

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CASTLECRAG PROGRESS
ASSOCIATION INC.

Seventy nine years of community development
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Castlecrag Progress Association

6/77 Edinburgh Road,
Castlecrag
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www.castlecrag.org.au

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Bob McKillop

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Committee: Peter Moffitt

Jill Newton

Howard Rubie

Gay Spies

John Steel

General Meeting

Tuesday 27 April 8pm

Castlecrag Community Centre

Membership renewals for the
Progress Association are now
due for 2004
(please see page 6)

The Crag is edited by
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Please send all correspondence
and membership renewals to
the above address.

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What Traffic Problem?

Castlecrag residents, in common with most other Sydneysiders, put traffic high on their list of concerns. Requests to 'solve the traffic problem' have been made to the Progress Association since it was first established in November 1925 and we have devised various schemes to better manage traffic matters within our suburb.

Concerns over speeding and pedestrian safety on Edinburgh Road have been a long-standing issue. As reported in *The Crag* on numerous occasions, our efforts resulted in a study of local traffic issues in Edinburgh Road, which led to a Local Area Traffic Management Plan (LATM) in 1999. Construction of the works was approved for 2002-03, but opposition by some residents resulted in most of the scheme being postponed and only the roundabout at Rutland Avenue was constructed.

Residents I have spoken with have commented on the success of the roundabout and a number of those living along

Edinburgh Road have approached the Progress Association to urge that the remainder of the scheme be implemented. As this is a matter of general concern in Castlecrag, we have asked Council's Transport Management Officer, Tony Lehmann, to attend our General Meeting on 27 April to advise residents of the current status of the LATM scheme and to hear your views on the subject. Please come along to the meeting and have your say.

We can report a positive outcome regarding the dangerous corner in the vicinity of Nos. 78-80 The Bulwark. In response to a submission by the Progress Association, the Local Traffic Committee resolved that a single row of Raised Reflective Pavement Markers (RRPMs, or 'Cats Eyes') be installed around the bend fronted by No.78 and No.80 The Bulwark at 2 metre spacings. The Mayor and General Manager adopted this recommendation under delegated authority on 19 March 2004.

I represented the Progress Association with delegates from Northbridge, South Willoughby and Naremburn Associations on a sub-committee to review the traffic problems faced by Northbridge residents. Like Castlecrag, Northbridge is a peninsular suburb and it is difficult for local traffic to get out onto the main arterial roads during peak hour as traffic lights are set to maximise the flow of traffic on the main roads.

The proposal by Northbridge Progress Association that more traffic be diverted down Flat Rock Drive generated some excitement among residents in South Willoughby and Naremburn, and we agreed that such diversions do not offer any solutions. The only solution to traffic congestion in large cities is to reduce the number of cars on the roads, by pricing and/or restrictions, and to improve public transport, so the committee was short on specific proposals for Council to consider.

Bob McKillop

Castlecrag Progress Association ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 16 May 2.30pm

Guest Speaker, Mark Sobolch
Innovative Solutions to Water
Management in Willoughby City

All welcome
Castlecrag Community Centre
Refreshments provided

Castlecrag Progress Association

GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 27 April 2004

Agenda:
Edinburgh Road LATM
And traffic safety
Tony Lehmann, Willoughby Council

All welcome
Community Centre at 8pm
Refreshments provided

Community Bytes

Council Elections

The Local Government Elections are now behind us. With four councillors having retired and two being defeated, there will be six new Willoughby City Councillors when meetings resume on 19 April. In Sailors Bay Ward seven groups contested the election, with sitting councillor Trevor Morgan elected to the No.1 spot, followed by Adrian Cox and Mary Johnston. Castlecrag resident, Gloreen Goldin, ran a strong campaign challenging Mary for the third position. Pat Reilly was easily returned as mayor.

The Castlecrag Progress Association congratulates the new councillors on their success and looks forward to working with our local Ward Councillors over the next four years.

DCP19 Heritage & Conservation

At its meeting of 8 March 2004, Willoughby City Council unanimously approved the Amended Draft Development Control Plan 19 (DCP19) for Heritage and Conservation in Willoughby, following four years of consultation with the community.

The new DCP will assist in the protection of the amenity and heritage of the twelve Conservation Areas of Willoughby City, (including the Griffin Conservation Area in Castlecrag), defining these and providing management policies and controls to retain the character of each.

Stoker Playground

Willoughby Council's Open Space Department has drawn up plans for the redevelopment of the Stoker Playground on Edinburgh Road. The design for the new facility incorporates castle features after the names of Castlecrag streets and reserves. Copies of the proposal will be available at the Progress Association General Meeting on 27 April.

Heritage Week walks

The Walter Burley Griffin Society will again be holding its popular walks on Sunday 2 May 10.30am to 3pm. The Society is planning four types of guided walks, *Introducing the Griffins' Castlecrag* (1 hour) (\$10), *Griffin for the Enthusiast* with Professor James Weirick (2.5 hours) (\$25), *Hidden Castlecrag* (reserves and walkways) (2 hours) (\$15) and *Castlecrag — inspiration for the modern architect* (2 hours) (\$15). Walks will leave from the carpark of the Griffin Centre at the corner of Edinburgh Road and The Postern, at regular intervals. All welcome!

Willoughby Arts Assistance Program

Willoughby City Council is seeking applications for local artists to apply for grants up to \$2000. The Arts Assistance Program aims to provide opportunities for Willoughby residents to develop their potential in arts practices. It covers visual arts, performance, music, literature and multimedia. Applications close on 7 May 2002. For guidelines and application forms, ring 9777 7979 or check Council's Home Page: www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au

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Trees in Castlecrag Lorraine Cairnes

Last year's drought and this year's water restrictions mean that many of our gardens, and the bushland reserves, are stressed. As well as having less water in the soil, trees are being targeted by our native fauna, which includes possums and many native insects. They are looking for a quick meal but finding that there is less to choose from this year.

The way in which native trees respond to these conditions is by survival strategies that they have evolved over eons. Trees reduce their water demand during the tough times by losing leaves, or their smaller branches might die.

In nature, after the stresses are past, trees often recover. Typically, new shoots that have been dormant in the trunk and at the base of the tree spring back to life when the drought ends, much as we see trees recovering after bushfires.

Sadly, we have been seeing a lot of very grand trees chopped down in recent months because they look dead. Given time, they might have recovered.

The most valuable plants in any landscape are the mature trees. These form the basic structure of the bushland and gardens, and will take decades to replace. We are lucky in Castlecrag that many of our special

garden trees – Angophoras, Sydney Peppermints, 'Old Man Banksia', to name a few – are relics of the original bushland. They keep the links and wildlife pathways from the bushland through the built-up parts of Castlecrag.

Some of these trees are a hundred years old and more. Replacing them will take longer than our lifetimes.

At present, the possums in our area are feasting on these new shoots and making it hard for some trees (such as Angophoras) to recover. We love the possums, but this is the time to exclude them from favourite trees by a possum guard (see below).

Of course, trees can become stressed because of other causes: for example, changes in drainage, too many nutrients, or insect attack. But care for a tree is worthwhile, and consult an expert if in doubt. The chainsaw should only be a last resort!

So . . . here are a few ideas:

1. Even if a tree appears to be dead, give it a little time to see if it might recover. Seek the advice of an expert arborist.
2. If dead branches might be dangerous, have these removed carefully, but keep the living parts of the tree to recover.

3. Stop possums eating the new regrowth shoots by possum-guards around the trunk.
4. Plant some new native trees to replace the ones which might have been lost in years past. We all enjoy our native birds, so every garden in Castlecrag should have at least two native trees!

An Easy Possum Guard

This works well if there is no direct branch-to-branch contact with other unguarded trees. You might need to put guards on several trees.

Wrap a sheet of heavy flexible plastic around the tree trunk and secure it with grey duct tape. The plastic needs to be heavy enough that the possums can't dig their claws into it. When wrapped around the tree it needs to be about half a metre high. We used a sheet of clear polypropylene – very flexible and easy to handle; we bought it at Eckersley's Art Supplies, 21 Atchison St., St Leonards for \$9.

We placed a guard on an Angophora that had lost all leaves and appeared to be 'dead'. Within two weeks, new shoots 20cm long had grown from the trunk. They will become the new branches. We plan to leave the guard in place for at least six months, until the new branches are strong.

Progress Association Web Page

In response to our request in previous issues of *The Crag*, Annette Frith has come forward to assist in managing the Castlecrag Community website. Annette is an IT professional who specialises in Web Page design. Many thanks Annette!

On the advice of our new ISP, the Progress Association has registered a new Domain name and with Annette's assistance, the site is now up and running. Please check it out at:

www.castlecrag.org.au

The site provides a range of useful information for residents of our suburb, as well as promoting Castlecrag to a wider audience. It will be updated regularly. Your comments on improvements welcome.

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The Rural Fire Permit

Each Summer I get the nagging urge to burn off our bush garden. I enjoy a good fire and justify my urge by rationalising that it should be done for the safety of our house and the good of the bush as so many of our native plants need fire to germinate, but my atavistic tendencies are thwarted by regulation. My efforts to regenerate our bush had generated piles of dead leaves and branches that fire authorities would describe as the 'threat of increased fuel loads'. I wanted to tackle the problem by burning. My arguments fell on deaf ears, it being reasoned that it would be too dangerous and I would upset the neighbours if the fire got away.

"No", said she who must be obeyed, "you need permission and if you cannot get it, you will have to take that lot up to the bin."

Momentarily I thought that repositioning many years of leaf litter uphill might be easier than getting the 'permission', but that option would not achieve my main aim of bringing back the plants that need fire to germinate.

Being under strict instructions to find someone competent to do the job, I made enquiries and an application at our 'City Hall'. Adopting the freshly acquired knowledge of 'fire protection', I was able to convince the authorities that a 'control burn' should be done in and around our garden. To my great surprise, an enthusiastic Council Officer arrived at 7.30 the next morning. He advised that we were "definitely under threat of these increased fuel loads and something would therefore have to be done."

Over the next few weekends, I dutifully followed the Officer's guidelines by piling up my 'fuel load' into small twiggy versions of Angkor Wat. These little temples of 'fuel' were to be incinerated in an 'ecological burn', the timing of which was subject to 'favourable meteorological conditions'.

Weeks went by and my expectation gradually turned to disappointment as burn-offs occurred over the ridge, but the officers had not returned to my area. Then the fire officer turned up at 7.30 in the morning, dressed in well-ironed khaki, but alas, he brought the sorrowful news that, despite the forecast of



Willoughby City Council Fire Hazard Reduction team leader, Phil Sarkies, at the Harold Reid Reserve burn, 1 April 2004. Photo: Willoughby City Council

cool calm weather, the overworked fire crew were too busy elsewhere and my burn was to be put off until next season.

Dejectedly, I showed the custodian of outdoor matches my temples of twigs, which he deemed to be suitable and shared my disappointment at not being able to complete the task. Then he had an idea. He would issue me with the Rural Fire Permit! I was back on track with a piece of paper that allowed me to use my matches outdoors. Instead of being an amateur fire bug, I was now a 'professional' with the paper to prove it.

She who must be obeyed was not sure about my new authority or professionalism, but deferred to the judgement of the chief custodian of outdoor match use. I declined

to be fitted out in khaki or the silver fire-proof suit she proposed, opting for flannel-ette attire that was suitably non-flammable. I then made sure that my neighbours were informed of the burn.

On the appointed cool calm day I set to work. I lit the first temple at sparrow, with the hose at ready. Crikey, it turned out to be harder and hotter work than I had anticipated. My fires were like small children in a shopping centre, always threatening to get away and needing constant supervision. I was still going late at night, tired and smelling like a barbeque, with the last temple extinguished when the family were in bed.

I surveyed the garden in the dark under torchlight with stinging eyes and imagined all the seedlings that would grow from my scorched ground. And grow they did, banksias and gum trees, prickly shrubs and grasses made a carpet of vegetation during the next few weeks. I was very pleased, as I now have the vigorous new growth in my garden I was seeking.

Sean Lander

Editor: Willoughby Council has an excellent Fire Hazard Reduction Team and residents are advised to contact them on this subject.



Residents planting in Lookout Reserve

Community Planting - Lookout Reserve

Castlecrag's Lookout Reserve has benefited from a community planting day on 4 April organised by Willoughby City Council's Community Projects Officer Donna Fitton. Over 100 native plants propagated from local seeds were supplied and laid out by the Council with residents from five of the households neighbouring the reserve planting them.

This is the first stage of a revegetation plan for Lookout Reserve, and part of the overall Plan of Management for Castlecrag's Griffin reserves. The residents who participated in the planting were rewarded with hot cups of tea, cake and chocolate Easter eggs beneath the magnificent paper bark tree planted by Marion Mahony Griffin in the reserve.

Adrienne Kabos

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Willoughby Council News



Fire Measures

Council officers successfully conducted a coordinated fire hazard reduction burn over two hectares of Harold Reid Reserve on Thursday, 1 April 2004, launching the beginning of Fire Hazard Reduction Season.

"Strategic burns such as this are essential in reducing the threat of uncontrolled bush fires by reducing fire fuel such as dry and dead leaves, trees and mulch", said Willoughby City Council Mayor Pat Reilly. He added: "These burns ensure the safety of the reserve's surrounding properties. Also coined an ecological burn, the activity is ultimately responsible for encouraging the regeneration of native plant species and increasing biodiversity."

Water Conservation

Willoughby City Council Mayor Pat Reilly unveiled Council's water recycling system - the first of its kind in Australia - at the Warners Park Community Centre, Northbridge on Thursday March 4, 2004.

"This water recycling unit is a first for Australia and I hope that other Councils follow suit in implementing such efficient and environmentally-friendly systems, which not only set an example for the community but are also educative", said the Mayor. The system has two main features: a Rainwater Planter Box and a 10,000-litre rainwater tank.

Council's Water Management Officer, Mark Sobilich, will be the Guest Speaker at the Progress Association's AGM on 16 May. He will cover this facility and other water conservation initiatives in Willoughby City. Come along and discuss this important topic.



Civic Place

Community support for proceeding with the Civic Place Project was clear from the Council Poll, held at the same time as the elections. The final Civic Place Poll results were: 58.72% YES, 36.13% NO and 5.15% informal.

The Civic Place Masterplan will now be presented to the new Council together with the outcome of the community consultations over the past 11 months, and the results of the Poll, with a formal recommendation that the exhibited 2003 Masterplan be adopted.

Detailed architectural design and documentation, including further community consultation, will occur over the next two years followed by the development application processes and tendering.

Letter to the Editor: re History Part 8

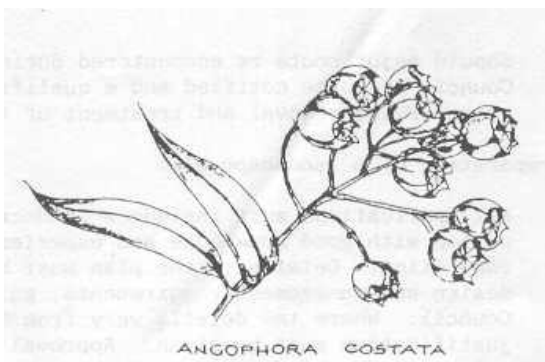
Dear Editors,

I refer to the paragraph about the Castlecrag playreading group operating largely in private homes from 1953. My wife Madge, Ella Young and myself and others were closely associated with this group. On one occasion the playreaders performed at the Lane Cove Ambulance Station to a large and appreciative audience.

During 1957 the playreaders engaged the services of an author, Mr (Geoffrey, I think) Thomas, who was confined to a wheelchair, and was paid the princely fee of four guineas! For this particular reading, Mr Thomas selected the actors from the audience, and two of the female players were supposed to be pregnant. Incredible but true, he actually chose Madge Milston and Barbara Meth, both of whom were then about five months pregnant. When told this after the playreading ended, he was most amused!

During December 1957, Barbara Meth produced Simon, and on 19th January 1958 Madge gave birth to Leah.

Numbers of people attending performances of the group varied, but 30 or 40 was the usual. On one occasion in December, over 100 viewers attended a reading at the Milstons' home in The Battlement.



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History of Castlecrag: Part 9

1953 The distinguished Australian photographer, **Max Dupain**, moved with his wife Diana and young family to their newly-completed house designed by architect Arthur Baldwinson, in The Scarp. The Scarp was then a dirt road, the area was unlit and sewage had not been installed, but it was a paradise of undisturbed bush overlooking Sailors Bay. This natural bushland setting was to become an important subject of Dupain's work.



St James Church, Castlecrag

1955 A clubhouse was constructed in the then-dusty **Cortile Reserve** to replace a corrugated iron shed, and the ground was excavated for two tennis courts to replace the single court constructed in 1928.

1957 Architects **Bill and Ruth Lucas** designed *The Glasshouse* at 80 The Bulwark as their own residence. It was a hallmark building in low-budget, minimalist Australian architecture, comprising a square, steel-framed timber-joisted platform supported by four steel columns. The house, designed to touch lightly on the natural bushland, stands on tiptoes amongst the boulders and ferns of the steeply sloping site. Bill designed and built, in collaboration with his brother Neville, the two adjoining houses at 76 and 78 The Bulwark. In 1960 he designed for Con and Addie Saltis at 70 The Bulwark, *The Block House* which is also one of Australia's most significant modern houses.

1957 *The Griffin Centre* was redeveloped to give Castlecrag its first supermarket. Residents had successfully campaigned against the development of a hotel on the corner site that is now occupied by *The Quadrangle*.

1958 Archbishop Loane officially opened **St James Anglican Church** on 29 November. Castlecrag Anglicans had begun holding services in private homes in 1947 and Lot 112 in Edinburgh Road was acquired for a church in 1950. Construction of the church foundations, crypt and hall at 184-186 Edinburgh Road began in 1954. The lower hall was completed by July that year and opened by the Archbishop of Sydney. The church itself was designed by local architect John Brindley in cream brick of simple form with a light stone tower on which is mounted an unadorned wooden cross. Bim Hilder designed and built the mural in the porch, which depicts scenes from the life of the Apostle James.

1960s A fund-raising appeal was made by Castlecrag Community Centre Committee for a fountain to honour Walter Burley Griffin. Bim Hilder, local sculptor and friend of Griffin, was commissioned

to design this significant work. The **National Trust of Australia (NSW)** organised its first tours and inspections of some Griffin houses in Castlecrag.

1964 The **Castlecrag Progress Association** was revitalised and took over the functions of the Castlecrag & East Willoughby Co-operative Advancement Society. The Progress Association remains active in promoting its objectives, namely:

- 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

- To conserve the natural and human heritage of Castlecrag for the benefit of future generations.

1965 **Max Dupain**, undertook an extensive photographic essay to document the Griffin buildings in their landscape setting at Castlecrag. Dupain subsequently donated a number of these photographs to the Walter Burley Griffin Society.

Elizabeth Lander, Bob McKillop and James Weirick

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