

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

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JUNE/JULY 1990

* SIXTY FIVE YEARS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sue Randle (958 6344)

Sadly, I have to inform our community of the death of Bim Hilder early in June. Bim was a long-time resident of Castlecrag and a great artist who made outstanding contributions to the social and cultural life of our community.

Bim was born in 1909 as the elder son of the famous artist Jesse Jewhurst Hilder and Phyllis Meadmore. After studying commercial art at East Sydney, Bim accepted an offer by Walter Burley Griffin to work as a carpenter, which offered the opportunity to learn about the properties and applications of timber and stone. Between 1929 and 1948, Bim designed and supervised the construction of four houses in Castlecrag. During this period he also established himself as an expert designer and fabricator of display and exhibition equipment.

During the War, Bim worked as a camouflage artist, then turned his attention to sculpture work around 1950. He became an inaugural member of the Society of Sculptors and Associates in 1951 and became President in 1963. A major breakthrough came when he won the Reserve Bank Competition to do a sculpture for its new Martin Place Building. Bim went on to work as a commercial sculptor in many areas of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji and was awarded the MBE in 1978 for services to art and the community. He was commissioned to construct the memorial fountain to Griffin in Castlecrag in 1965. In 1982, Bim had works in an Exhibition of three generations of Hilders, along with his father's and son Kim's work. Bim is survived by his sons Kim and Larry.

Three Castlecrag residents were recently in the news with the Queens Honours list. One of Australia's sporting legends, Reg Austin, received an AM for his contribution to athletics, especially sprinting. Reg is credited with winning more professional races than any other Australian. Malcolm Latham received an AM for his services to architecture, especially town planning. Malcolm was associate commissioner of the National Capital Development Commission from 1980 to 1985, and commissioner from 1985 to 1988. A further AM went to John Graham for services to the housing industry. We extend our congratulations to all three.

Residents may breathe easily with news that the threatened revival of the Warringah Freeway remains a distant dream. The long-hidden Northern Transport Study surfaced after being circulated to North Shore Liberal MPs. The study presented figures which claimed that a freeway had the highest benefit:cost ratio (0.9) of the transport options considered for a transport link to the Warringah Peninsula. Representatives of Action for Public Transport have examined the report and come up with a radical re-ordering of options on the basis of available data. Part of the problem appears to lie in the very different criteria used for evaluating investment in road projects compared with public transport.

At a seminar on land transport at Sydney University on 18-19 June, a Government spokesperson announced that a decision has been made not to proceed with a Warringah transport link due to "environmental and political pressures".

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD AT THE CASTLECRAG INFANTS SCHOOL, EDINBURGH ROAD, ON TUESDAY 24 JULY 1990 AT 8pm. ALL WELCOME, NEW RESIDENTS ESPECIALLY SO.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CASTLECRAG CONSERVATION SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY 20 JULY 1990 AT THE CASTLECRAG INFANTS SCHOOL AT 8.00 pm. THIS WILL BE A SOCIAL EVENING WITH A SHORT TALK AND SLIDES ON THE SUGARLOAF BUSH REGENERATION PROJECT. SUPPER WILL BE SERVED. PRESIDENT HAROLD SPIES 958 8569.

CASTLECRAG LIBRARY

The Community Centre, The Rampart

TUESDAYS 3.30 - 4.30PM

THURSDAYS 12.30 - 4PM

SATURDAYS 10AM - NOON

NEW BOOKS LIST

VINCENZI, P Old Sins
COLLINS, L Maze
LUDLUM, R The Bourne Ultimatum
MAGRIS, C Danube
WEST, M Lazarus
MALOUF, D The Great World
BROOKNER, A Lewis Percy
ALBEURY, T A Time Without Shadows
FORBES, B A Song of Twilight
WHITNEY, P Rainbow in the Mist
FAST, H Confession of Joe Cullen
GOLDING, W Fire Down Below
DURAND, L Angkor
ASTLEY, T Reaching Tin River
FORBES, C Shockwave
LUSTBADER, E White Ninja
BRAYFIELD, C The Prince
SPELLMAN, C Paint the Wind
ELLIS, J Loyalties
STEEL, D Daddy
MACLEAN, A Night Watch
PLAIN, B Blessings
THEROUX, P Chicago, Loop
MORTIMER, J Titmus Regained

New members are always welcome at our free library, which is within walking distance of the shopping centre.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

KEEP THOSE REPORTS ROLLING IN, FOLKS!!!



How many times have you sharpened up your own actions after hearing of friends who forgot to fasten their seatbelts and suffered a hefty fine? Or took more protective measures after seeing someone suffering from skin cancer? The same applies when you hear of a break-and-enter in your area - chances are you'll take more care in the protection of your home. So we ask you - PLEASE REPORT breakins or attempted breakins in your neighbourhood to your co-ordinator, or your Area Co-ordinator, Richard Wheeler (958 6963). We will feature such reports in our Newsletter and so alert ALL residents.

Be an active Neighbourhood Watcher - new membership enquiries - 958 6963.

CASTLECRAG SPORTS CLUB INC. has vacancies for juniors 9-14 years now, or registration on waiting list for year beginning 1.2.1991. Phone 958 4365 (Mr Davis).

CHANGE OF NAME: The South Arm of Sugarloaf Bay is now known as **CRAG COVE** as notified in the Government Gazette dated 24.4.1987. Corteille Reserve (between Edinburgh Road and The Parapet) is now correctly spelled **CORTILE RESERVE** as set out in the Government Gazette dated 16.3.1990.

These changes arose from action by a member of the Progress Association by reference to the Geographical Names Board, Sydney. The Board is now located at the Land Information Centre, Panorama Avenue, Bathurst, 2795 (enquiries to M/s Elizabeth Hadden). The former Secretary of the Geographical Names Board, Mr R McPhail, is still located in the Lands Department, Bridge Street, Sydney and a computer facility is available to him for resolution of enquiries about geographical names.

Jan Morley

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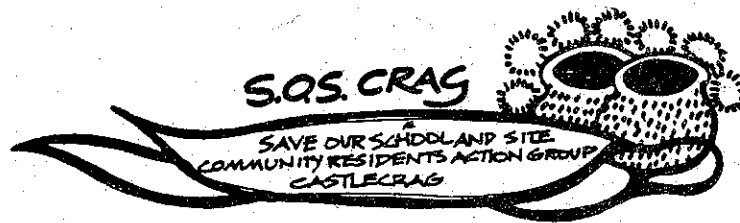
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There have been a number of significant developments regarding the future of the school in the last few weeks, with the passage of the Education Reform Bill on 24th May bringing it all to a climax. The Parliamentary motion regarding school closures contained a number of amendments which recognised that the Government had acted wrongfully in the way the fifteen schools were closed in 1989. The Labor Party and the Democrats combined in the Upper House to move that a School Closures Review Committee be established to properly look at the factors regarding those fifteen schools marked for closure in 1990, as well as those schools (like ours) already closed in 1989. The Government however refused to accept the retrospectivity clause claiming it to be unworkable. For some schools this was true, but for others (Balmoral, Riley Street and Castlecrag), there is still every reason to hold an inquiry into the closures.

After intense lobbying and pressure, the Democrats retreated on the retrospective clause because otherwise the Education Reform Bill would not have been passed and none of the still-operating schools would have had the opportunity for an inquiry. The condition that all this was agreed to was the assurance from Dr Metherell that the Castlecrag School site would not be sold and that consultation would take place with the community about its future use. For this dynamic piece of backroom politicking we have to thank Richard Jones, Democrat MLC. He reported to the Parliament details of the deal struck by the Government and the Democrats in the early hours of the morning (when you would think they would be asleep instead of deciding the fate of major educational reforms) to ensure Dr Metherell lived up to his word:

I have been most concerned about the school closures, in particular Castlecrag Infants School. I am given to understand that CIS and the whole area covered by the school grounds will not now be sold. I have been invited by the Minister, the Hon. T Metherell, to discuss the future use of the land and the buildings. I will be consulting with parents and residents to determine their view as to the most appropriate future use of the school and its land. (Hansard 22.5.90)

A press release was issued 24th May 1990 which simply said:

Education Minister, (Dr) T Metherell and Health Minister, Mr Peter Collins (Member for Middle Harbour) today said that the Government had decided not to sell the site of the former Castlecrag Infants School.

They said they favoured the site becoming an open green park, however, they were prepared to consider other options after community consultation.

Early on 18th June, Peter Collins made an unannounced visit to the school. He asked the person on picket duty what she thought the community wanted if the school could not be reopened. Let's hope this is not to be the full extent of the consultative process! Apart from this five minute visit there has been no word from the Government to SOS*CRAG or any other local organisation (except perhaps discussions with the local Liberal Party branch).

SOS*CRAG has requested a meeting with Peter Collins who is now reportedly saying that he thought the school should have remained open. It is certainly hoped that our local member will now set up an effective mechanism to enable him to hear the community's views on the matter.

Unbeknownst to SOS*CRAG, a meeting was held on June 8th between Dr Metherell, Mr Collins and a delegation from Willoughby City Council regarding the school site. No community representation was invited, neither was Richard Jones MLC. Thankfully though, Mayor Reidy assures us that WCC is pushing for the reopening of the school and is sticking hard to that position.

Not surprisingly, new forces have come into play with the growing community usage of the site. Whilst SOS*CRAG'S prime objective is still to have the Infants School reopened, it is clear that the community wants more than this sole use for the site and ideas for a multi-purpose community education centre are coming thick and fast. SOS*CRAG applauds the decision to preserve it as public open space - this is a major win and the first of our objectives has been achieved and we encourage people to use it as such. Nevertheless, to evict the eighty odd children who enrolled for infant education, scatter them over wide distances by bus and private car yet retain the grounds solely for a park, does not make economic, social or common sense.

LEGAL CHALLENGE: SOS*CRAG has decided to pursue court action challenging the validity of the rezoning of the site. Willoughby City Council is supporting this move by contributing \$3000 to cover court costs if we win. Our Ward Aldermen Mayor Noel Reidy, John Squire and Pat Reilly have all been most supportive in arguing our case in Council and our thanks go out to them for their continuing involvement.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: This event on 3rd June was most enjoyable and affirming. Non-Government state and federal members of parliament congratulated us on our partial victory and for our determination and energy. The children who would have started school this year planted their trees which were kindly donated by Council. Thanks to Mark Crew and the Conservation Society who were out in force in assist with the planting. The Progress Association generously provided the basics for the coffee shop, and a special thanks must go to Liz Tremain and Sue Randle for their brilliant catering. We certainly appreciate all those people who brought a plate of sandwiches or cakes to sell - we made over \$400 on refreshments.

With everyone doing their bit we are moving mountains. If you've never been on picket duty or if you are a lapsed picketer please drop in to the caravan (open 24 hours a day!) and put your name down for a shift. The value of our presence at the school should not be underestimated, the site would have been sold for medium density development had we not together been physically defending it.

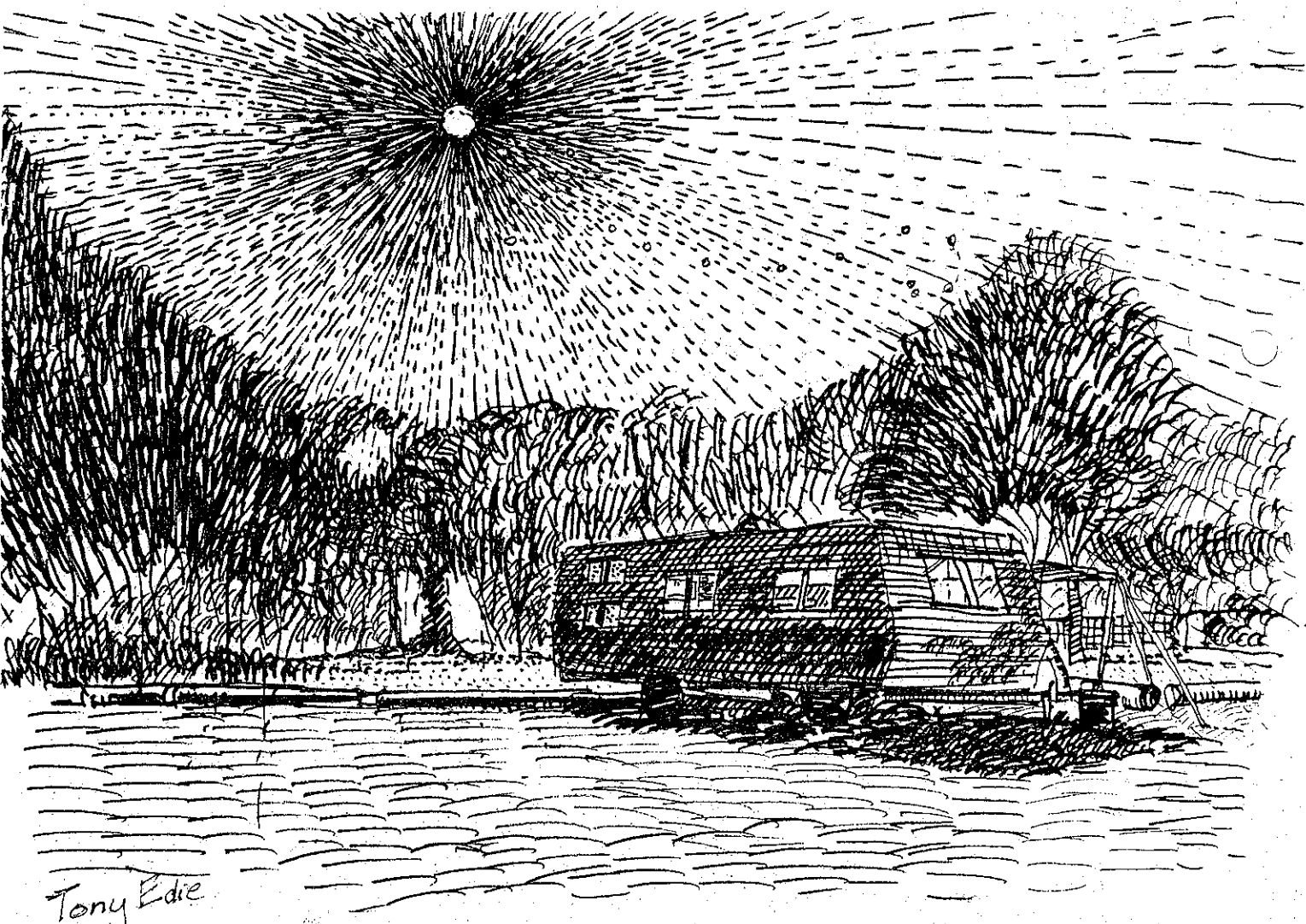
FUNDS: The coffers are low so any donations would be gratefully appreciated. Anyone with money-making ideas, time, energy to contribute to fundraising, phone Sue Randle 958 6344.

Time for everyone to stand together
Raise up our voices and sing
This is our past and our future
Come on stand together we can win!

Lindy Batterham, SOS*CRAG Co-ordinator.

Anyone interested in life-drawing on a regular basis (2.5 hours per week) at the school (model available) please contact Mary Ferguson 958 3948.

Parents of girls interested in joining Castlecrag-Northbridge Guides are invited to attend a meeting at the Guide Hall, Sailors Bay Rd, Northbridge (near oval) on Wednesday 1 August at 7pm. Gumnut Brownies may join at age 6, Brownies at 7 and Guides at 11 years. Further information available from Pamela 958 2374.



THE PICKET IN THE FULL MOON IN SCORPIO

CASTLECRAG: A DISCUSSION PAPER

by Bob McKillop

The Griffin Heritage

Among Sydney's 500+ suburbs, Castlecrag is unique. Its natural features make it an attractive place to live; its well defined boundaries contribute to a common sense of identity among residents; but, above all, its origins as a community deliberately planned in harmony with the Australian landscape sets it apart from the rest of the metropolis. Walter Burley and Marion Griffin brought a vision to their suburb that was ahead of its time. Walter expressed his plans thus:

The motive of the suburban development ... has been the permanent preservation of the pristine loveliness ... of the rockbound woodland coves, through the vigilance of numerous interested owners and appreciative rangers. The placing of the roads and the allocation of the home sites thus required complete topographic surveys followed by detailed personal feature studies in order to determine and to conserve the distinctive formations and flora...

The common proprietary interest in the adjacent play space, for the children particularly, of each neighbourhood of homes surrounding such an area, fills a want and restores a corrective in the social life of a great city, which has been a most important factor on the more healthy country communities¹

The importance of community in Griffins' Castlecrag is summed up by Donald Johnson:

Castlecrag was not only an experiment in suburban development: it was an experiment in community living. The philosophy and political thoughts of Walter and Marion Griffin were dominant factors in life at Castlecrag. There was a community social centre ..., a neighbourhood circle which met every month and in which everyone participated, and an open air theatre...

It is apparent that the architecture was to be no more than a series of habitable elements in the landscape. The houses were to be private, personal places in specific proximity to the total community and related in every facet to the environment. Castlecrag was a special community by the sea for people devoted to understanding and enjoying what they believed was a natural relationship with the land².

Many elements of the vision have been lost as Castlecrag's subsequent development was shaped by influences more in keeping with mainstream Australian suburbia, but the original planning concepts and the *Griffin heritage* were sufficiently powerful to set the community apart from its neighbours. As environmental issues have become of more general concern in the eighties, the

Castlecrag community have taken increasing pride in their *Griffin Heritage* and they have rallied to protect their neighbourhood against external threats, notably the proposed freeway and the closure of their school.

The City Neighbourhood

The efforts of the Castlecrag community are but one element of the quiet revolution in Australians' neighbourhood awareness and organization. Across the nation, communities have banded together to "repel unwanted invaders"³. The threat of the highwaymen of the RTA, the asset salesmen of *NSW Inc.* and Northshore developers have been great mobilisers of community spirit. Successful resistance has also meant that the defenders efforts have been labelled as "selfish obstructions to progress".

Because Castlecrag is a desirable location and environment for urban living, conflict between "developers" and environmental protection can be expected to escalate. The majority of existing residents - and the Progress Association - are justifiably concerned that the Peninsula will be overdeveloped. Most of us have firm views of what we are *against*: a *concrete jungle/another Hong Kong* is not what we have in mind. But what are we *for*?

Public opinion on the future of Australian cities has been remarkable for its lack of originality and vision over the past decade. Australia is one of the world's most urban societies and the characteristic feature of our cities is the suburb. The space of the suburbs, their opportunity for free and satisfying self-expression, mixtures of community and privacy, fond familiarity, and scope for quick change and escape lies at the heart of people's vision that Australia is a great place to live⁴. There is certainly scope to improve the planning and facilities of our suburbs, but the people have clearly demonstrated their preference for this style of living over the medium - or high - density urban models.

In the face of this reality, Australian governments have adopted an 'urban consolidation' fad as policy. There is little evidence that central intervention in this area has brought benefits, either in slowing city growth or reducing public costs. Moreover, as the North Sydney experience demonstrates, where high-rise development has occurred it resulted in expansion of private *living space* for those who can afford it, including increased demand for car use and commercial services, but not a population increase.

The community action groups which have recently emerged in our cities seek a lifestyle with freedom of expression and community support structures. Small neighbourhood units in which people share a sense of identity and maintain social support networks are becoming the core building blocks of the cities of the future.

Castlecrag, as one of Sydney's few examples of successful urban neighbourhood planning, has a responsibility to plan and strive for an improved community in a manner which might serve as a *model* which could be followed by others. These efforts should build on our heritage and strengths to enhance the existing neighbourhood.

A Community Centre

One outcome of community mobilisation to save the Castlecrag school has been the realisation that the school has served as a focus for the community for four decades. Without this community focus, Castlecrag as a neighbourhood would gradually disintegrate, with individuals relating to activities and services which are external to the suburb.

Accordingly, the fight for the school is an integral part of the long term future of Castlecrag. The political battle is now at a stage where new initiatives by the community have the potential to gain acceptance. These initiatives should focus on the most effective use of our public assets for the benefit of the community. Potential uses include:

- * a library and resource centre (resited);
- * child-minding and play group activities;
- * an environmental resource centre;
- * a venue for adult education activities;
- * a communication centre for community transport services and other activities;
- * an electoral polling centre; and/or
- * a park devoted to the Griffins.

Development of the school site as a neighbourhood centre would provide the basis for a viable community in the future and establish Castlecrag as a model for planning urban environments to meet the needs of urban communities into the 21st Century.

1. Griffin, WB, "Occupational Conservation", *Australian Wildlife (A)*: 1 (Oct 1935)
2. Johnson, DL, *The architecture of Walter Burley Griffin*, Macmillan, 1977, p.84.
3. Stretton, Hugh, *Ideas for Australian cities*, Third Edition, Sydney, Transit Publishing, 1989, p. XLIX.
4. *Ibid*, p. 14-15.

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HOW TO DESTROY THE BUSH WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

Harold Spies

I found this article in my mass of papers but didn't know its source until I found it in Robin Buchanan's 'Bush Regeneration'. The author is G P Edwards who presented it at a seminar 'Bush in the Urban Environment' by the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation (October 1980). I thought that the steplike process of bushland degeneration was applicable to areas of bushland in Willoughby.

Edward's theory of incremental development states that the development of a parcel of land proceeds by a series of steps which in aggregate form a far more extensive change than is envisaged at the first step. In other words although each stage of development can be justified on the basis that it is only a limited change from the conditions existing at the time, in fact it may represent a major change from the original condition or from the most desirable condition.

Put in less abstract terms, the destruction of a small area of bush is no less effective if it happens not at once through clearing, but by a process like this:

1. Initially the reserve carries native vegetation in good condition;
2. marginal firebreaks slashed;
3. boundary fences erected - machinery disturbs reserve while manoeuvring;
4. neighbour's spare car is parked there: compaction results;
5. other neighbour heaves garden rubbish and lawn clippings over the fence: bulbs take root, prunings drop seed, exotic grasses spread;
6. sympathetic engineer (or Council or other person or body in charge) retires;
7. gas pipeline and telephone cable dug through the reserve on two separate occasions;
8. drainage line excavated;
9. sewer main installed;
10. local urchins hack trees and build cubby house;
11. road widened - substantial disturbance;
12. resident illegally lops trees for view;
13. sickly trees removed because of danger of falling limbs;
14. lopping for electricity wires;
15. whole reserve slashed for reasons of fire hazard.

By this time the reserve is recognised as being untidy, heavily invaded by weeds and containing a few scruffy trees. There is little point in maintaining such a little-used nuisance and in any case, the kindergarten committee would save \$20000 if it could use the site for a new building.

Every one of the actions listed above is, by itself, eminently reasonable. But the ultimate result is a loss to the community of a valuable natural feature, and let us not pretend that our cities are fit to live in without natural features.

It takes a great deal of courage for the controlling authority or one of its officers to halt the process of incremental conversion of pockets of bush into weed-infested wasteland and then in turn, into something horticulturally 'tidier' or 'more colourful'. Unless the techniques for managing such pockets are better understood, authorities won't bother making the effort.

HERITAGE STUDY

Willoughby Council is looking for any historical information or anecdotes about North Castlecrag. It is making a heritage study of the northern escarpment for management of the area. Anyone with information or ideas on conservation can contact Robert Freestone or Lynne Sheridan, DC Research, 255 Clarence Street, Sydney (263 3200).

NORTH SHORE TIMES, 6 June 1990.

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OBITUARY

The McConnell family became our neighbours in the 1960s, so they have been part of our lives for almost 30 years. In that time you get to know people fairly well. We got to know Phyl best of all... she was a gentlewoman in every sense of that word.

Her daughters Jenny, Anne and Lyndall all married and moved away from Castlecrag. Tom McConnell died of a heart attack soon after his retirement from Goodyear Rubber and Phyl was left alone for the next fifteen years or so and that was when we came to know her best, and the way she coped with life's trials. She was a wonderful neighbour and when our dog took her roast leg of lamb from her kitchen bench one Sunday lunch time - Phyl laughed. There are not many people who could do that.

Golf and bowls were her passion and she was very good at both. She still found time to work at Castlecrag Library, for Meals on Wheels, the Smith Family and was an active parishioner of St James Church. But most of all she was a mother, grandmother and a good neighbour. She won our hearts with her simple goodness, her willingness to help others, her sympathy in times of trouble and her unfailing cheerfulness.

Her tragic death has diminished us all. Castlecrag has lost one of its most distinguished and best loved residents.

John Crew

1990 RED SHIELD APPEAL

With the assistance of a dedicated group of collectors, Castlecrag again increased its collection (an increase of just under \$1,000) for the recent *Red Shield Appeal*. Some very generous cheques were received and donations in general demonstrated the caring attitude the Castlecrag community has towards others in need of help. My sincere thanks to collectors and contributors for a very positive 1990 effort.

Jan Morley, Co-ordinator, Castlecrag Red Shield Appeal

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The Progress Association is looking forward to the Willoughby Fun Fair in Willoughby Park on Saturday 15th Sept 10am - 4pm. The 'Trash and Treasure' stall we hold there is our main fundraising event which helps to pay for the printing of our newsletter. Please keep the stall in mind if you are spring cleaning! Ring Rita Kaye (958 6146), Sue Randle (958 6344) or Kerry McKillop (958 4516) to arrange to have any unwanted 'treasure' such as old books, china, clothes and small white elephants, picked up from your house!

I/we wish to become members of/renew our membership of the Castlecrag Progress Association, for which I/we enclose subscription and/or donation. (Membership fees are renewable from 1st February each year.)
Family \$10; Single \$5; Fixed income/student/concession \$3.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please send to the Treasurer, Diana Jones, 72 Linden Way, Castlecrag.

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association by Mary Baker (958 5518) and Kerry McKillop (958 4516). Deliveries: Donna Sife (958 1841).