

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CASTLECRAG PROGRESS
ASSOCIATION INC.

Seventy eight years of community development
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Castlecrag Progress Association

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Bob McKillop

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Annual General Meeting

Sunday 21 April 2.30pm

at the Community Centre

Gwen Meredith, *Blue Hills* and Castlecrag

Guest Speaker:

Dr Michelle Arrow

Election of Office Bearers

Refreshments will be served

Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.
6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

The Crag is edited by
Kerry McKillop 9958 4516
Elizabeth Lander 9958 5384

**Please send all correspondence
and membership renewals to the
above address.**

**Membership fees for 2002
are now due**
(see membership form on last page)

Gwen Meredith, *Blue Hills* and Castlecrag

Gwen Meredith OBE, born in 1907, is a writer and playwright who is best known for her radio serials, especially *Blue Hills*, which ran at one o'clock every Monday to Friday for over 27 years. It was a great achievement and probably a unique one in that Gwen was the sole writer.

Gwen Meredith is of more than usual interest to us in Castlecrag because most of her writing life was spent when she and her husband lived at *The Gingerbread House* down on the water at the end of Edinburgh Road.

This year the Castlecrag Progress Association is delighted to welcome Dr Michelle Arrow as guest speaker to its Annual General Meeting. Michelle is a professional historian who will talk on Gwen Meredith. She was awarded her PhD in 1999 for her thesis *Upstaged: Australian Women Playwrights 1928-1968*. Her

current research project is a social and cultural history to study the enormous popularity of Gwen Meredith's ABC radio serials *The Lawsons* and *Blue Hills* and to undertake this work she was awarded the 2000 NSW History Fellowship.

Dr Arrow states: 'Gwen Meredith's ABC radio serials *The Lawsons* (1944-1949) and *Blue Hills* (1949-1976) are central to both nostalgic and historical recollections of the post-war era, but especially of the 1950s, when their popularity was at its peak. They are uncritically recalled as emblems of the perceived insularity, homogeneity and stability of the era.

A national treasure lived in our midst and we hope at our AGM to celebrate and record, in a small way, her quite extraordinary contribution to the neighbourhood of our wide brown land. Come and hear about the place of the *Blue Hills* phenomenon in national folklore and popular memory

Do come to our AGM to listen and join in the following discussion with your thoughts and memories. Don't let your young children deter your coming - the playground provides the perfect baby-minder! Afternoon tea follows the election of office bearers for the forthcoming year so, your presence will be very welcome at this annual community event.

If you cannot make the AGM in person for any reason, Dr Arrow would still like to hear from you if you remember the *Blue Hills* era. Did you listen in every day? What appealed to you most and which were your favourite characters? Did you have a special ritual in your household when you 'tuned-in'? Please let *The Crag* editors know (in writing, would be appreciated).

The Editors

Castlecrag Community Web Site

The Progress Association has been looking at a project to establish a community website. It would provide information and news about Castlecrag and it would offer a vehicle for you to have your say about the issues that are of concern to you.

Artarmon Progress Association has beaten us to the punch. You can find them on:

www.artarmonprogress.org.au

It is at an early stage of development and the APA is seeking expertise from their community to enhance and improve their website. It currently gives information on issues of local concern, coming events and has a link to the Willoughby City Council site.

The Castlecrag Progress Association would like to establish a similar Web page with links to other community organisations

and Council. We are keen to hear from anyone with web design skills who can provide volunteer assistance with the design, updating or maintenance of a website for Castlecrag. Please contact:

Kate Westoby: 9958 0215 or

Bob McKillop 9958 4516.

Bob McKillop

Conservation Matters

Castlecrag's Griffin Conservation Area is a heritage precinct of international standing. The Conservation Area in particular, but also the suburb generally, derives its character from its natural landscape and the manner in which the built environment relates to that landscape. The outstanding character of the Conservation Area is based the concept that "each individual can feel the whole landscape is his."

The Castlecrag Progress Association was founded in 1924 with the objective of upholding these values. It continues to do so today. The attractiveness of the area and the special character of Castlecrag are themselves factors in the threats under which our heritage is continually placed. Soaring land values generate pressure a desire to build large residences that dominate the natural landscape and remove significant vegetation. It is a trend that causes deep concern in Castlecrag.

The good news is that Willoughby Council's Development Control Plan 19 (Heritage & Conservation) seeks to protect Castlecrag's remarkable heritage and all residents are encouraged to make themselves familiar with

its objectives and controls. DCP19 seeks to conserve Castlecrag's unique character derived from:

narrow winding roads following contours, linked open space networks, lack of fences, unobtrusive houses, and retention of bushland in reserves, walkways, nature strips and road islands.

Most unfortunately, there were developments in Castlecrag prior to the introduction of DCP19 in 1996 that clash with this character. For instance, a number of unsympathetic fences, including high solid structures, had been erected along several of the pedestrian walkways, giving them an alley-like character and shutting out important vistas. These can no longer be used as a precedent for inappropriate development.

In a recent case in the Land & Environment Court, a resident challenged a Council order to demolish an illegally-erected fence on the walkway between The Parapet and The Rampart. While Commissioner Nott found that Council's demolition order had not been prepared correctly, if a valid notice had been given he would have "as a matter of merit confirmed the order." He noted that the Griffin reserve system is a major aspect

of significance and the objective of Council's Plan of Management is to respect and recover features of the Griffin vision. The Commissioner stated in his judgment that a solid fence of this type is inconsistent with the philosophical basis of the Griffin Conservation Area. He noted that under DCP16, fences and walls are required to "maintain significant views from the public domain." Commissioner Nott concluded that "there are circumstances that would justify the council taking proceedings in relation to demolition of the fence."

Obviously much cost and irritation will be avoided if residents follow the proper procedures on landscaping and fencing matters. Council, in consultation with the local community, is developing more specific guidelines for appropriate fencing, particularly that adjoining walkways and reserves. A number of residents, including representatives of the Progress Association and other community groups in Castlecrag, serve on Council's Griffin Reserves Advisory Committee. This provides a channel for local input into the detailed conservation management plans for each reserve and walkway. This committee looks forward to receiving any input you feel may be of assistance in this task.

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A Walk through the Castle: road and place names in Castlecrag (Pt.3)

The previous article in The Crag 140 brought the explorer of Castlecrag's streets and reserves to The Retreat Reserve off Rockley Street. We rejoin the journey at that point.

Back up Rockley Street we come to the beginning of The Bulwark. As a resident of The Bulwark I am appalled at the frequency of mail grossly misspelling this name! It has nothing to do with 'bulls' or for that matter 'walks'! It in fact comes from the same Danish source, *bulwoerk*, as does the French *boulevard*. In a castle a 'bulwark' is 'one of the outer ramparts in a fortification', a structure or place for defence and protection. Its position in 'the castle' of Castlecrag is perfectly logical. The Bulwark follows as near as possible the contours. Observant visitors will appreciate how this road was carved in many places through the solid sandstone.

Several hundred metres brings us to a junction of The Bulwark and a lower road, The Scarp. A 'scarp' refers to a steep slope below various fortifications; in Castlecrag it describes the lands steeply sloping to the foreshore of Middle Harbour. A short distance along The Scarp brings us to another cul-de-sac, The Barricade, a fortification for defence, well named as the ground drops steeply to the harbour foreshore.

At the entrance to The Barricade is the beautiful Haven Amphitheatre, a gift of The Griffins and said to have been built at the urging of Marion Mahony Griffin. As in its ancient classical counterparts, this theatre has tiers of stone seats around an arena or stage. The Haven Amphitheatre is a very

special place in Castlecrag with a bushland valley setting and the waters of Middle Harbour as its backdrop and is a popular place for occasional concerts, Christmas carols and other functions.

Returning to The Scarp and back up to The Bulwark, a short distance further on we come to a smaller round cul-de-sac, The Bartizan. In castle architecture a 'bartizan' usually refers to a small overhanging turret on the walls of a castle, often pierced with apertures for viewing and defence. Our Bartizan and its houses perch on the edge of a steep slope and presumably this is why it was so named!

If you now leave The Bulwark and follow the steps and path from the left hand side of The Bartizan this will take you into The Oriel Reserve. This name comes from the term for a great bay window and no doubt before the houses were built this bush reserve enjoyed expansive views of Sailors Bay. The Oriel Reserve to the west links with The Gargoyle Reserve and this in turn with the much larger Embrasure Reserve linking back to The Bastion. A 'gargoyle' refers to a spout for draining water clear of the building; in Gothic buildings these were ornamented with carved angel, human and grotesque animal forms. From The Gargoyle Reserve a stream draining from The Battlement flows down under The Bulwark and through the Retreat to the sea. An 'embrasure' refers to a splayed opening in a parapet of a battlement for cannon to fire through. Again all three reserves are appropriately named for their positions and they separate the houses high on The Battlement from those of The

Bulwark. It is pleasing to see that after years of neglect, these reserves and walkways are now being restored by Council officers.

From The Oriel Reserve I suggest that you follow the pathway up the slope where the sandstone steps and path lead to The Citadel. Follow its round turning circle carved from the solid sandstone and enclosing the road reserve and view the front of one of the finest Griffin-designed sandstone houses (No.15). A 'citadel' is the name of 'a fortress near a city, either to keep inhabitants in subjection or in a siege to form a final point of defence'. May these definitions never be the case for our Citadel!

We are now nearing the end of our castle tour. Rather than entering this western end of the Battlement, follow the road up the hill to Edinburgh Road. Before you weaken be sure to visit the Tower Reserve. Turn to the right as you enter Edinburgh Road; just over a small hill turn again to the right to enter The Tower Reserve via a lane. Through a grove of native *Kunzea* trees on the western side, climb to the top of our natural tower, the highest point on the Castlecrag Peninsula, Castle Rock. This sandstone outcrop supports some interesting remnant native vegetation including a small but precious grove of *Callitris rhomboidea*, the Port Jackson Pine. It is said that it was this area that inspired the Griffins to use the parts of a castle to name the places of this part of our peninsula. The view from here is magnificent and includes the City of Sydney and its eastern suburbs, South Head, part of North Head, and Port Jackson, Middle Harbour, North Sydney and the suburbs to the northwest and the northeast. >>> Contd page 4

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Castlecrag Progress Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 21 April 2002

Gwen Meredith, Blue Hills and
Castlecrag.

Guest Speaker, Dr Michelle Arrow

2.30pm at the Community Centre

Refreshments Provided

A Walk through the Castle (contd)

While you have not visited all of the reserves and walkways of our castle, you have earned some reward! Return to Edinburgh Road and a short walk will bring you back to the Castlecrag shops where there are several establishments willing to serve you some well-earned refreshments.

So next time either a visitor to Castlecrag or your taxi driver complains about being lost even before apologising for their late arrival, tactfully explain to them the logic of the names. This might even help them find their way out of our suburb!

Carrick Chambers

Willoughby Heritage Festival 2002

There is a wide range of interesting events on the program for this year's Willoughby Heritage Festival. They include:

20 April: Artarmon Heritage Open House Tour. Self-guided tour of open houses arranged by Artarmon Progress Association. Adults \$6; bookings Michelle Sloane, 9415 4457.

21 April: Willoughby Park Heritage Celebrations & Awards, 11am-2pm. Gate opening ceremony, market stalls, entertainment

and 2002 Willoughby Heritage Awards.

28 April: Natural Heritage Bushwalk & Poetry Reading. 3.5km through the natural heritage of Middle Harbour. Bookings essential: 9777 1000.

28 April: Willoughby History Museum Re-opening. Viewing of the newly refurbished and rearranged Museum, 58 Johnson Street, 1.30-4pm. By appointment, phone 9419 7354.

Correction

In the article, *Doggie Matters* in *The Crag* No. 140, Muston Park was listed as an unleashed dog area. Please note that this is not correct. Muston Park is NOT an unleashed dog area.

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Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2002 DUE 1 January 2002

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Treasurer: Diana Jones, 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag 2068

Objectives of CPA Inc.

(1) To do everything possible to promote and further the interests of the district of Castlecrag or such other nearby area where it is possible that such benefit should accrue to the advantage of the district and could enhance and stimulate the community life of residents of Castlecrag and environs; and

(2) To conserve the natural and human heritage of Castlecrag for the benefit of future generations.