

Castlecrag Timeline

1940-1959

- 1940 The reserves and ways of access on the Castlecrag Estate were transferred from the GSDA to Willoughby Municipal Council, by Deed of Trust on 28 November.
- 1942 Phylis Stocker, who operated a registered child-minding centre at her home *Bayview* on Edinburgh Road consented to accommodate a group of mothers who had established a preschool group in part of the home. Two Kindergarten Trained teachers were appointed in 1944
- 1943 Marion Mahony Griffin gave the Title Deeds of Haven Amphitheatre to Willoughby Municipal Council on 12 October so the community could continue to enjoy, and appreciate the outdoor theatre. It fell into disuse until 1976.

- 1944 The Castlecrag and East Willoughby Community Advancement Co-operative Society Ltd was formed to administer the preschool and raise money for a Community Centre. Frank Duncan, who had experience of co-operative societies in England, was the first president and Joyce Batterham secretary. Land allocated by WBG for community purposes was transferred by Willoughby Municipal Council to the Co-operative Society. £1000 was raised and matched by the Council. Eric Nicholls donated his services to design the building and residents did much of the labouring work. Funds were subsequently raised to establish the Community Library at the Centre, to establish the Kindergarten (still in operation) and to campaign for establishment of the Infants' School. (*The Crag* 75, May/June 1991)



Castlecrag residents undertaking preparation work for their new Community Centre

- 1944 The Castlecrag Sports Club was established on 17 August to manage the tennis court (since duplicated) in Cortile Reserve on behalf of Willoughby Municipal Council. A new constitution was adopted on 30 September 1986 with the objectives: 'to foster the playing of tennis ... to encourage the participation of youth ... in the playing of tennis (and) to provide social and recreational facilities for its members'.
- 1944 Portions of Warner's 'Waratah' dairy farm were subdivided. Warner's Estate No.1 is located in the suburb of Willoughby, while No.2 extends from Edinburgh Road, south side, to Sailors Bay Creek. Dairy sheds were located on this land up to 1938.
- 1946 Castlecrag children began attending East Lindfield Public School.
- 1946 The Cumberland Country Council (CCC) was formed to oversee the planning of the future of Sydney's metropolitan area. The proposal for the Express Route from Manly to the city was taken up. In accordance with conventional thinking of the time, it was assumed that existing roads would be upgraded and use where possible. The Councils of Willoughby, North Sydney and Manly recommended a route along Strathallen Avenue, Eastern Valley Way, Edinburgh Road and then a bridge from Sugarloaf Point to Seaforth, while the CCC favoured a route along the foreshores of Northbridge and across the bluff at Seaforth.

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- 1947 The Castlecrag Community Centre was officially opened in November after years of effort by the community to raise funds and to assist with construction. Edgar Deans was instrumental in having the land set aside for the Centre. It initially housed the preschool kindergarten (which continues to thrive) which had operated at the site since February 1946. It became a thriving centre of community life.
- 1948 The CCC plans for the City to Manly Express Route were placed on public exhibition in March. Willoughby Council objected to the Northbridge route and, on 7 June, formally requested that the Castlecrag route be adopted
- 1949 In response to a request by the Minister for Local Government, the CCC dropped the Northbridge route for the City to Manly Express Route, leaving the Castlecrag route, which became known as the Warringah Expressway. The proposal to build the Expressway along the northern escarpment of the Castlecrag peninsula and across Middle Harbour by a bridge off Sugarloaf Point caused outrage in the Castlecrag community. The Progress Association, led by its president Eric Nicholls, led 200 irate ratepayers to a Willoughby Council meeting to protest against Council's support for the route. It also presented a petition with over 1000 signatures opposing the proposal to the Minister for Local Government. It was the beginning of a long battle to protect the natural environment of Castlecrag from ill-conceived development.
- 1950 Another of the projects that the Progress Association had fought long and hard for finally became a reality when the Castlecrag Infants School was officially opened on 30 June with Una Puxley as its first teacher. It had been established as a result of community action and it was to become a centre of community life, with practically all the children of Castlecrag commencing their education in the kindergarten and Years 1 and 2 classes at the school.
- 1951 The Castlecrag Community Library, housed in a new wing at the Community Centre, opened on 3 November. It had been formed at the Annual meeting of the community Circle in 1947 and a committee comprising Joan Stanton, Mrs Brett Hilder, Bim Hilder and Mrs and Mrs Walker set about the establishment of a free library. It was established under the Castlecrag and East Willoughby Co-operative Society. Pat Case was appointed as part-time librarian in July 1951, while Ernestine Claridge and Manfred Souhami catalogued the collection according to the Dewey system. The library is now a branch of the Willoughby Public Library, staffed by volunteers. Long-service librarians included Beryl Small, Rita Kaye, Joyce Batterham, Addie Saltis, June Jones, Hade Spiegel, Anne Thomas, Billy Hume and Dorothy Fraser
- 1950s A post-War building boom saw rapid development in Castlecrag, most of it not complying with Griffin's planning vision. David Blacklock (snr) commenced the Linden Way sub-division. At the shopping centre, King's Butchery and Hardware was opened. The route 203 bus service to Castlecrag commenced, initially terminating at the corner of Sunnyside Crescent and Edinburgh Road. The Infant's School experienced rapidly expanding enrolments to the extent that it often had six classes. The Castlecrag Scouts and Cubs were formed and met in an area of the shops now occupied by Castlecrag Cellars. The troop later moved to and purchased Warner's Dairy, which remains its base today. Bernard Hesling broadcast reminiscences of the Griffins and the early days of Castlecrag on the ABC radio magazine *Scope*. He subsequently published this as 'Life with the Burley Griffins' in his book, *Stir up this Stew*. The Griffin Reserves were neglected by this time and had deteriorated into impenetrable vegetation. The area in Sailors Bay below The Retreat Reserve was shark-netted, proving a popular swimming venue for Castlecrag residents. There was also much activity at the boatshed at this time with rowing boat hire and a junior sailing club based there. Yachts began to take up the moorings, many owned by ocean race winners.

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1952 All landowners along the Warringah Expressway corridor were advised that their properties were in whole or in part "affected by the road proposal". The majority of owners sold their affected land to the appropriate authorities over the coming years. At this time Bert Done had joined Edgar Deans as an alderman on Willoughby Council, while Albert Date also served for a short term. Eric Nicholls was Council's honorary town planner.

1952 The Methodist Church (now the Uniting Church) in Charles Street was opened and dedicated on 11 October. It is connected to the Sunday School Hall, which had been opened by 1947.



The Uniting Church was the first to be built in Castlecrag

1952 Primary school children from Castlecrag were being enrolled at Willoughby and Castle Cove public schools instead of East Lindfield. Other children attended other lower North Shore schools.

1952 A group of residents, including Jean Colville, Val McKenzie and Kit Parkes, organised a professionally produced play performed at the Community Centre to promote their idea of establishing a formal play reading group. There was a strong public response and Castlecrag Playreaders was formed the following year. A large number of play readings were held in private homes and at the Community Centre until 1968, when television's inroads ceased productions.

1953 Castlecrag Kindergarten amalgamated with the Kindergarten Union of NSW in order to maintain its practice of being staffed by professionally qualified teachers. Miss Joan Dove began her 25-year appointment as its Director.

1953 On his return to Australia from studying at the University of Pennsylvania where he was influenced by the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Peter Muller's first commission was a house for the American Ron Audette at 265 Edinburgh Road. The result was a dark-stained timber, site-hugging red brick building with a subtle affinity to Japanese architecture. It established principles, including accentuated massing and open planning, which were to characterise Muller's work. Extensive conservation works carried out in 2003 to maintain the significant heritage of this house.



The recently renovated Audette House by Peter Muller is one of the outstanding examples of the work by modern Australian architects in Castlecrag

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- 1953 The distinguished Australia photographer, Max Dupain, moved to their newly-completed house by architect Arthur Baldwinson in The Scarp with his wife Diana and young family. The Scarp was then a dirt road, the area was unlit and sewage had not been installed, but it was a paradise of undisturbed bush overlooking Sailors Bay. This natural bushland setting was to become an important subject of Dupain's work.
- 1955 In the then-dusty Cortile Reserve, a clubhouse was constructed to replace a corrugated iron shed and the ground was excavated for two tennis courts to replace the single court constructed in 1928.
- 1957 Architects Bill and Ruth Lucas designed *The Glasshouse* at 80 The Bulwark as their own residence. It was a hallmark building in low-budget, minimalist Australian architecture, comprising a square, steel-framed timber-joisted platform supported by four steel columns. The house, designed to touch lightly on the natural bushland, stands on tiptoes amongst the boulders and ferns of the steeply sloping site. Bill designed and built, in collaboration with his brother Neville, the two adjoining houses at 76 and 78 The Bulwark. In 1960 he designed the *Block House* at 70 The Bulwark for Con and Addie Saltis, which is also one of Australia's most significant modern houses.
- 1957 The *Griffin Centre* was redeveloped to give Castlecrag its first supermarket. Residents had successfully campaigned against the development of a hotel on the site now occupied by *The Quadrangle*.
- 1958 Archbishop Loane officially opened St James Anglican Church on 29 November. Castlecrag Anglicans had begun holding services in private homes in 1947 and Lot 112 in Edinburgh Road was acquired for a church in 1950. Construction of the church foundations, crypt and hall at 184-186 Edinburgh Road began in 1954. The lower hall was completed by July that year and opened by the Archbishop of Sydney. The church itself was designed by local architect John Brindley in cream brick of simple form with a light stone tower on which is mounted an unadorned wooden cross. Bim Hilder designed and built the mural in the porch, which depicts scenes from the life of the Apostle James.



St James Anglican Church