

by April Hersey

Like all the villages that make up the City of the Blue Mountains, Glenbrook is a special place.

It is not only the gateway village to the mountains but because of its topography it has a considerable amount of open land.

This open plan happened rather accidentally because the original 1860's railway which ran through the town was moved after the apstone deviation was constructed and in 1913 the rail and its station were placed 500 metres to the south of the town.

This left Glenbrook, according to heritage assessor, Professor Ian Jack, as a "janus" village looking both ways.

It looked in both directions at quite a lot of open land.

This is an unusual situation on the mountains where villages tend to cling about the rail and road on the ridges of mountains.

It became a village of parkland and open space dotted about with cottages and quiet roads on undulating hills.



Joan Peard from the Glenbrook Historical Society.

For 50 years not much changed in Glenbrook.

Joan Peard, who is related to many of the pioneer families of Glenbrook and is a member of the Glenbrook Historical Society, remembers early days in the little town when people were paying off their homes to her grandfather *George Bunyan*, butcher and *landholder*, for a few dollars a week.

George Bunyan in turn could remember when he brought Glenbrook's meat up from Emu Plains by horseback to the few families living there.

Change has been very gradual.

The trains that carried commuters back and forth to the city changed over the years but Glenbrook itself continued to be a peaceful town growing very slowly while the whole of the greater western area

mushroomed between Parramatta and Penrith.

Eventually the tide of development swept up towards the mountains and Glenbrook became a natural target for subdivisions. But it was

not until the 1970s when a major state government plan was exhibited that Glenbrook was threatened with the possibility of high rise housing.

This prospect alarmed the community and sparked a series of public meetings to oppose the proposition which was eventually set aside.

In the 1990s another land development idea threatened the fringe areas of the town when the Blue Mountains City Council in conjunction with Landcom planned the development of crown land into a massive sub-division.



Glenbrook's main street... still a village atmosphere

Local public opinion rejected this plan and a committee was formed called Glenbrook Opposing Landcom Development, or GOLD.

Glenbrook residents were quick to take action.

Michael Moore who had been a committee member of GOLD said

that the first plan showed large areas with heights permitted up to 12 metres.

"This plan was actually a mistake and should not have been shown, but we didn't know that and before the first meeting between residents and council members was held in February we did a leaflet drop around the town urging people to attend the meeting."

To the astonishment and alarm of the council and its consultants, hundreds of angry Glenbrook residents attended. They filled the small church hall. The night was hot and soon people covered the verandahs and spilled out into the whole surrounding area so that

amplifiers had to be used. It was probably the liveliest scene that had ever occurred in the town.

Blue Mountains City Council had worked out a very reasonable plan for consultation with the residents, including working committees and workshops on various aspects of the village to establish just what the residents wanted.

But on that first night, there was only one message going back to the council. No high rise of any kind and leave Glenbrook alone!

Four other meetings followed, gradually tempering the situation until a satisfactory plan for the Glenbrook Village Centre was agreed.

Finally the village appears to have been saved from over-development.

It is to retain its village atmosphere. The existing use of land and the existing small shopping area will be maintained in the current style. Cottage streetscapes will be continued with new buildings being of a modest scale. Historic homes have been noted and the future use of the playground of the infants school should "maximise public access and community benefits."