

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

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* SIXTY SIX YEARS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT *

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sue Randle (958 6344)

Dear Residents,

On behalf of the Progress Association I wish you all a happy 1991, and welcome new residents to our Castlecrag community. I would like to extend an invitation for you to attend our Annual General Meeting and supper on **Tuesday 26 February, 8pm at the Castlecrag Infants School.**

I take this opportunity to thank the resident caretakers of our waterfront cottages on the northern escarpment for protecting and caring for our community's heritage. In response to the public exhibition of the North Castlecrag Escarpment Heritage Study (see page 2), over 200 submissions from concerned residents have been sent to Willoughby City Council. Many stated that they regarded the historic cottages as part of Castlecrag's heritage and that they should be saved. They also supported retention of the resident caretakers. This is seen to be in line with Walter Burley Griffin's position that "buildings are the most subtle, accurate and enduring records of life - hence their problems are the problems of life and not the problems of form" [1928]. We all await Council's decision to save and maintain our heritage, and not to destroy.

For 14 years I have been associated with many community organisations in official and unofficial capacities, and now feel that the time has come for me to stand as a candidate for Middle Harbour Ward in the Willoughby City Council elections to be held in September this year. A resident of our suburb has not been elected to Council since Eric Kaye ably represented our ward from 1980 to 1987. During this period Eric served on many Council committees and was Deputy Mayor for two years.

The position of Alderman would be a major responsibility but a challenging one. With the support of our community, I would like to undertake this role.



OUR MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO ALL RESIDENTS SO COME ALONG TO OUR NEXT ONE, THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, ON TUESDAY 26th FEBRUARY AT THE INFANTS SCHOOL, EDINBURGH ROAD, 8pm, AND MEET SOME OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CASTLECRAG COMMUNITY.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CASTLECRAG CONSERVATION SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY 15th MARCH AT THE CASTLECRAG INFANTS SCHOOL AT 8pm. FOR DETAILS, RING HAROLD SPIES, PRESIDENT, 958 8569.

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association by Judy Stone-Herbert (958 7961) and Kerry McKillop (958 4516). Deliveries Donna Sife (958 1841).

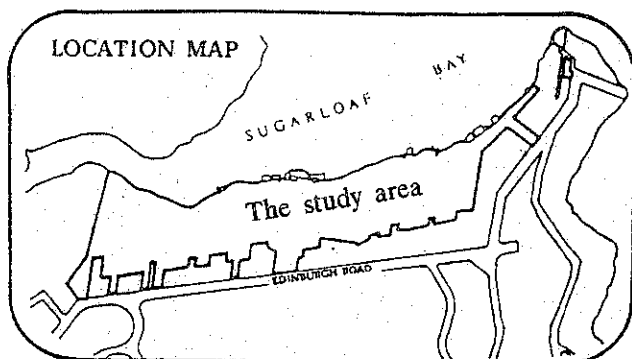
NORTH CASTLECRAIG ESCARPMENT HERITAGE STUDY

Ed: A consultant report by *DC Research* on the "North Castlecrag Escarpment Study" was submitted to Willoughby City Council in October 1990. The report has been on display in the Willoughby City Library and many residents have taken the opportunity to comment on its findings. The report is lengthy and poorly structured. It also lacks an executive summary. The following outline seeks to bring the main findings of the report to readers of *The Crag* in a coherent format.

The Heritage Study was initiated largely to help determine the historical significance of Council-owned waterfront cottages and other structures located on the northern escarpment of Castlecrag. Its aims were to analyse the history of the northern escarpment, identify and analyse its environmental heritage and make recommendations for its conservation and management. The study area comprised that part of the northern escarpment zoned for open space purposes.

The study assessed the degree of significance of 17 heritage items on a four point scale: 1, of slight significance to 4, of exceptional significance.

Overall, the northern escarpment is judged to have a general heritage value. However, in a local and to a lesser extent regional sense, the study area is undeniably of significance. It is the range of heritage values that is particularly distinctive. The various features capture a sequence of occupations back to the 1800s. This is all the more remarkable given its proximity to the centre of a city of some three and a half million people.



While revealing something of the historic appeal and functioning of the waterways of Middle Harbour in a regional sense, the significance of most heritage items is primarily local. Of most interest are the buildings and structures surviving to record a phase of development from the early 1900s - pre-dating Griffin's Castlecrag. The most socially significant items are those which convey the attraction of the area as a weekend and holiday resort in the early twentieth century. The extent and quality of the aboriginal heritage is judged to be inferior to sites in nearby bushland under less pressure from residential areas.

Aesthetically the area is significant as part of the scenic bushland environment of Middle Harbour. However, the natural environment has been disturbed and in places deleteriously affected by the suburban environment of the Castlecrag peninsula. Nevertheless, the blue waters of Sugarloaf Bay complement the rugged topography of the steep slopes, with the two elements drawing the northern escarpment into the wider and distinctively Sydney landscape of Upper Middle Harbour. The historic pattern of development in the area can only be appreciated in terms of the dominance of the natural environment.



FA Horsley's Boat Shed, Sugarloaf Bay

In terms of historical significance, the area is judged to be rich in local history, with an interesting and at times intriguing past, recalling many prominent figures in Willoughby public life. Of most importance in the present landscape are the reclamations, stonework and dwellings dating from the decade before the first world war. These represent the earliest extant structures in the modern development of Castlecrag. Local heritage items of considerable significance (level 3) are identified as:

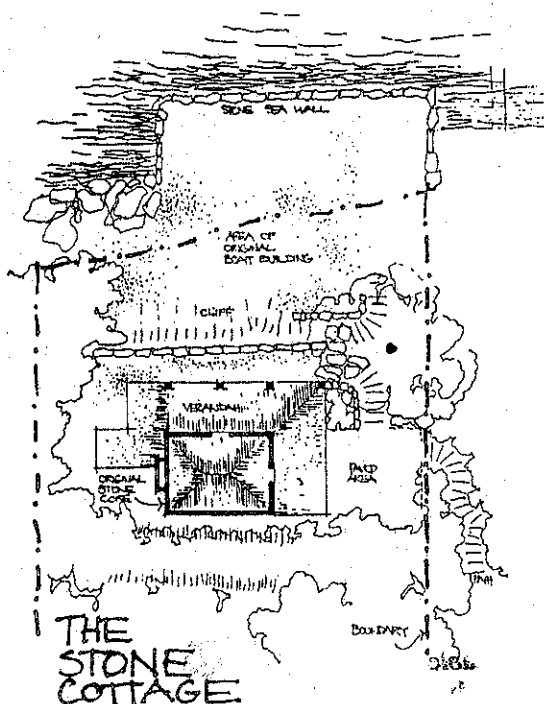
- * remains of municipal bath structures and access steps, 241 Edinburgh Road;
- * house, 233 Edinburgh Road;
- * stone core of cottage, 217B Edinburgh Road;
- * stone walls, steps and baths, 217B-233 Edinburgh Road;
- * rock engraving, 207 Edinburgh Road.

The planning, conservation and management implications for preserving this general heritage value focus on the historic waterfront core zone. The consultants put forward general objectives for an acceptable future heritage conservation policy for the study area to:

- * conserve the environmental heritage and integrity of the northern escarpment;
- * retain all significant structures where possible;
- * give statutory protection to all individual heritage items;
- * increase public appreciation of the history and heritage of the northern escarpment;
- * retain all archaeological features;
- * protect and enhance the native bushland environment;
- * balance natural and man-made contributions to heritage character;
- * increase public access to and use of the waterfront;
- * help resolve existing land use conflicts and management problems;
- * ensure coordinated and heritage-sympathetic management; and
- * acknowledge the housing needs of Council tenants in finalising implementation of any management strategy.

The study presents five management options for the heritage area. Attention is focused on the historic waterfront core, as the balance of the study area cultural heritage considerations are considered of minor importance, and natural environmental features are best considered at a larger regional scale. The options are:

1. **Heritage caretaking.** This covers the idea of installing permanent residents as caretakers in Council cottages as a means of ensuring their preservation. The option involves the disbenefits of private occupation of public assets. It would maintain the *status quo* of key properties, with the historic stone core of the cottage at 217B remaining obscured by more recent additions. Other forms of community caretaking (eg, daytime occupation for non-resident purposes) could be considered.



2. **Institutional campus.** Use of the waterfront core as a site for school and community groups to study landforms and natural science. A scientific field centre would require laboratories, tutorial rooms, library and meeting places, so that new structures would probably be required. The option may not be economically or environmentally feasible.
3. **Commercial development.** This might involve adaptation of the existing cottages to commercial use such as a restaurant or tea room. It might generate revenue for Council, but could be construed as leading to unacceptable alienation of public land and properties; and would represent a significant intensification of use that would not be environmentally acceptable. It would also involve substantial infrastructural, servicing and development costs.
4. **Community complex.** Based on leasing of facilities to local community groups who would undertake to maintain them in good order. The option is constrained by inaccessibility, costs of upgrading of buildings and the need to invest in substantially better environmental management services.
5. **Waterside historic park.** This would involve a planned heritage open space zone, linking ridge and shoreline down the face of the escarpment. The waterfront zone would be developed for passive recreational use. Existing sandstone steps leading from Edinburgh Road to the waterfront could be upgraded to form the major access route to the waterfront. These steps pass through a diversity of vegetative species and would serve to provide an excellent introduction for the casual bushwalker to the species of the escarpment. The stone hut forming the core of the cottage at 217B Edinburgh Road would be restored for use as an equipment store, exhibition space, general purpose building and/or supervised weekend shelter, managed directly by Council or community groups.

The waterside historic park option is preferred by the consultants as the most feasible, administratively simple, environmentally sound, and cost effective means of preserving and reinvigorating the cultural heritage values of the northern escarpment of Castlecrag. It is proposed that Council should prepare a detailed plan of management for the park area with input from the local community and government departments. Such a park could ultimately be vested in the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a discrete unit of the Sydney Harbour National Park.

EARLY DAYS IN WILLOUGHBY

My parents went to live in Edward St Willoughby in 1912. I was born there two years later. The house was one of several built at that time in the district known as *Knight Smith Houses*. Knight Smith was the owner and publican of the Willoughby Hotel and lived in a large house at the corners of Penshurst and Forsyth Streets, later owned by Dr Lang and now the site of a service station. A short distance from our house was Ryan's Road, now Artarmon Road, and where Channel 9 is now, was Foster's Dairy.

None of the roads in the area was really made and there were certainly no footpaths or kerb and guttering. In wet weather they became quagmires. Bricks in those days were carted from the yards at St Leonards in horse-drawn drays to the many houses being built in the district. Almost every brick house had a stone foundation for stone was considered to be the only suitable material for foundations in the clay soil of the area. The stone came from local quarries, the largest one was on Willoughby Road south of Ryan's Road.

When the quarry was worked out, a bus garage was built for The White Transport Company, one of several privately owned bus companies in the nineteen twenties and early thirties. Later this garage became the refrigerator factory of the late Sir Edward Hallstrom. Prior to this a blacksmith and farriers shop operated at the corner of now Artarmon Road. Townhouses now occupy the site of the old quarry. A common sight in wet weather was a dray bogged down to its axle. Bricks were jettisoned to place under the wheels. The only cars seen were likely to be those of doctors.

Ryan's Road was cut out of rock and was passable in all weather even though rough with outcrops of rock. The only traffic using the steep Ryan's Road was milk carts belonging to Foster's Dairy. There were two milk deliveries daily, domestic refrigeration was unheard of and there was no ice delivery in the district.

My father told me that when the family went out at night a hurricane lamp was carried and hidden in the bushes at the corner of Ryan's Road so that on their return by tram, the family could safely negotiate their way up the rocky road.

An open creek ran from behind what is now Windsor Gardens, then known as *Coffeys Place*. It meandered towards Artarmon Road where it was crossed by a wooden bridge in the dip just west of the corner of Sydney Street. It was joined by several tributaries surrounded by native vegetation. Almost behind Channel 9 was a large hole in the creek, known locally as *Kelly's Hole* and used by boys for what is now known as 'skinny dipping'.

Willoughby Road crossed the creek via a stone arch bridge known as Flat Rock Bridge. It must have been of solid construction as it was crossed by trams. I am fairly certain that the original stone bridge still exists and forms the centre of the bridge. Cut into the stone on the western side was *Fleming Mayor*, and a date which unfortunately I am unable to remember; it is quite possible that the inscription may still be visible as it was not covered by the original concrete widening.

A short distance east of Flat Rock Bridge was quite a high waterfall, at the base of which was a deep hole known as *Devil's Hole*. Fantastic stories were told that no-one had ever been able to find the bottom. This of course was proved untrue when in later years the creek, then in a large concrete tunnel, sadly was covered with garbage. The amount of garbage fill can be estimated by the fact that the back fences of houses in Garland Rd were originally at the top of a cliff some forty feet high. Now they are level with Hallstrom Park.

The gully between Willoughby Road and the Suspension Bridge was one of the most beautiful on the North Shore. Christmas Bush abounded as well as splendid specimens of almost every tree and native shrub on the North Shore.

I first went to Willoughby School when the main building in Mowbray Road was of stone. I can remember the date 1876 cut into the stone. As the school was fast outgrowing itself, classes were held in a two-storey house adjacent to the school and where the Girls' High School is now situated. The only light and air coming into my classroom was through a normal sized window and double French doors opening onto a verandah. Long desks which stretched from wall to wall were used. In order to get to one's seat, students had to walk over the desks as there was no room for an aisle. The present school in Oakville road was just being built. My brother and I often walked to school, across what was known as *The Cow Paddocks*, so named because Foster's Dairy used it for their dry cows. We were then able to walk in almost a straight line to Mowbray road, at Devonshire St.

The streets bordered by Mowbray Road, Sydney St, Tindale road and Artarmon road were just being formed by the subdividers. I could add much more about this part of Willoughby if space permitted.

Albert Beckenham, Castlecrag, 1987

(Ed: Mr Beckenham kindly submitted his article to our newsletter; it was originally published in the Journal of the Willoughby District Historical Society in October 1987).

CARETAKERS' STATEMENT

The resident caretakers wish to thank those who put in the effort (especially over the Christmas period) to write to Council in support of the waterfront cottages (and other items of heritage significance).

When it was decided by Willoughby Council to commission a Heritage Study of the northern escarpment of Castlecrag, we all felt 'great relief' that it was finally being done. The study makes great reading and tells of many interesting and historically significant events which have happened over the last century. It certainly highlights the richness of history of the escarpment and inextricably tied to this are the waterfront cottages.

It was therefore with surprise and concern we learned that the favoured option for use of the escarpment entails demolition of 227 and 297a Edinburgh Road with partial demolition of 217b. We, the caretakers of these houses, have always argued their heritage significance.

Fortunately, so do many others. When the study went on display submissions were called from the public. The response has been overwhelming. It is to be hoped that Council will in fact take serious heed of what the public wants and acknowledge once and for all the importance of these houses in the history of Castlecrag and therefore of Willoughby as well.

RUBY FURNELL

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Poets of Castlecrag!

SOS*CRAG is setting up a Poetry by Candlelight Night at the Ampitheatre. Komminos, the People's Poet, will contribute the second half of the evening's entertainment but it is up to you to supply the rest. Each poet will read his or her own work to the audience. Coffee and tea and supper will be served by SOS*CRAG.

The Poetry by Candlelight night will happen on the first weekend of March, Saturday 2nd at 8pm. Everyone should bring a candle and Aerogard.

If you want to contribute ring Lisa Purser 958 1503. Come out of the closet and join us in what promises to be a great evening!



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CASTLECRAG LIBRARY

The community Centre, The Rampart

TUESDAYS 3.30 - 4.30pm

THURSDAYS 1 - 5pm*

SATURDAYS 10am - Noon

NEW BOOKS LIST:

BOYD, M	A Life (Brenda Niall)
KENNARD, G	Solo woman
JAMES, C	May Week was in June
RENDELL, R	Make Death Love Me
BOURAS, G	Greek, a Foreign Wife
McCULLOUGH, C	The First Man in Rome
BYATT, A	Possessions
HOWATCH, S	Scandalous Risks
KING, S	Four Past Midnight
BINCHY, M	Circle of Friends
BRAGG, M	A Time to Dance
CLARK, M	Quest for Grace
O'BRIEN, E	Lantern Slides
WELDON, F	Darcy's Utopia
RENDELL, R	Going Wrong
FRANCIS, D	Longshot
SILVER, LR	The Heroes of Rimau
Le CARRE, J	The Secret Pilgrim
LUSTBADER, E	Angel Eyes
SANDERS, L	Sullivan's Sting
MORTIMER, J	Rumpole à la Carte
USTINOV, P	The Old man and Mr Smith
GORDIMER, N	My Son's Story
COOKSON, C	Gillyvors
AURL, JH	The Plains of Passage
de MILLE, N	Gold Coast

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Connie Wilson - Hon. Sec. 958 5542
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Congratulations to the **Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA)** for their National Estate Grant of \$18,000 for bush regeneration work in Sugarloaf Creek. These grants are highly sought-after and only three were received in the Sydney region. The grant will be used to carry out new work from the third waterfall towards the badly degraded area behind the mangroves in the South Arm of Sugarloaf Bay. Also, certificate for a Community Environment Project by the Keep Australia Beautiful Council was awarded to Willoughby Council in October 1990 for the project, which WEPA has been conducting since 1985. Council has also renewed its grant to WEPA to enable the regeneration work to continue.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Richard Wheeler 958 6963



Knock knock, who's there? NSW Fire brigade has advised NW that some unsavoury characters are using the title 'Fire Brigade Representatives' to gain entry to homes. The idea being of course to 'case' your home as to being a potential, or otherwise, break and enter prospect. Remember, before you allow any stranger to enter, ask to see some positive identification. And of course, if in doubt, don't let them in!!

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.