTION IS NECESSARY. To be effective action should, and often must, be taken at all levels - State Government, Local Government and State Government instrumentalities; and often, of course, with private citizens. At the time of writing, a lovely and prized strip of bushland in the heart of the district, known as Devlin's Creek Reserve, threatened with extinction by a proposed new expressway, is the subject of much action on the part of the Trust, and it is hoped that efforts for its preservation may not be in vain.

In addition to representations to all persons and bodies concerned, the Trust has drawn up and circulated a petition calling on the State Government to take action to prevent despoliation of this reserve by its Department of Main Roads.

The keynote is initiative, followed by dynamic and imaginative action, in place of pessimistic hand-wringing.

Though some fights will be lost, many will be won. Without effective citizens' organisations such as the Trust many quite needless civic disasters will occur, simply by default. The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust knows that several undesirable types of development have failed to mature due to its activities.

Without some such organisation, the ordinary citizen is at a complete disadvantage, a lone voice in the wilderness, easily ignored or brushed aside. All he can do in any adverse situation is to write to, or interview, his Council or local Government member. With a strong citizen organisation to represent him the position is entirely different.

No Council, Member of Parliament, or public utility can lightly brush aside representation from such a body.

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

One of the chief objectives of the Trust, as laid down in its constitution, is effective communications, aimed at keeping residents fully and accurately informed on those events, pending activities and trends which affect district amenities - thus the community can be better poised for any necessary action.

An appreciation of natural beauty with attractive and sympathetic surrounding development by Government and Local Government is sought. (If this aim were successful, the activities of Civic Trusts could become almost unnecessary).

To achieve unanimous acceptance of this new "public vision" also necessitates asking some residents to re-appraise their attitude to their neighbourhood. It can mean, for instance, suggesting to some, who come from older suburbs, conditioned to a "bricks, mortar and concrete environment," and to whom such things as trees and natural beauty have hitherto had little meaning, to stop and reflect on the essential element in the district which first attracted them; and then to enter into the spirit of the area to preserve and better it.

Tragically, and so often, the first action of new owners of a beautifully wooded block, is to strip the entire site of its timber in preparation for building. After building, realising the desirability of some trees, the next step often is to plant' exotics, which, while having their place, are frequently poor substitutes for the original natives.

Developers have been permitted to contribute significantly to this denudation because the minimum building block size in the area is but 7,500 square feet, too small for the substantial houses now being built - and trees. The B.C.C.T. is currently pressing the Hornsby Shire Council, the Minister for Local Government and the State Planning Authority to have this minimum increased to 10,000 square feet.

It is a strange and sad paradox that, in flocking to a locality to share its charm, so many contribute to the destruction of the very beauty which had attracted them.

To so cultivate and mould public thought and opinions as to engender a heightened concept of civic amenities; and thus to improve community living standards - this is a long term and idealistic project, but, we think, our most important.

WHY YOU SHOULD ACT.

TOO LITTLE - TOO LATE: OR IS IT? It is very nearly so, but not quite. What speculators have done to the shores of Sydney Harbour, compared with what could have been done is sheer tragedy. Not only has the harbourside suffered. It is now almost impossible to enjoy views of our metropolitan coastline, because the cliff tops, and much of the beach area, have been built out. A glance at a Sydney metropolis land use map will reveal little "open space" in the twenty miles which separate Kuringai Chase on the north, from National Park on the south. And a study of proposals outlined in the report of the State Planning Authority of October, 1967, entitled "Sydney Region - Growth & Change", reveals that much of this minute area of "open space" is destined for destruction or scarring, by government instrumentalities.

In this report it is stated (on page 75) by our State Planning Authority, that there are "pressures to use undeveloped areas as routes for communications systems."

Sydney was once set in a natural forest of some of the most beautiful bushland in the whole of Australia. But this has been almost systematically destroyed till there are now but scattered remnants in the metropolitan area; and if some developers, public utilities, and organisations had their way, even these few remnants would soon disappear to be replaced by bricks and concrete.

Recently the Sydney "Sun" had this Editorial comment:-

"We are living in the remorseless age of the bulldozer and concrete mixer..... In far too many cases, beautiful features such as trees, rocks and bushes are seen only as obstacles to progress. In less time than it takes to register protest they are ripped from their settings and dumped out of sight and another lovely area is ready for its coating of concrete and its banks of bricks....."

An occurrence typical of this recently occurred in the Beecroft Cheltenham area, when during subdivision of a bushland area a noble blackbutt, perfect in form and of classic beauty, over a hundred feet high and estimated to have been between 150 and 200 years old, only very slightly in the way of road works and which could easily have been preserved as a land-mark by a little thought and re-alignment of works, was razed by the developers. At the request of this Trust, Hornsby Shire Council has named this new street in the Hooker-Rex Woodlawn Estate (Cheltenham Heights) - "Blackbutt Avenue "

BUT THE TIDE IS TURNING. Ponder on that vast, dreary and featureless desert of bricks and concrete fanning west, south and east of Sydney one great "slurb", to borrow a word used by the R.A.I.A. (Royal Australian Institute of Architects).

If ever there was an indictment of the unrestricted rampages of "developers"; of the inaptitude of Governments and Councils; and of abject acquiescence on the part of a community - it is this.

Even if some residents, becoming accustomed to this type of environment, can ignore or even grow to like a "bricks and mortar desert" can make driving through such an area a most unenjoyable and tiring task.

But there is evidence of an awakening community interest in the aesthetics of our environment, and of efforts in many quarters to nurture this interest.

The contribution of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects with their now famous "outrage" campaign shocked many people into looking at their surroundings with clearer and critical eyes.

At a meeting of the Constitutional Association of Australia, Mr. Justice McClemens is reported as saying:-

"We in Australia lead the world in destroying everything we lay our hands on....."

"There is no race in the world which is as bulldozer happy and axe-happy as we are....."

A serious current threat to our metropolitan environment is the proliferation of home unit blocks. Indiscriminately and clandestinely thrust into living areas without regard to the wishes and general amenities (privacy, light, air etc.) of existing residents - in fact, apparently without regard to anything except the interests of developers - home unit blocks too frequently are a major and serious intrusion into the lives of defenceless citizens.

In Beecroft, before the formation of the Trust, an area was zoned for home units, by the Shire Council, and with the approval of the local Councillors of the time, but it was a shock to most residents when building of the first block commenced.

Actions by the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust have resulted in preventing more than one additional block being erected to date, and in having an area rezoned to prevent home unit construction, but our community and its Trust at present can depend only on sympathetic actions by its Councillors, a minority of whom are elected from the area.

It is known that there are elements within Councils which appear to look with more favour on the representations of developers, than on the wishes and interests of residents. A statement typifying this attitude was made to a meeting of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust Committee by a former Hornsby Shire President - "We must consider the developer - after all - he has to make a living."

A pronouncement, which it is hoped will prove to be of historic significance regarding the right of residents to determine the type of their environment was made by Mr Justice Hardie in the N.S.W. Land and Valuation Court, in the case of *Wilson v Kogarah Municipal Council* (24.2.66) (S.M.Herald), "Failure to provide some adequate machinery to reverse erroneous decisions of councils granting planning consent will put it beyond the power of the community to call a halt to still more and more development of a type which must ultimately destroy, the amenity of many residential areas"

With the backing of such a Statement it seems both reasonable and necessary that citizens should organise to protect their environment from undesired development, and put their case, for protection from those who seek to injure them, solidly to their Parliament for corrective and protective legislation. This is in fact what the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust has already done, but although granted the concession, by the Minister for Local Government of being allowed to lodge objections to the Hornsby Shire Planning Scheme (there is no present provision in the Local Government Act for community bodies to protest against Town Planning provisions), there is to date no indication of Government action to legislate for citizen rights to seek reversal of council decisions.

This, Australia's first Civic Trust, with membership of approximately 500, has done much, in the four years since foundation, to put the case to Government and Local Government for the survival of what remains of our passive and defenceless natural beauty and for the citizen who wishes to continue to enjoy this natural beauty and other desirable civic amenities.

The British Civic Trust, a national body now supported by more than 600 individual organisations, has not only assisted the formation of many new Civic Trusts (stated to be increasing at the rate of three per week) but has recently, through its President, Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P., had a Civic Amenities Act passed by the British Parliament which provides new conservation and community amenity safeguards.

From its earliest days, members of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust have been aware that this was a pilot project. It has always been felt that the movement could spread to many other areas with much resultant benefit to our society.

In the year following its foundation the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust assisted the formation of the West Pennant Hills Civic Trust.

In the following year, the Parramatta Trust (formed in 1963 primarily to ensure historic buildings preservation) altered its constitution providing for activities "similar to a Civic Trust." The Hunters Hill Trust, formed at the beginning of 1968, is referring to the constitution of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust in forming its own. To its Fourth Annual General Meeting, the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust invited representatives of these trusts; also The Balmain Association and The Paddington Society; when discussions took place which resolved that a New South Wales Civic Trust should be formed.

Subsequent meetings were called of interested bodies, when it was decided that a Civic Trusts Council of New South Wales be formed and that its inaugural meeting should take place on 2nd July, 1968, at Parramatta, when the following Associations decided to become foundation members:

Avalon Preservation Society	Balmain Association
Becroft Cheltenham Civic Trust	Central Coast Civic Trust
Paddington Society	Parramatta Trust
West Pennant Hills Civic Trust	

The Becroft Cheltenham Civic Trust is honoured that Mr. W .H. Matthews was chosen as the first President of this Association.

BEECROFT-CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST - CONSTITUTION

1. Name: The name of the Society shall be Beecroft-Cheltenham Civic Trust.
2. Objects: The objects of the Trust shall be:-
 - (a) The preservation of the existing village character and the natural beauty of Beecroft and Cheltenham.
 - (b) To express in the appropriate quarter the point of view of the Beecroft and Cheltenham residents with regard to any proposed development in the Beecroft-Cheltenham area,
 - (c) To work with and assist the local government in any efforts to improve and beautify the locality and where appropriate to instigate such improvements,
 - (d) To endeavour to achieve the above objects by all means, including:-
 - i. Dissemination of information to residents, councillors and others.
 - ii. Public meetings.
 - iii. Exhibitions.
 - iv. Lectures.
 - v. Publications.
 - vi. Public relations activities, including news releases.
 - (e) To co-operate with, and to seek the co-operation of the National Trust of N.S.W. and fauna and flora protection societies;

3. Membership: Any resident of Beecroft or Cheltenham, or any other person acceptable to the Committee, may, upon payment of the appropriate subscription, become a member of the Trust. Membership shall lapse if the subscription is unpaid six months after it is due. There shall be two grades of membership.

- (a) Senior Members - 21 years of age and over.
- (b) Junior Members - Under 21 years of age.

Eligibility to vote belong to all members, both Senior and Junior, provided the Junior Members are 17 years of age or over, and in the instance of husband and wife membership, both shall be entitled to a full vote.

4. Finance:

- (a) Annual subscriptions shall be:-
 - i. Senior Members - \$2 per year.
 - ii. Junior Members - 50 cents per year.
 - iii. For Husband and Wife Membership - \$3 per year.
- (b) The financial year shall be 1st January to 31st December each year.
- (c) If the subscription of a new member is paid after 30th September in any year, it shall cover the period until 31st December in the following year.
- (d) The accounts of the Trust shall be audited before the Annual General Meeting.

5. Meetings: An Annual General Meeting shall be held in or about March of each year to receive the Committee's report and the Auditor's report and to elect members of the Committee and to appoint a honorary auditor or auditors who shall not be members of the Committee. The Committee shall decide when ordinary meetings of the Trust shall be held and shall give at least seven days' notice of such meeting to all members. Special General Meeting of the Trust shall be held at the request of ten or more members.

The quorum at a General Meeting of the Trust shall be twelve.

Committee meetings shall be held not less than one every second month or more often as required.

6. Officers:
- (a) Ten Committee members shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting. These ten Committee members shall at their first meeting elect from among themselves, a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and a Treasurer, all of whom shall relinquish office at the date of the Annual General Meeting.
 - (b) Within three months of the Annual General Meeting this Committee shall elect two additional committee members from the Trust membership who shall have all the rights accruing to a Committee member and shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.
 - (c) No President shall be eligible to hold office for more than two consecutive years.
 - (e) The Committee may appoint a Patron or Patrons.
7. Committee:
- (a) The Committee, which will be responsible for the operation of the Trust, will consist of the following - President, 2 Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, plus Committee Members (7). A quorum for a Committee Meeting shall be six (6).
 - (b) The Executive shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer, and they shall be empowered to act as necessary in the interests of the Trust in the intervening period between Committee Meetings. The quorum for an executive meeting shall be three (3).
 - (c) Not less than three Committee Members shall come from Beecroft and not less than three from Cheltenham.

- (c) The Committee shall have the power to co-opt members of the Trust for specific purposes, but such co-opted members will not have the power to vote at Committee Meetings.
 - (d) If a Committee Member shall be absent from 3 consecutive Committee Meetings without apology, he or she shall cease to be a member of the Committee.
 - (f) The Committee shall have the power to fill a vacancy on the Committee and the one person so appointed shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.
8. Appeals: The Committee shall have the power to make appeals, solicit donations and canvass monies for carrying out the objects of the Trust.
9. Expenses of Administration: The Committee shall, out of monies received by the Trust, pay all proper expenses of administration and management of the Trust and shall use the residue of such monies as it thinks fit for or towards the objects of the Society. The Committee shall also have the power to open a Bank Account, cheques for which must be signed by any two of the President, Secretary or Treasurer.
10. Amendments to the Constitution: Amendments to the Constitution shall be made at a General Meeting held not less than seven days after all members have been notified by written notice of the proposed amendments and of the meeting. The decision of the meeting shall be made by a simple majority.
11. Winding Up: In the event of winding up of the Trust, the available funds of the Trust shall be transferred to such one or more charitable or public bodies having object similar or reasonably similar to those herein before declared.

BEECROFT CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST FOUNDATION COMMITTEE 1964/5

Mr. E.J. Richards	President
Miss M.B. Byles	Vice President
Mr. W.H. Matthews	Vice President
Mr. F.R. Barnett	Hon. Secretary
Mr. R.A.L. Green	Hon. Treasurer
Mrs S.M. Manion	Mrs. O.E. Rowlands
Mr. M.A. Brown	Mr. R. Kingsford-Smith
Mr. J.F. Noble	Mr. E.B. Penman
Mr. D.W. Pulsford	

BEECROFT CHELTENHAM CIVIC TRUST COMMITTEE 1968/9.

Mr. G.C. Addison	President
Mr. K. Thornton	Vice President
Mr. P Brooke	Vice President
Mr. J. Noble	Hon. Treasurer
Mrs J. Stevenson	Correspondence Secretary
Mr. L.J. Wallace	Minute Secretary
Mr. C. Krauss	Mr. J. Holt
Mr. W.H. Matthews	Mr. W. Freeburn
Mrs O.E. Rowlands	Miss O. Dunk