

regional round-up

Our executive director takes a tour of the New South Wales National Trust properties



Left: The workshop at Woodford Academy with the Blue Mountains Branch and the Woodford Sub-Committee; Right: The indomitable National Trust "Beast" sets out.
Top: John Neish (end) with Sumi Thambyrajah (second from left), and members of the Lachlan Branch at the Parkes Observatory

On October 28, 2008, the National Trust (NSW)'s official station wagon (the "Beast" for short) started west to visit each and every branch and property of the National Trust in NSW. Loaded with fresh writing charts and a suitcase filled with pens, cards, and the all-important Minties (for when attention starts to lag!), the Beast was a willing accomplice of its passengers, including recently appointed National Trust (NSW) Executive Director John Neish.

The Mission: To discover how the Trust's members, volunteers and staff work, what they see as the future of the Trust both for the membership and Trust properties, and what help they need to work more effectively in their local areas and on their properties. With that in mind, the goal was to cover every highway and byway of the State to visit with and learn from the people who make up the backbone of the organisation, and who drive its complicated machinery.

The first leg of the trusty Beast's tour was through the Central West of the State, followed by the Blue Mountains region, the north of NSW, the Hunter region, Sydney Metropolitan and then to the south of NSW. So far, there have been visits and workshops with 11 regional groups, 19 property-linked Friends groups, volunteer groups, management committees and advisory committees, and 16 properties.

The primary message heard from the Trust members was the need for the Trust to lead the way in protecting our heritage, from continuing to fight local threats to developing broader advocacy campaigns. The Trust's leading role in heritage advocacy was felt to be especially needed now to combat the effects of the recent planning changes which threaten places of heritage and environmental significance.

There was also the strong message that effective and on-going support is required for the work of Trust members, volunteers and staff throughout the state. Ideas floated point towards improving communication lines between the Trust in Sydney and the regional and metropolitan networks, and instituting the right management and internal policy framework to provide this support.

Linked to this was the need for the Trust to develop resources to take care of the conservation, development and staffing needs of its properties. Coming through

loud and clear was that attention is needed to providing immediate and ongoing funding for essential conservation works of the properties and their collections. Funds raised locally should support local activity either for a National Trust property, or branch activity. There was also general agreement that a proportion of the funds raised could support Sydney office costs where the level of fundraising permits this.

Education of both the community and the young was felt to be a vital role of the Trust with new strategies required to develop existing and new programs to teach younger generations about their Australian heritage.

There was also a cry to reinvigorate the Trust's membership by attracting the younger generations, including a heartfelt plea to "Get more men!!" from a certain group of ladies who shall remain nameless. But this issue certainly highlighted the Trust's dependence on its ageing volunteer and member base and the need to introduce sensitive succession planning measures as increasingly onerous duties become difficult for existing members and volunteers.

The Beast and its passengers plan to complete their tour of the entire network in February. Then the work of pulling together the information gathered into a Draft Strategic Plan will begin. The draft Plan, which will be released for comment to members, will incorporate all aspects of the Trust's operation, management and governance with detailed strategies and action plans for implementation. The draft will be submitted to the Board to consider and develop over the months April to August with a view to implementation in the following financial year.

As the Beast has constantly been hearing from those who have come to tell their stories, there is no magic pill to do what has to be done across the National Trust organisation in NSW. It will take time, it will require additional resources and most of all it will need the wholehearted support of members, supporters, volunteers and staff to reinvigorate the Trust.

In the meantime, there is still much more of the State to travel, more properties and committees to meet and more information to gather. It is the dedicated Trust volunteers, members and staff who have inspired this journey, and it will be they who help shape the way the Trust survives and succeeds into the future.

Sumi Thambyrajah

executive director's message (continued from page 3)

optimise our brand, strengthen our regional networks and place our 3 core tenets – Advocacy, Conservation and Education – at the centre of our mission.

In the context of the restructure we remain committed to operating with fiscal responsibility firmly front of mind. To this end, we are exploring the goal of doubling revenues over the next 5 years. This will require a range of measures that include supporting and empowering staff and committees to build their capacity to generate revenues and help ensure the Trust's sustainability.

The draft outcomes of 2020 will be available on the Trust's website in the first half of 2009 at www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au. I welcome members' feedback.

There are many challenges for the Trust at this time, ranging from recent changes to the legislative framework for heritage protection, to the current

financial climate. However, with our new strategic direction in place, and with the support of our greatest assets – membership, Committees, Friends, volunteers, staff and supporters – we are also presented with great opportunity. Together, I believe we can strengthen the Trust for the years ahead, and lay the essential groundwork for a viable future focused on realising our mission: to conserve our priceless natural, built and cultural heritage for future generations.

On this point, please note that our annual flagship event, the National Trust Heritage Festival, will run from 4-19 April this year. The Festival program is in this issue. Once again, the Festival presents hundreds of events designed to engage the community state-wide in celebrating and valuing our rich heritage and culture. I do hope you will participate.

John Neish, Executive Director

Interpreting the Green Bans at The Rocks

Protests, union strikes and an unrelenting community spirit halted redevelopment in The Rocks during the famous Green Bans of the 1970s. That slice of history has now been captured by Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority in a new interpretive installation in the historic precinct.

Located in Kendall Lane, the three storyboards bring the Green Bans to life for the millions of visitors, locals and workers who wander through The Rocks each year.

The panels feature profiles of key figures of the era: Jack Munday, NSW Secretary of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), head of The Rocks Residents Action Group, Nita McCrae, and Owen Magee, head of Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority.

It was in the early 1970s that Jack Munday became a national figure. As a union leader he was instrumental in organising social protests against development in various parts of Sydney, including The Rocks.

"The protest in The Rocks didn't start because of overdevelopment, it started because the people were going to be turfed out ... they were fighting for somewhere to live," Jack Munday says.

The union, which claimed a massive 90 per cent membership among labourers at the time, banned its members from working in The Rocks, effectively stopping any demolition.

The battle for The Rocks came to a head when a developer using non-union labour broke The Rocks Green Ban by commencing demolition of old garages on Playfair Street in October 1973.

"When they used scab labour ... we warned them not to do it," Mr Munday recounts. "When they did we stopped work on all of Sydney's building sites and marched down on The Rocks."

The police response, the ensuing scenes and the large number of arrests – including of Jack Munday – provoked widespread media coverage and commentary. Government and developers cast the Green Bans as undemocratic and provocative action by a militant union.

However, the widespread community support for the Green Bans demonstrated a commonly shared view that local residents had little voice in planning and development processes.

"Jack and the green ban crusaders recognised that as buildings were knocked down, whole neighbourhoods would also be lost," said Robert Domm, CEO of Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

"Today, the character of The Rocks is derived largely from the historic buildings left in the area.

"If not for Jack Munday and others like him, many of Sydney's wonderful historic buildings would have been lost forever, and The Rocks would have looked much like the rest of Sydney's CBD," said Mr Domm.

Step forward to 2009 and a pedestrian-friendly area with limited vehicle access has been constructed on Argyle Street between George and Harrington streets. Renamed Jack Munday Place, the pedestrian quarter marks the location of the Green Bans and is now home to a new farmers' market every Friday and Saturday.

"The naming of part of the street, along with the new story panels, commemorate the heroic conservation efforts of the past," said Mr Domm.

"Jack Munday Place and the panels will be a permanent reminder of how community rights that we take for granted today, came about from the struggles of a dedicated few."

The panels form part of the Authority's award winning* heritage interpretation strategy, which has seen a number of other installations in The Rocks. These include large scale murals at Gloucester Street and Brown Bear Lane, life-sized steel caricatures of The Rocks Push in Suez Canal, and an image of an orphaned Cadigal boy who was taken in by white settlers.

More interpretations will be installed over the next 10 years as improvement, restoration and maintenance works are completed throughout The Rocks. Planned installations include reinstating a sentry box at Dawes Point and the interpretation of a 150-year-old colonial street discovered buried below the former Mariners' Church at 100 George Street.

* Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority's Interpretation Strategy won a 2008 National Trust Heritage Award for Interpretation and Presentation.



Image: New storyboards, large scale murals and life-sized steel caricatures bring the colourful stories of The Rocks to life for visitors.

Sydney's shopping icon has expanded to include The Rocks Farmers' Market on a Friday and Saturday, and an even bigger and better weekend market with more stalls and a dedicated designers' section.

The Rocks Farmers' Market
10am – 3pm Fridays, 9am – 3pm Saturdays
Jack Munday Place (Cnr Argyle and George Streets)

The Rocks Weekend Market
10am – 5pm Saturdays and Sundays
Playfair and George Streets

The Rocks MARKETS
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EVERY FRIDAY, SATURDAY & SUNDAY

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