Dear Bill,

"Cormiston" is now falling to the wreckers' sledge-hammers, and I hope the authorities who pronounced its death sentence are proud of their insensitivity. That leaves only one old building still standing within the area of Wollongong proper. This, of course, is "Little Milton", and its defenders must begin to gird their loins to see that this, too, does not go the way of "Bustle Cottage" and "Cormiston"; for if "Little Milton" goes, we will have nothing left in the way of private buildings of comparable age, a way of colonial life, part of our heritage, will have been destroyed; and is irreplaceable. So the time has come for a sober review.

"Bustle Cottage" was the first victim, because it has been let go so for now that it is beyond recall. As you know, I always did hold the view that this
house was not so old or intrinsically interesting as others, and that alterations 
had long since changed its character to the extent that it is no longer a true 
relic of our past. Yet its defenders were right, as it so happened, because the 
skirmish to preserve this old house was the first line of defence for others. I 
for one did not range myself alongside those defenders, though I now feel 
remiss for not having done so.

"Cormiston" was another matter. Its historical and aesthetic 
associations were far stronger than those of "Bustle Cottage", and its quality 
far greater. But those considerations could not save it; other considerations 
in the form of dollars in private pockets, aided by obtusely irresponsibles 
attitudes on the part of decision-making authorities, have resulted in the present 
thud of sledge-hammers into old and irreplaceable masonry.

That leaves only "Little Milton", the best of them all, and the last. The 
original part of the building is of the typical bungalow style, relaxed 
comfortable, and superbly adapted to the Australian environment. Its 
verandahs give protection from excessive sun in summer, and the rough 
elements in winter. The fact that this style of architecture does not lend itself 
to modern conditions is due to cost and space. But that only means that this 
 surviving example of an ideal style should all the more urgently be preserved.

So I come to my main point, which is really of your own making. You 
will remember that recently when we discussed the relative quality of our three 
old private buildings - those which then remained - I remarked that by State­ 
wide standards ours were not very significant; and that is true enough. But 
then you made a point which has impressed me more and more since then. 
This was that one must have regard to all or any available remaining sources. 
I think you instanced Windsor, saying that a house might be insignificant in the 
wealth of old buildings in such a place, whilst the same house in an area less 
generously endowed, like ours, has a far greater significance.

The more I think of it, the more I think you are right, and I agree with 
you that in making classifications the National Trust should have regard to the 
wealth or paucity of comparable buildings in a given area. Despite our rich 
local history, we are a poor area in relation to historic buildings, and poorer 
still since "Cormiston" was abandoned to sledge-hammers.

No doubt you will be wielding your own editorial hammer on this 
subject in our "Bulletin", but I do hope you will not fail to stress this most 
significant argument of your. And in doing may I add another argument of my 
own.

I think it is true to say that private owners of historic buildings have 
no absolute property rights. To a high degree they are trustees of their
properties for the community, and this is a fact they must accept in buying or holding those properties. The modern concept is that we have planning authorities whose duty it is to respect and protect that trust, if owners do not have proper regard to it. It is our duty as citizens of the present to see that trust is respected in favour of future generations. We cannot blame the jackhammers and crowbars; if there is any further breach of trust, we can only blame ourselves, if we do not stress our point. When we have done this, and failed, blame must fall solely on our representatives for having disregarded our importunities and their solemn trust.

Let there be no misunderstanding: "Little Milton" is our last hope. If that goes, we are destitute. So please go your hardest!

Yours sincerely,
Edgar Beale.