

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

No. 92

Seventy years of community development
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President's Report

Howard Rubie

In the Constitution of the Castlecrag Progress Association the objectives of the Association are stated thus:

To do everything possible to promote and further the interests of the district of Castlecrag where it is possible that benefit could accrue to the advantage of the district and could enhance and stimulate the community life of the residents of Castlecrag.

It was with these objectives in mind that a Special Meeting of the Association was called under Section 25 Part 5 of the Constitution to discuss legal action with the Department of School Education over the sale of the Castlecrag Infants School. No sane reason can be found as to why this community should be made to wear the destructive mistake made by the Department with the closure of our school (see the article *Castlecrag School - the Full Story So Far* by Andrew Frazer).

The debate ranged widely until one of our oldest residents, Hilda Chapple, aged 88, spoke with truth and power from her heart and challenged the meeting to join her in the following prayer: *Father, you know everything about this situation we bring before you regarding our need to preserve our Castlecrag School for our community. We pray that you will give us guidance and wisdom to make the right decisions according to your will and that the outcome may be to the benefit of our community and all concerned in this matter. We thank you, Lord. Amen.*

Now, it cannot be said that Mrs Chapple represents a small vocal minority, as her action yet again reminds us all of the devastating loss of the school site. Your Association will proceed with this legal action with verve and determination for the benefit of the residents, and the families of Castlecrag.

The next meeting of the Castlecrag Progress Association will be the Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Galzar Restaurant, Griffin Centre, Castlecrag, on 30th March 1994 at 8pm, with guest speaker Leonard Teale AO. Please make reservations with the restaurant (phone 958 1357) or fax Howard Rubie (967 2408) or phone Secretary Elizabeth Lander (958 5384), as numbers are limited.

The next meeting of the Castlecrag Conservation Society will be held at the Infants School, Edinburgh Road, on Wednesday 20th April 1994. For more information ring President Harold Spies (958 8569)

The film produced in the 1920s by Walter Burley Griffin's company, the Greater Sydney Development Association to promote the Castlecrag Estate, will be shown at the Walter Burley Griffin Society's next General Meeting on Tuesday 19th April 8pm at Castlecrag Community Centre at the corner of The Postern and The Rampart. Willoughby City Library is kindly lending the film which is on video. It is a wonderful film of Castlecrag in the 1920s, its bushland setting, Griffin houses and panoramic views of Middle Harbour complete with a short ballet sequence performed beneath the angophoras and eucalypts. Adrienne Kabos, President. All welcome!

Castlecrag School - the Full Story So Far

It is bitter irony indeed that the final scenes of the Castlecrag School site epic are being played out in the Year of the Family. Glanaeon are poised to bring down the curtain on community life in Castlecrag.

True, Glanaeon Council has done nothing wrong, staying clearly within the law. It simply followed the script written by a government determined to demonstrate the power of passing politicians over the public. On any analysis, the privatisation of the school site will prove to be amongst the greatest social injustices inflicted on a community.

What fools we've been! To think that victory would flow from the force of truth. To think that loss of unique open space and the inevitability of traffic chaos should stifle political bastardry. To think that a 19% increase in children numbers would support a rethink by the perpetrators of the zero growth myth. Their own figures showed an increase of 14% over two years in 1996 enrolment estimates.

But we were winning. There was a feeling that the Government had thrown everything at us and missed. The Kelly's Bush "minority dissidents" had won recently their battle for the preservation of open space in Hunters Hill - we must win: our cause was more compelling and supporting facts were emerging.

We knew that success could only be frustrated by someone or something educational - the Minister said that, in November 1992 and begged to be trusted. Geographical, traffic and community issues would frustrate any proposal to import an educational resource; the Department's preferred options of centres for behaviourally disturbed children and special education had not materialised - presumably for those reasons. The Government called for expressions of interest in the use of public sites throughout NSW for community projects. We were already doing that; a thriving community centre providing structured and informal education in a wide range of topics.

Oh it was great to be winning, and without a contender in sight!

What went wrong? We had lodged our submission for a community centre to be run by a committee of Willoughby City Council personnel and Castlecrag residents. Lodged by the closing date of 19 February 1993, it confirmed that the Minister's vision for school sites throughout NSW was already in place in Castlecrag.

But the final chapter had already been written. Glanaeon Council, as confirmed by information obtained recently under FOI, had been in discussion over the school site at ministerial level since late 1992. Little wonder that Tom Hartigan's article in the October 1993 edition of Glanaeon's magazine "Four Seasons" described the negotiations with the State Government over the Castlecrag School site purchase as "politically a potentially explosive issue". How fortunate indeed to have noticed the inconspicuous advertisement for the school under the heading "commercial premises to let and wanted", adjacent to the lottery results, in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of Friday 26th February 1993. One can only speculate as to what would be so contentious in nine "folios" in departmental files predating the sale advertisement and relating to contact between the Department and Glanaeon, that they cannot be released under FOI. Perhaps the Ombudsman will be more sympathetic to our request for a reassessment?

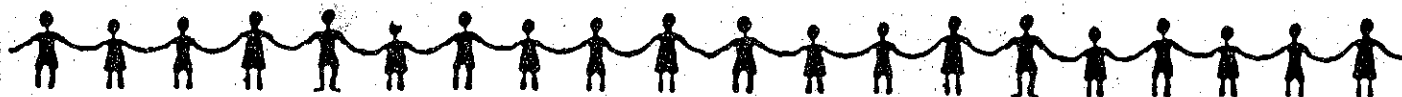
FOI releases show how Glanaeon's dream continued - only the application of the Castlecrag Progress Association for community/school use of the site stood in its way. Properties Director David Rowland, who 11 days previously had stunned me with his claim that Castlecrag could not have an open space problem because Burley (sic) Griffin designed Canberra, dealt the final blow. The extent of his published deliberation is the following extract from his recommendation to his Minister:

The Castlecrag Progress Association believes there is a need for the school to re-open and claims that it is valuable open space. They believe that a private school would exacerbate traffic problems. RECOMMENDATION: That approval be granted for the Valuer-General to be authorised to negotiate the sale of the former Castlecrag Infants School to Glanaeon Rudolf Steiner School Limited. D Rowland 30.3.93

Approved 1.4.93. I hope this matter can be resolved. Virginia Chadwick

It is a pity that the Glanaeon Council did not consider seriously Castlecrag's proposal for a three-year lease of the site during which time they would have had overwhelming support in negotiating an acquisition of their adjacent Warrane Road site. Glanaeon parents in Castlecrag prefer that alternative but were not consulted in the protracted negotiations by their school Council.

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Castlecrag residents have no need to follow expensive propaganda in local newspapers. They are aware of the achievements of SOS*Crags in pursuing social justice. They know who was responsible for the government abandoning its threat of medium density development on the site. They will have their own views on whether Walter Griffin would have welcomed Glenaeon as owners of the only open space in Castlecrag; in much the same way as they pondered Paul Keating's claim that Sir Robert Menzies would have supported the push for a republic. They will experience the injustice as the Glenaeon cars clog our inter-sections and Castlecrag infants are forced to travel outside the area for their public education. They know that the Department added a classroom at Northbridge over the Christmas break when enrolments exceeded the capacity of the school. They will strengthen their resolve to maintain their unique community and continue to wonder why Peter Collins was so impotent in taking our case to his government.

For now, we are assessing the information flowing from FOI projects and the many supporters who share our outrage. After all, the advertisement called for proposals acceptable in the community and which took into account local expectations - have you been asked by Glenaeon for your opinion? Watch this space for the next development - **THE COURT CASE.**

Andrew Frazer

Leslie Hope Wharton (1916-1994), a long-time resident of The Parapet, Castlecrag, passed away in January after a long illness.

Les and his wife Cecily built their home *Penwerris* in the late 1940s and established a very pleasant garden. Trained as a teacher (as was Cecily also), Les taught in country schools prior to enlisting in the 2nd AIF in 1940. His unit, the famous 2/30th Battalion of the 8th Australian Division, served in Malaya and Singapore, and took a most active part in fierce battles against the Japanese. Taken prisoner with thousands of Allied troops at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, Les was part of an Australian working party sent to Burma to construct the infamous Burma-Thailand Railway. Surviving the horrors of slave labour for over three years, Les returned to Australia in October 1945 and resumed his teaching profession.

Known as "Mr Fixit", Les skilfully made or repaired items not only in his home but also for friends and associates. For many years he was the Returning Officer at Castlecrag School voting booth for both state and federal elections. Les was closely associated with St Stephen's Uniting Church in Macquarie Street where he was a Church Elder. His "Mr Fixit" label was a reality in activities on church committees.

Castlecrag residents expressed their sympathy to Cecily, daughter Anne, and son Tim.

Nev Milston

Heritage and Conservation in Castlecrag

Draft Local Environment Plan No.73

Castlecrag residents will be aware that Willoughby Council placed Draft LEP No.73, Heritage and Conservation, on public display in November. The objectives of the Plan are to:

- conserve the heritage of the land to which the plan applies;
- integrate heritage conservation into the planning and development control process;
- provide for public involvement in matters relating to the conservation of the City's heritage; and
- ensure that new development is sympathetic to and does not adversely affect the heritage significance of heritage items and conservation areas and their settings, including streetscapes and landscapes and the distinctive character that these impart to the City's heritage.

Arguably, the most important item of man-made heritage in the city is Walter Burley Griffin's landscape design for the suburb of Castlecrag of 1919-20. The Griffin Estates, comprising some 100 hectares of the present suburb of Castlecrag, were listed by the National Trust as the Castlecrag Recorded Conservation Area on 3 July 1978. The listing was "to acknowledge Griffin's ingenuity as expressed in his road patterns and their sympathy for the topography of Castlecrag, and in his series of internal public reserves and connecting footpaths for common use and social interaction". The Trust went on to state that "a classified listing is not considered appropriate in light of the unsympathetic developments and more specifically, the deterioration of Griffin's reserve system and siting principles". Since 1978 the work of Walter Burley Griffin has received >>

international recognition as a leading figure in 20th century urban landscape design and, accordingly, the heritage significance of his Castlecrag Estates has been greatly enhanced.

In his Castlecrag subdivision, Griffin was able to achieve an expression of his vision of "man living in and with his environment". The Castlecrag community retains a strong sense of its Griffin heritage and a desire for its conservation. In 1981 an Advisory Committee was established to prepare a Local Environment Study which provided the basis for statutory planning controls. As a result of their work Development Control Plan No.3 Castlecrag (DCP3) was formally adopted by Willoughby Council on 18 May 1987. Since then, the Progress Association has received continuing support from residents who wish to protect the suburb's character and heritage.

Draft LEP73 designates the Castlecrag Conservation Area on the boundaries defined by the National Trust. It also lists a number of Castlecrag buildings as State and Regional Heritage Items, including 13 Griffin houses, the Haven Theatre and the Memorial Fountain.

In recognition of the importance of the issues raised in the Draft LEP and its potential impact on Castlecrag, the Progress Association called a public meeting on 20th December to provide residents with the opportunity to comment on the proposals and to provide the Association with an assessment of public feeling on the matter. Despite the busy pre-Christmas period, a large number of residents attended the second part of the meeting to discuss Heritage and Conservation issues. The meeting expressed strong support for the general principles of Draft LEP73, particularly its inclusion of the Griffin Estate as a Conservation Area. Several residents expressed concerns that the Special Provisions of the Draft are "too vague" and should be strengthened further. Contrary to the popular misconception that heritage listings and Conservation Areas can adversely affect property values, the theme of the meeting was that well-defined and well-managed Conservation Areas actually enhance both property values and quality of life.

This issue lies at the heart of the reservations which some residents have expressed about the proposed Heritage and Conservation provisions. It is noted that some concerned neighbours have

circulated letters expressing strong opposition to the Draft LEP on the grounds that a conservation zoning will result in "devaluation of your properties" and make it "more difficult to sell your properties". Such emotional claims generate concerns among residents despite their lack of objective assessment of the facts.

Following the public meeting, the Progress Association has made a submission to Council on the Draft LEP73. This expressed support for the objectives and rationale of Draft LEP73, while suggesting the need for further refinement and strengthening in several areas, namely:

- upgrading classification of the Castlecrag conservation area - Willoughby's one area of international reputation - a "conservation area of heritage significance";
- tighter definition of the Castlecrag conservation area to exclude areas not developed by the GSDA and with a character that has little relationship to the Griffin principles (eg, Rockley Street and the subdivisions at the end of The Bulwark and The Scarp);
- more balance between the built and natural environment in listing items for Schedule 1, with the concept of heritage including natural features (rock formations, water and vegetation including trees), views and vistas, Aboriginal heritage, rare and endangered species, urban planning concepts (eg, the Griffin planning concept in Castlecrag), and the streetscape as well as buildings of heritage significance;
- clearer definition of the listing process and assessment criteria to ensure consistency in identifying heritage items;
- listing of the Griffin walkways, landings, walkways and islands as State and Regional Heritage Items;
- the need for back-up development control plans (DCPs) to LEP73 which provide clear guidelines on what is/what is not permitted;
- preparation of quality visual material to support the LEP and DCPs through community education on development guidelines, especially the importance of harmony in conservation areas.

The Progress Association wishes to involve residents in the process of formulating LEPs and DCPs which guide the future development of our suburb. Your active participation in the Association's meetings and any other public meetings called to discuss these issues is most desirable.

Bob McKillop

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 January).
Family \$10; Single \$5; Fixed income/student/concession \$3.
Please send to the Treasurer, Diana Jones, Box 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

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Protecting our Natural Heritage

Gay Spies

Late last year Willoughby Council placed on display for public comment a Draft Development Control Plan (DCP) for Control of Development Adjacent to Bushland.

The plan applies to properties which share a common boundary with bushland but is activated only when a new development or alterations and additions are proposed requiring development and/or building consent from Council. The plan is not retrospective, however its aims and objectives can certainly provide guidance to lessen the impact of existing properties should owners wish to do so.

Why the Bush is at Risk: The fingers of blue and green, our waterways and bushland, are the essence of Sydney's natural landscape and are greatly admired by visitors to this country. While Willoughby is very fortunate to have both waterways and bushland, their quality is very dependent on how land is managed.

Our highest quality bushland is the Explosives Reserve at Castle Cove and at parts of Harold Reid Reserve at Middle Cove, areas largely on ridgetops above road level and houses. Most of our bush however is downslope of development where it is subject to erosion from stormwater discharged from roofs and paved areas, to nutrients in run-off from gardens, and to invasion by exotic plants which are favoured by increased moisture and nutrients and which if unchecked will eventually replace the native vegetation. Sediment and nutrients eventually reach the waterways, choking and polluting them, changing the vegetation, displacing or killing the fauna and rendering the waterways unsafe for public use.

What the Bush Does for Us: Healthy bushland is an asset to the whole community. It stabilises the soil, improves air quality and provides habitat for native animals. It provides landscape and scenic quality which contribute to the character of different localities and offers opportunities for a range of passive recreation activities.

For those lucky enough to live next door to bushland, it provides privacy, attractive landscape, cleaner air, a degree of climate control, protection from noise and the pleasure of enjoying at close quarters our native flora and some native animals, particularly birds. These privileges also increase property values. They also entail a responsibility not to harm the amenity of neighbours or the wider community.

Why Protection (and this DCP) are Necessary: The DCP acknowledges these values and recognises that development on properties adjoining bushland, if not carried out sensitively, can contribute to bushland degradation. For an overview of the problem, imagine a birds-eye view above Willoughby, from the Lane Cove River to Middle Harbour. The main issues, run-off and weed invasion, are easily recognised in the bush at particular locations: along creek lines, down the drainage lines linking roads and creeks and along the edges of reserves behind houses where there will often also be extension of gardens or dumping of rubbish. Similar problems exist where public or private facilities share a boundary with the bush; dumping also occurs in bushland where development exists only on the other side of the road; and the problem along creek lines is exacerbated by sewer overflows.

Since October 1986 when State Environmental Planning Policy 19: Bushland in Urban Areas (SEPP 19) was introduced (and in fact launched in Harold Reid Reserve), the owners of properties adjoining bushland have been required to consider the impact on the bush of any development on their land requiring consent from Council. In Willoughby this policy has not been implemented as firmly as it should have been. This DCP makes more explicit the measures required to make sure that the impacts of development are minimised.

The DCP Provisions: Measures required by the DCP include:

- siting of development so that as much local indigenous vegetation is retained as possible;
- minimisation and containment of disturbance during construction which could otherwise result in erosion, sedimentation, damage to vegetation and to rock outcrops;
- a setback from the bushland boundary so that adverse impacts on adjoining bushland are minimised and to allow space for control of stormwater damage. A seven metre setback is proposed but discretion applies according to site conditions, and to subdivision or dual occupancy applications if permitted;
- use of local indigenous plant species in the setback zone. Again discretion applies and the use of exotic species in other landscape areas is not opposed;

preparation of a **landscape plan and a soil erosion and drainage management plan**. Maximisation of soft landscaping, use of plants not requiring fertiliser, and control of runoff are vital, as enriched run-off from private property is a major contributor to the line of weeds so common along bushland boundaries.

The DCP has an advisory section dealing with bushfire control and with domestic pets. Appendices set out the requirements for preparation of landscape and stormwater management plans; a copy of the Tree Preservation Order; a list of Noxious Weeds (most of which are agricultural and of little relevance to Willoughby); a much larger list of Environmental Weeds which constitute the major threat to gardens and bushland; and species lists, though unacknowledged, of the flora of Harold Reid Reserve and Ferndale Park. While the latter are fascinating for those with a detailed interest in our local flora, it would be useful to provide a shortened list of species which can easily be propagated or obtained for landscaping purposes. Such a list for Castlecrag will be included in the next *Crag Newsletter*.

The DCP is neither new nor novel. Similar plans have been in place in other municipalities for some time and enable both residents and Councils to recognise clearly the measures needed to protect the natural environment. They complement the various planning instruments, building codes and health regulations which not only contribute to our standard of living but recognise our responsibilities to the wider community and future generations. These principles are summed up by Benson, D and Howell, J in *Taken for Granted. The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs* (Kangaroo Press and Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney 1990): *To protect and maintain our bushland requires the actions of governments and the vigilance of individuals. The role of bushland in enriching our lives and enhancing our suburbs, as well as for its own intrinsic value, is beginning to be generally appreciated. History shows that if our bushland is taken for granted, it will be quietly taken from us.*

Council is to be congratulated for preparation of this DCP. It would benefit from some fine-tuning but deserves wide public support. Although the formal one month display period expired in December 1993, the closing date for submissions has been extended to 11 March 1994. Copies of the DCP can be obtained from Willoughby Council's Division of Environmental Services. Copies of the Environmental Weeds lists prepared by the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators can be obtained from Willoughby Environmental Protection Association. Contact **Gay Spies 958 8569**.

A Tribute to Harry "Our Postman"

In April this year, Harry Fox, our dedicated, friendly and colourful postman retires, after serving with Australia Post in the Willoughby area for 40 years, the last 25 of these as a postman in Castlecrag. Since a lad, Harry has been associated with our community. He grew up in Northbridge and joined the First Northbridge Scout Group, subsequently becoming cub leader. Three of his cubs still live in Northbridge and all have sons who were cubs. Those cubs who are still around remember Harry as being "firm but fun". These are the very qualities that have endeared him to so many of our residents and to not a few of our dogs.

Harry's scouting activities left him with a love of walking, he speaks with pleasure of walks and camps to such places as the Blue Gum Forest on the Grose river and the six foot track through Jamieson Valley to the Cox's River. He started work as a rigger at Morts Dock, Balmain in the post-2nd World War period, this was a time when Sydney had a very active ship-building capability, based on Cockatoo Island Shipyard, Morts Dock and Poole and Steel. I was the Electrical Overseer at Cockatoo Island at the time and feel sad that these dockyards no longer operate and an important part of our heritage has been lost to Sydney.

Harry is a frequent visitor to many of our community functions and has a genuine affection for our suburb, he is critical of those who deface it. During my time as an Alderman I persuaded Willoughby Council to appoint him as an Honorary Ranger, a duty which he carried out very conscientiously. These days Council has a larger staff of permanent rangers.

Our community wishes Harry and his wife Marjory many happy years together in their retirement, and expresses the hope that they will continue their association with us.

Eric Kaye

The Crag, 92, Feb/March 1994, p 6.

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The Gallery, Castlecrag

The Gallery opened in the Quadrangle Shopping Centre in July last year. The aim of the gallery is to present top quality Australian craft such as wood, glass, ceramics, silver and bronze, as well as original Australian paintings by well recognised and respected artists. Gallery director Jenny Leslie, following her move from Frenchs Forest to the new premises in Castlecrag, now has extra space to be able to expand the range of craft exhibits and the number of exhibiting artists. Many of the artists represented have works in a number of overseas and Australian public and private collections.

On 11th March an exhibition of paintings by Sue Bell, David Brayshaw and Howard Ireland will commence, with superb hand-spun pewter by John Trier and ceramic pieces by Jim Ellis. This exhibition will run until Sunday 20th March 1994.

The Gallery is open seven days a week.

Request from Haven Amphitheatre

Bathroom fittings for dressing rooms
Treated pine posts: 7/7m long (250mm)
Support beams, steps: 750x75 - 75m
Floor joists: 125x75 - 155m
Partition studs: 100x50 - 50/2.4m
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Rails: 160x30 - 63m
Cement sheets: 6mm 1.2x2.4m - 24 sheets

The Committee needs these materials for the building and fitting out of the undercroft at the theatre. Please ring Lisa Purser 958 1503 if you have any of the above items to spare.

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RUSSELL BENN
Manager

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association (Box 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag) by Helen Levett (958 3510) and Kerry McKillop (958 4516). Contributions and letters are most welcome.

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