

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CASTLECRAG PROGRESS
ASSOCIATION INC.

Seventy nine years of community development
ISSN 0814 - 2054

No. 153

October 2004

Castlecrag Progress Association

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

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Vice presidents: Kate Westoby

Gay Spies

Secretary: Elizabeth Lander

Treasurer: Diana Jones

Committee: Glorene Goldin

Bob McKillop

Peter Moffitt

Jill Newton

Howard Rubie

Coming Events

Tuesday 26 October:
Public forum on Heritage

Sunday 5 June 2005:
Community Fair

Please see page 6 for
membership renewals

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

The Crag is printed by
Bertram Printing
Bertram Street
Chatswood
Tel. 9415 1070

Keeping Castlecrag Special!

In order to address concerns relating to heritage and conservation matters expressed by some residents, Willoughby City Council and the Progress Association have organised a public forum for Tuesday, 26 October 2004.

The forum, titled *Keeping Castlecrag Special!*, aims to explore and help residents understand the special qualities of the suburb that the community may seek to retain and to explain the processes that are used to achieve the conservation of the built and natural environments. It seeks to demystify the issues and correct misinformation.

We have brought together a group of experts in the heritage and conservation field to discuss the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of heritage and conservation matters. The following speakers have agreed to address the forum:



The preservation of heritage buildings and places can generate conflict in the community. The forthcoming forum seeks to address areas of misunderstanding.

- Bob Clark, architect and planner, Senior Heritage Planner to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust;
- John McInerney, town planner, Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney, former President of the Planning Institute of Australia;
- Peter Moffitt, architect, planner and urban designer

and resident of Castlecrag;

- James Weirick, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of NSW, President of the Walter Burley Griffin Society and a world authority of the work of Walter and Marion Griffin; and
- Greg Woodhams, Director of Environmental Services, Willoughby City Council.

John Owen, General Manager of Willoughby Council, will chair the forum.

Further details are provided in the official invitation from Council that will be distributed to all residents and business houses in Castlecrag.

This is your opportunity to obtain expert and accurate information about heritage and conservation matters which apply in our suburb. There will be ample time for discussion.

The Editors

Haven Amphitheatre

Christmas Carols at The Haven

7.30pm Christmas Eve
Friday 24 December
Free Entry - All welcome

Free bus at Castlecrag Shops
from 6.30pm
Information: Phone 0418 648 870 or
www.thehaven.com.au

Willoughby City Council invites you
to a Public Forum

KEEPING CASTLECRAG SPECIAL!
Tuesday 26 October 2004

Castlecrag Community Centre, 7.15 pm
Refreshments Provided

The Community Centre is at The Postern
Please park in the street and walk down

Community Bytes

Castlecrag on the Web

Annette Frith has updated and improved the Castlecrag website on behalf of the Progress Association. There are new user-friendly means of getting around the site, various sections have been updated and/or corrected, and new material has been added. This includes information about the Progress Association and its Committee, recent articles from *The Crag* newsletter, new photos and additions to the Castlecrag History Timeline (up to 1978). If you would like to check out items from earlier instalments of our popular Castlecrag History series, just follow the links from 'History' to the Timeline, which is now presented as a PDF document, including selected photographs.

We are looking at further improvements to the site, including a 'News and Events' Page. We would like to hear your suggestions. Check out the Home Page at www.castlecrag.org.au and contact John Steel (9958 5804) or Kate Westoby (9958 0215) with your suggestions for improvement or corrections.

Justice of the Peace

Trevor John Evans advises that he is available to provide a community service if residents require a Justice of the Peace. He is a registered JP (No. 9900891) and lives at 4 Tower Reserve, Castlecrag. Please telephone 0418 404 333 for appointment.

Australia Day 2005

Gloreen Goldin is coordinating street parties and barbeques planned in Castlecrag on 26 January 2005. If you and your friends have such an activity in mind, please contact Gloreen on 9967 9100.

Movies at the Haven

The family-oriented movies *Babe* and *Mary Poppins* gave great pleasure to all who attended the movies under the stars during the September Spring Festival. Both audiences were enthusiastic for more such shows. Not only is it magic to watch golden sunset turn into dusk, but at only \$10 for adults and \$5 for children it is bargain-price community entertainment. Huge thanks to Doug Mitchell for his assistance in the screening of *Babe*; and to Richard Newton (who donated the use of Videowall's specialist projection, sound and screen equipment for both nights).

Do you have any suggestions for future movies at The Haven? Old style epics like *Casablanca* or *To Catch a Thief*? Sing along with the *Rocky Horror Show*? Another family movie? Please email your suggestions to Bookings@thehaven.com.au **Bruce Wilson**

momo

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Court Supports Griffin Principles

An appeal to the Land and Environment Court of NSW against Willoughby City Council's refusal of a development application (DA) for additions and alterations to an existing dwelling in the Griffin Conservation Area, that would have the effect of partially blocking water and bushland views from an adjoining dwelling, was dismissed by Commissioner J Murrell in a recent decision. In rejecting the proposal, the Commissioner said:

The site does have constraints but the site also has opportunities and the opportunity is in terms of the natural topography and a building that respects that natural landform and the contours of the land. The site also has the constraint, which should also be seen as an opportunity, of being within the Castlecrag Griffin Conservation Area and development should make a commensurate contribution to those principles and qualities that give the area its special character.

Proposed Development

The existing part one- and part two-storey dwelling is located below street level and further down the site than most other houses in the vicinity. It is close to its rear boundary adjoining a waterfront reserve and very close to the FBL. The DA was to alter and extend the ground floor and add an additional storey substantially on the footprint of the existing house. The effect would have been to substantially disrupt existing views of Sailors Bay and bushland views from the living rooms and balcony of a neighbouring house.

Apart from the view loss, the application failed to comply with a number of controls in Willoughby LEP, DCP 16 and DCP 19, including the two-storey height limitation. The DA could only be approved if SEPP 1 was used to override the two-storey height limit in the LEP. This would mean establishing that

compliance with this height limit is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the case.

The Decision

In a strong decision upholding Willoughby Council's planning controls and dismissing the appeal, Commissioner Murrell said:

... having regard to the context of the Griffin Conservation Area, view loss is one that is significant and does not warrant approval of the development application" [and] ...the SEPP 1 objection in respect of the storeys control as contained in the LEP is not allowed and the application on its merits also does not warrant approval.

Commissioner Murrell considered the provisions of the relevant planning controls having regard to the objectives and intent of each. While her decision referred to the Griffin Conservation Area, she did not restrict her decision, stating:

I am not satisfied that the proposed development meets the objective of appropriate view sharing and in my assessment the view loss in the circumstances is unreasonable having regard to the conservation area as well as the principles of view sharing.

Given there were possible alternative design solutions and further instances of non compliance with the planning controls, Commissioner Murrell said:

...in combination the SEPP 1 objection together with the fact that I do not consider the proposed development is responsive to the topography as well as the impact on views and the bulky presentation to [the adjoining property] in my assessment means the application fails.

Conclusion

This case confirms and upholds the planning controls for the Griffin Conservation Area and for Castlecrag in general. Willoughby Council is to be commended for upholding its controls and defending the appeal so professionally in the Land & Environment Court.

The salient lesson to be learnt is that failing to comply with Council's planning controls can prevent, or at the very least, delay building approval. A proposal that impacts adversely on the views or other amenities of neighbours, or otherwise detracts from the special qualities of Castlecrag, is likely to be refused.

A formula for success includes:

- Ensuring you and/or your architect fully understand the controls. (For those sensitive and difficult sites appoint architects who are experienced in similar projects);
- Complying as far as is reasonably possible with the relevant planning controls, including respecting neighbours' amenity and the special qualities of Castlecrag; and
- Discussing your plans with Council planners and neighbours early in the design process!

A development, which in the words of Commissioner Murrell, makes "a commensurate contribution to those principles and qualities that give [Castlecrag] its special qualities" can also be a wonderful dwelling!

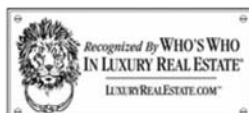
See the L&E Court website for full details:
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/caselaw/caselaw.nsf/pages/lec_2004_Case_341

Editors

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Our Wildlife Protection Areas

Our native wildlife will be able to breathe easier now that Willoughby City Council has designated a number of Wildlife Protection Areas (WPAs) in our bushland reserves. These are:

- **HD Robb Reserve** (Castle Cove), the **Castlecrag Northern Escarpment** and **Willis Park** (Middle Cove), which are WPAs in their entirety, so no domestic animals, leashed or not, are allowed.
- **Explosives Reserve** and **North Arm Reserve** (both in Castle Cove), **Flat Rock Gully** (Naremburn and Northbridge) and **Ferndale Park** (West Chatswood), which are WPAs except for walking tracks. Dogs must be leashed and confined to walking tracks.
- **Blue Gum Park** (West Chatswood) is now a WPA with the exclusion of the walking track between Dulwich Road and Kooba Avenue.

Council is empowered to do this under the Companion Animals Act (1998) and has based this action on the recommendations of its Fauna Study (2001) and the Urban Bushland Plan of Management (1997). Both recommended reducing dog access to bushland to protect native wildlife.

The Fauna Study identified a number of areas that provide critical habitat for native animals, some of which are listed under State and Commonwealth legislation as threatened species requiring protection of their habitats, while others have become uncommon in the Sydney Region. The Powerful Owl and Red Crowned Toadlet fall into the first category, while the second includes the echidna, Glebe Gully Skink and Bibron's Toadlet.



The rare Lewin's Rail was recently sighted in Castlecrag's Northern Escarpment. Photo Nevil Lazarus

In the WPAs closest to Castlecrag, the bushland between the Sugarloaf and Camp Creek catchments, is home to echidnas, the Powerful Owl, Red Crowned Toadlet and Swamp Wallaby, as well as two recently sighted ground-dwelling birds, the Buff-Banded Rail and the rare Lewin's Rail. There are no formal walking tracks in this large expanse of bushland, so native fauna is not disturbed.

In making their decision, Councillors took into account differing opinions about the impact of domestic animals on wildlife in bushland and the wishes of those who wished to exercise their dogs in reserves. For some residents the bushland provides a pleasant environment in which they and their dogs can exercise, but for others the presence of dogs represents the loss of the passive amenity provided by tranquillity and natural values. There are also the harmful impacts of dog faeces and the nuisance behaviour of some animals.

The decision by Councillors seeks to find a balance that satisfies the legitimate environmental and social demands of the commu-

nity. The WPAs that have been adopted are not as comprehensive as those originally recommended by the Fauna Study, but the designation of these areas, together with your support, will significantly enhance the conservation of native wildlife in our midst.

While there is considerable emphasis on restricting dog access to WPAs, residents should note that the restrictions apply to all domestic animals. Owners are required to keep their cats out of the bush at all times because of their impact on birds, small reptiles and ring-tail possums.

Willoughby Council is second only to Canada Bay in the provision of off-leash exercise areas in the metropolitan area.

It provides a brochure and map detailing 14 off-leash areas, which provide 10 hours per day of unrestricted use for dog exercise and socialisation.

Gay Spies

Community Fair 2005

As listed in 'Coming Events', the Progress Association has scheduled the 2005 Castlecrag Community Fair for Sunday, 5 June. Gloreen Goldin is establishing a committee to plan the event. If you can help, please contact Gloreen on 9967 9100.

The Progress Association will hold its regular *Trash & Treasure* stall at the fair. If you have any items suitable for this stall, can you please put them aside NOW.

If you need to place these in storage, please contact Kate Westoby at 9958 0215.

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Rare Bird Sighting

Local bird expert Andy Burton was recently called in by the WEPA bush regenerators to help identify an elusive bird that had been heard amid a dense lantana thicket on the banks of Sugarloaf Creek. Its unusual 'jek, jek, jek, jek' call had generated speculation about its identity.

Andy and the volunteers got a brief glimpse of the bird when it relocated between two lantana bushes, revealing a bright chestnut crown. On the basis of this sighting, Andy identified the bird as the rare Lewin's Rail.

This is the first sighting of this species in Willoughby.

If you are interested in helping with the Willoughby City Wildlife Watch Program, please contact Simon Brown, Council's Wildlife Officer, on 9777 7982. Simon can also help with copies of the soon to be published *Birds of Willoughby* book.

Water-Conscious Living

Free Workshop: Discover how to implement inexpensive and easy changes around your home to save money, reduce water usage and protect the local environment. Topics include rainwater tanks and water conservation in the home and garden. Sunday 17th October, 2-4.30pm OR Thursday 18th November 6-8.30pm. Warners Park Community Centre, Northbridge. For information and bookings (essential) contact Dan Williamson on 9777 7873.

Art Goes Down the Drain!

Willoughby City Council's 'Streets to Creeks' program is exploring its artistic side through drain stencilling in Castlecrag and Willoughby, which seeks to bring a little life to what are usually drab street kerbs. Local schools and scout groups have been involved as well as Council's bushland contactors. The stencilling tells us where stormwater from our streets, gardens and roofs flows to. Stormwater from Willoughby and the northern side of Castlecrag (facing Middle Cove) drains to Sugarloaf creek, Sugarloaf Bay and eventually to Middle Harbour. South Castlecrag stormwater drains to Sailors Bay and Middle Harbour. **Where does your stormwater end up?** Have a look on your nearest drain to find out!

Samantha Glass
Public Relations, WCC

Haven Amphitheatre

The Haven now has its website available at www.thehaven.com.au

It provides details of forthcoming events and you can check out the historical 1928 movie trailer on Castlecrag titled 'Beautiful Middle Harbour' on the 'History' page of the website.

The Haven Shop offers two Christmas gift DVD suggestions: re-live the Christmas spirit with your family singing at 'Carols at The Haven 2003' (\$25), and/or enjoy the full footage of Haven History back to the Roaring 20s (\$20). Email requests to bookings@thehaven.com.au.

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How about Christmas at Noosa?

My family have booked (and paid a deposit) on a beautiful house in Little Cove, Noosa thinking that it would be a lovely way to spend our Christmas break. However soon after we paid our deposit my brother announced that he was getting married in Spain at the same time. Of course, we're thrilled, but the Noosa Real Estate agent doesn't share our joy. They won't release our deposit until the place is re-let. So, dear neighbour, if you're interested in spending Christmas in Noosa the house is Bimbadeen at 11 Allambi Rise. It has 7 bedrooms and sleeps up to 14 in two units, each with kitchens, living areas, etc.

It is a great place for two (or more) families. Visit the Peter Dowling web site for pictures on: www.peterdowlingnoosa.com.au then look under Holiday Rentals and Little Cove.

The house is available from 17 to 26 December for \$7,360 (\$818 per night or \$58 per bed per night). We've visited it and it is beautiful.

*If you have any questions please call Jennifer on:
9967 1271*



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Letter to the Editors

Dear Editors,

This letter is long overdue to thank all of you and past Progress Association committee members for all your good work, community involvement and for *The Crag*, which I read with great interest.

I have lived in Castlecrag since 1969 and wanted to add some recollections and tributes to deceased residents, which you might publish. In this, I have been inspired by your obituary of Giza Hrones in *The Crag* No. 152 and an article in the *North Shore Times* on Iby Kery.

Not many of our residents recognise the numbers and influence of the post-Second World War immigrant on Castlecrag. The suburb's founders included many architects, artists and nature-lovers. Their wonderful institutions, such as the Community Centre and Library, the school and churches, and The Haven Theatre were consolidated in the aftermath of the War and it was then that many Europeans started to hear of Castlecrag. They continued their moves across the sea – this time from across Sydney Harbour and their flats in the Eastern suburbs. They were looking for a final haven amongst nature and like-minded people. Most of them had suffered greatly during the War, many of them being Jewish Holocaust survivors while others had Jewish connections.

They were overwhelmingly middle class professionals, cultured in intellect but creative too and they cherished the balance to their lives that living in this environment brought. Many built architect-designed homes to bring nature in, but if they could not afford to do that, were mindful of opening up their houses to enjoy their surroundings, nurtured their gardens and went on many bush walks to explore their new environment, which was so different from the Europe they grew up in.

When we moved here from the Eastern suburbs I was amazed to hear European accents in our one delicatessen, which was owned by a former Yugoslav weightlifter! I still remember his barrel chest and friendly banter, though not his name. He came to Australia in the 1930s and finally retired aged around 90. We now take for granted our café lifestyle and food from all over the world, but in the '60s he was the only one who stocked the salamis, cheese and sour cream so essential to Eastern European people.

Many of these people are still with us, living quiet lives as elderly grandparents. Some like my parents, Hungarian survivors Frank and Susan King, have reluctantly moved to units with lifts as they cannot manage their weekly bush walks any more. All of them found peace and good neighbours here in our

beautiful suburb and they were able to introduce their children to the love of the environment too.

I want to pay tribute to two neighbours who have passed away: Mrs Vera Nosek and Mrs Clements from Czechoslovakia, both Holocaust survivors who lived in Edinburgh Road for about 50 years. Their houses are now gone – replaced by new, modern ones, but thankfully fairly tasteful and not monstrous.

Castlecrag still has a community feel, but we should remember and honour our now-elderly pioneers who founded it for us.

Vera Dunn

Editors' Note: Since its creation by the American-born Griffins, the 'Ideal Suburb' of Castlecrag has provided a new home to many people from other lands. During 1938 and 1939, a wave of Europeans fleeing Nazi terror sought peace and freedom in far-off Australia. To many of these refugees, Castlecrag appealed for many reasons. They were welcomed here, as were later European migrants, and their cultural influence has played a significant part in our suburb's evolving history.

The History of Castlecrag Part 12 has been held over to the next issue.



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