At the Licensing Court yesterday, a renewal of licence was granted to William Tory Dickson of the Bulli Family Hotel, Mr Lysaght appearing for applicant.

Tuesday, 30 August 1898

The Coal Trade - Shipments of coal at the port of Bellambi during last week amounted to 5970 tons, of which 1080 tons were consigned to Adelaide and the balance to Sydney.

For the fortnight ended Saturday last, South Bulli Colliery worked 812 days.

The Southern Coal Company’s patent shoot erected on its jetty Port Kembla continues to work very satisfactorily. It was again successfully used at the end of last week in the case of the steamer Rakanoa, which took in 3000 tons for Fiji. The Rakanoa is one of those large boats which without this shoot could not commence loading at low tide until they had taken in a certain quantity of cargo sufficient to lower them in the water so as to enable them to go under the ordinary shoot; but by means of this contrivance she was enabled to commence loading and thereby saved 70 or 80 pounds. The shoot is capable of serving vessels 15 ft higher than those reached by the ordinary shoot.

The steamer Cloncurry arrived at Port Kembla yesterday to load 3,500 tons of coal. The large steamer Larnaca and the Union Company’s Taleri are also due at Kembla this week for coal and coke.

HERITAGE - THE END OF THE ROAD

The amazing series of heritage debacles currently taking place in central Sydney have many lessons to teach us here in Illawarra.
As I've argued in this Bulletin before, if you can't save the Opera House as a heritage site by pulling down "the toaster" - preferably by nationalization WITHOUT compensation - then we are never going to be able to argue that any site in Wollongong is worth saving. The simple reason is that obstructionist planners will be able to say: "Is it more important than the Opera House?" And, of course, the only honest reply is: "Probably not."

Although, if they had time to read something of substance in between processing development applications, Robert Hughes' recent statement in his National Trust lecture may even give the most philistine of Wollongong's planners some pause for thought:

"Learning to value what is local is one of the means whereby a culture finds its maturity, its balance, its sense of self. It's how we find a relationship with our own history which is nobody else's history, and if we don't do that we end up not being able to say who we are. An urban culture that predicates itself chiefly on an obsession with development is not worth having. A city needs deep memory, without which it becomes merely a stage set." (Reflections, National Trust Quarterly, July, 1998, p.10)

But even philistines should be able to glean that The Wooloomooloo Finger Wharf, Piers 6 and 7 at Walsh Bay, that bloody "toaster" near the Opera House and the "Road at the Con" (Governor Macquarie's marvelous folly, the Conservatorium of Music Stables) take slightly less maturity and sophistication to appreciate rather than the now demolished Port Kembla Pool complex and the soon to be demolished South Beach Surf Club.

Hundreds of thousands of words have been written about the heritage crisis currently facing central Sydney. The only vaguely sensible anti-heritage voice I've read in all this time is from Harry Stephens, Head of the Interior Architecture Program at NSW Uni, who - in a badly constructed letter to the Herald (6/7/98, p.11) littered with red-herrings - nonetheless does raise the question which all those interested in heritage must answer:

Will we "be one iota better off as a culture for having retained in situ a section of a brick
ditch long since past its utilitarian value”?

I believe we would be, but it would take a book and a lot of time to research and marshal an attack-proof case in favour of retention.

The big problem is that the photos published in the Herald succeed in making the drain and road look glamorous. When I went to inspect the site, it became clear that while it remains behind the fence and you have to peer in at a tiny piece of excavated road and drain, it would be pretty hard to explain to your average punter that here was something of real historic significance.

If ever a heritage site required "interpretation", it's this one. The question is: will we get it in situ?

At the time of writing, the Heritage Council is supposed to have met to decide its fate, but the Friday, August 13 Herald contained no report of the meeting. The secrecy of it all is appalling. I doubt the public will be given any input into the decision-making at all.

But people like Harry Stephens seem to be suggesting that the public "are captives of an exaggerated sense of the importance of historical trivia" and if the unwashed non-expert guardians of heritage had their way "Bennelong Point would have been championed by the heritage lobby, preventing the Opera House being built".

A number of writers have raised this chestnut as a good reason for knocking down most of Sydney's Heritage but no-one I believe has tackled them head-on about this question.

Although I'd probably miss the Opera House (It's a great thrill to hear your children play music there!), beautiful as it is, it is not the most utilitarian of music venues and it seems likely to me that that "brick ditch long since past its utilitarian value" might just have more to teach a larger number of tourists and locals than Utzon's undeniably great building.
As for saving the "tram sheds" which once graced Utzon's site, there is little doubt that Sydney, as a whole, would have been a lot better off if it kept its tram sheds and concomitant tram-lines and trams. Not only would we have cleaner air in central Sydney but a great many heritage structures demolished for road works may still be standing.

Heritage Assessment is usually about calculating choices, that is - about trying to make development projects better, primarily by identifying less damaging options. Who knows what sort of tram shed Utzon would have designed had he been given that brief instead of the one we love today?

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I very nearly wept when I saw the photo accompanying the Sydney Morning Herald (8/8/98, p. 7) article entitled "Finger wharf timber being sold off".

Years ago I went (probably illegally) and walked inside this extraordinary structure.

Chris Levins, the National Trust head of strategic planning is not kidding when he describes the development vandalism now taking place as a "blow to the heart" Until Levins pointed it out I did not realise that the Finger Wharf is the world's longest timber wharf but, having walked inside and seen those giant timber beams, I have little hesitancy in accepting Levins' assertion that this is "One of the world's most significant timber structures."

So what do we do? We allow it to be turned into a residential and commercial development. What can one say in the face of such stupidity?

What can one do?

I have never felt so powerless in my life. It makes one feel that it's totally pointless to
write about heritage or attend demonstrations or Wollongong Council's Informal Planning Conferences or Neighbourhood Committee Meetings or to write submissions to Council opposing various developments.

Blind Freddy can see that what is happening is wrong. But what is the appropriate response of an individual in the face of such senselessness.

I have diligently followed all the letters and articles that have hit the press in the last year about the heritage disasters which have befallen central Sydney, but none has been more thought provoking and enlightening than that of Michael Clarke, a former Chief Engineer with the Department of Public Works.

In an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald (14/7/98, p.15) he argued that the level of concern at what might happen to the relics of the convict road found at the Conservatorium of Music "is just another symptom of the community's disillusionment with government and authority."

And this applies as much locally as it does nationally. For, in my experience, the process of dealing with Wollongong Council forces you to pretty smartly become suspicious of not only local government itself - but also councillors, bureaucrats and all the bodies sponsored by them (and particularly Heritage Committees and Architectural Advisory Panels).

Michael Clarke, from long experience, writes of the "subtle corruption of the decision making process and a concern that the community's interests will not be looked after by the established order."

Clarke explains that Government (in this case local) will claim "all the correct processes are followed, the community is given its say, submissions are considered and decisions are balanced".

"Why then," he asks, "is it that almost all projects proceed, often to the dismay of the
community, without significant modification even when there is strong opposition? (as has happened at North Beach with its second hotel proposal) Some conditions might be applied, often as a sop to the concerned, but in essence the proponent - especially when it is Government (or supported by Council in the case of the proposed North beach second Hotel) - gets basically what it wants."

As evidence, Clarke suggests: "Consider for a moment East Circular Quay, the monstrous Casino, the rape of Pyrmont, the degrading of Eveleigh Locomotive Workshops (a place of World Heritage significance), the Eastern Distributor, the grandstand roof on the Customs House..."

Clarke then highlights the fundamental problem:

"Even when the community's views have influenced a development approval, it is allowed no role in the monitoring process and there is no mechanism for its further input when something unforeseen occurs or a change is contemplated."

The scandal of the road discovery at the Conservatorium provides Clarke with his most powerful revelation:

"The road relics at the Conservatorium were found on June 3, but the community wasn't told of the discovery, in fact it only found out when the story broke in the herald 22 days later. No wonder the "find" caused upset - rumours spread and, reputedly, the Heritage Office (of all bodies) advised that the road remnant should be "removed and conserved elsewhere".

And this revelation highlights the same problem with our own Council and its Heritage Committee. Its meetings and proceedings are not made known to the wider public and from all our Society's representative, Michael Organ, has told me it is clear that Council
seems to be very careful when it comes to the issues and information it chooses to bring before the Committee.

Council and its bureaucrats set the agenda and seem to avoid serious issues so that the Committee becomes bogged down with heritage trivia - such as the original lights which mysteriously "disappeared" recently from the former Bulli Council Changes.

At the last meeting, reputedly, valuable time was taken up with what to do about the 1930s picnic shelters in the park opposite the soon to be demolished South Beach Surf Club because residents in the nearby units don't like the sex, drugs and rock and roll that is taking place within the shelter they provide. Strange that no-one got to talking about the fate of the rather larger heritage item across the road?

Meanwhile, Stream Hill at Dapto has roof problems and the regionally listed heritage item near Whytes Gully Dump needs to disappear to allow for the expansion of our waste engineering services. And countless items of, in my view, the highest significance - those essential heritage landscapes that make up our local scene, give way to housing estates, town houses, villas, cluster housing, car parks and tasteful renovations.

But most of these landscapes - and the individual heritage items of which they are made up - do not even rate the pejorative designation "Local significance" in Wollongong Council's grand visions.

As Michael Clarke concludes:

"A radical change in the system is needed. The community needs to be involved in decision-making - not just consulted - as a partner in the determination of need, the development of solutions and the monitoring of implementation so it can be sure undertakings are honoured."
"Not all wisdom and knowledge resides in government and its authorities. There is a monumental body of intelligence, knowledge and expertise and concern for our natural and built environment in the community. This should be harnessed - not fought or ignored - to make projects better and to identify less damaging alternatives. We need to imbue the ethic of community involvement in project managers and to furnish them with the necessary skills. The time and cost of the process should be built in at the front end of projects, instead of suffering the delay, cost and loss of goodwill involved in fighting rearguard actions.

"Those who don't want to change, who resent community involvement in projects, who regard the public as an impediment...will claim these proposals are utopian. However, unless they address the community's concerns, they will continue to be distrusted and treated as the enemy, and to suffer the frustrations of activism."

(Quotations are from Michael Clarke in his article "What went wrong at the Con?", SMH, Tuesday, July 14, 'Opinion', p. 15. Clarke is the former chief engineer of the Department of Public Works)

Joseph Davis

FIVE HERITAGE HEROES

The real frontline for heritage in Wollongong seems to have become that splendid group of souls who make up the Illawarra Escarpment Coalition.

This organization is dedicated to protecting the city's landscape heritage and recognizes that the escarpment foothills are crucial to ensuring that we have an escarpment worth protecting.

There are a whole series of flashpoints where developers are trying to get through inappropriate development on slip-prone, environmentally sensitive land, and the Coalition