

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

No. 105

Seventy one years of community development
ISSN 0814 - 2054

Nov/Dec 1995

Carols by Candlelight

at The Haven 7.30pm

H A V E N
AMPHITHEATRE



Christmas eve



Free shuttle bus from the shops from 6.45pm onwards, or walk.
Definitely NO PARKING at theatre. Candles available for purchase.

*Seasons Greetings and a happy and safe holiday
to all our readers from the Committee of the Progress Association!!*

Bushland Legacy: A Social Responsibility

Address to the AGM, Walter Burley Griffin Society, by Professor Carrick Chambers

As I thought about this talk I kept feeling how much easier my task would have been if I could have spoken directly to Walter and Marion and asked them questions, the answers to which would help me understand their interpretation of Australian vegetation, of Australian scenery, and some of their long-term expectations for Castlecrag. Griffin wrote in an article *Occupational Conservation* in the 1935 edition of *The Wildlife Preservation Society's Journal: The motive of the suburban development* (his estate in Castlecrag) *has been the permanent preservation of the pristine loveliness of some five miles of remnant of rock-bound woodland coves, through the diligence of numerous interested owners and appreciative rangers. ...The whole of the shores, the predominant heights, the caves and sculptural rocks, are embraced in a connected system of local reserves, which separate and screen the lots apart.....*

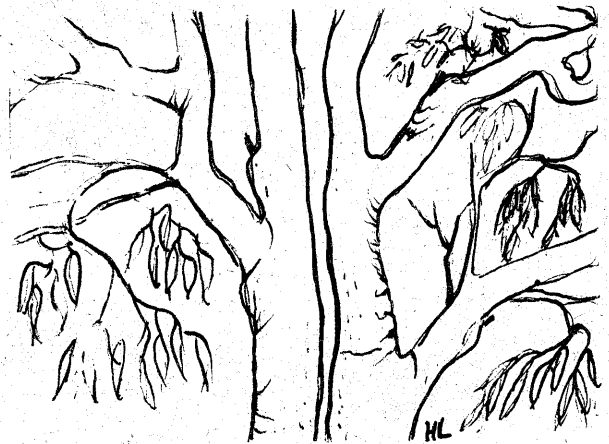
He goes on to write (remember this is 1935): *The acid soil of the Hawkesbury Sandstones underlying the Middle Harbour Headlands has furnished what is undoubtedly the cleanest, most delicate and varied ligneous evergreen perpetually blooming flora extant. For these reasons no vegetation could be better to live with, free as it is of rank growth, brambles, nettles, burrs, weeds or plants seasonally untidy. Moreover, it will persist through drought without watering and recover from abuse without help, provided the peculiar nature of the soil is respected and manures and exotic seeds are kept out.* He went on to state: *Not the least important factor in the conservation of nature here is, however, the covenant-controlled housing to prevent obtrusive and obstructive buildings and enclosures.*

We live in an age of increasing concern for our bushland legacy, and also of increasing appreciation of the subtleties of our Australian landscape. But there is also greater pressure to develop sites more intensively, to cover more ground with buildings, and as can be seen at parts of this peninsula and in other places, to destroy every remnant of bushland by redeveloping large wall to wall houses on each site.

On the more positive side, the past fifteen years has seen a great increase in the number of people actively involved in bushland management, and there has also been a parallel increase in seminars, conferences and training for this long-term management. At this stage, looking at Sydney in the broader sense, some Councils appear to be a long way ahead of Willoughby in developing such long-term plans for the management of their bushland. However, we must appreciate that Willoughby has at least put some resources into the hands-on work to be done in bushland management.

There appear to be two types of change occurring to bushland on the Hawkesbury sandstone. Sadly, the native species appear to be in decline. The challenge to reverse this decline is our social responsibility, if we are to preserve the true character of this Peninsula and its bushland legacy. Many of these changes are subtle and gradual, and, regrettably, we don't yet fully understand all the causes behind them.

It is the deliberate changes which give me particular concern for they are the result of planting large trees and shrubs from other areas. So many of those brought from elsewhere, even though they might be native Australians, have dense canopies; they are opaque; whereas one of the great features of most of the large native trees of this Peninsula is that they are transparent; they have open canopies; one can enjoy the views through their foliage. Just stop to think of *Angophora costata*, the red gum, *Eucalyptus sieberi*, Silver Top, *E. haemastoma*, Scribbly Gum, and perhaps to a lesser extent *E. piperita*, the Sydney Peppermint, to name just a few. All these species under most conditions tend to be transparent. From where you are sitting in this beautiful outdoor theatre, a Griffin legacy, you will see the sky and glimpses of the Harbour, through the Angophoras. The views can be enjoyed through the subtlety of constantly changing branches and foliage.



My plea is not that we must be absolutely pure (the Griffins didn't have that attitude to plants). But what we plant must be with care and thoughtfulness and if it is to be larger long-term framework trees, then certainly we must do everything we can to maintain the genetic stock of Castlecrag.

There is no doubt that managing urban bushland is complex and still relatively poorly understood. Phenomena such as runoff from gardens carrying enriched water, especially soluble phosphates and many other elements foreign to the landscape in this area, drainage from garden fertilising and probably, most of all, from the faeces of cats and dogs and other domestic pets, and the run-off from roads and other hard surfaces, are undoubtedly changing the soil regimes in urban bushland especially on Hawkesbury Sandstone. The effect of this enriched run-off is particularly noticeable in the gullies and streams which have provided very favourable habitats for foreign invading plants and animals. One can see evidence of the powerful and detrimental effects of run-off in many parts of Sydney and certainly by taking a boat trip around the Castlecrag Peninsula, one can identify very quickly where there are overflowing drains, poorly designed conduits, as well as identifying those properties whose owners regard the bushland below them as a place to dump rubbish. The consequent

enrichment has resulted in a vigorous growth of weeds which show up as a quite different texture and colour from the natural vegetation of Castlecrag.

I ask you to consider the significance of this bushland resource:

- It has educational value which reminds us of where we are and of the qualities of the native habitat that we have invaded.
- It is a resource for those who wish to learn and appreciate more about their natural environment.
- It provides, especially in a suburb like Castlecrag, a wonderful environmental setting.
- It is a place for survival of truly original inhabitants, that is the plants and animals.
- It provides an awareness to a wider society of our inheritance.
- It is a reminder for future generations of the historic setting of this great harbour and its city and it gives some degree of continuity with the past.
- Its existence contributes to an environmental balance.

On the other hand, urbanisation on this bushland peninsula has resulted in:

- Encroachment onto the bush; sometimes unnecessary clearing, but of course inevitable clearing for the site of a house and its immediate surrounds.
- Nutrient enrichment and increased run-off.
- Weed invasion.
- The dumping of garden waste, shoots and propagules some of which grow, especially as nutrients increase.
- Excessive storm water from the roofs of houses and from other hard surfaces carrying with it nutrients, weeds, seeds, propagules, rubbish, etc, all potential pollutants.

There is a need for community awareness about these problems:

- A willingness to prevent further encroachments.
- Prevention of dumping, especially of garden refuse.
- Careful control of urban freshwater runoff and total prevention of nutrient enrichment.

The native species that belong to the Hawkesbury Sandstone are amazingly adapted to extraordinarily low levels of nutrition. The soils derived from the Hawkesbury Sandstone are amongst the poorest soils known anywhere in the world, that is in terms of growing European agricultural crops. It was for this reason that the first settlement, the first farm on the Australian continent, on the site of the now Botanic Gardens, failed. In 1788 they planted wheat which yielded much less seed than that actually planted. The colony itself nearly failed. No doubt they were puzzled by this, because the land had supported a tall woodland and after it was felled and fired, the first growth would have been vigorous. We now know that a tomato seed planted in pure Hawkesbury Sandstone soil will develop as a small plant to the third leaf stage before it collapses and dies.

I think you will understand from that that the task of managing this bushland, especially when it becomes degraded, is complex. Restoration is only part of the story. We must address the causes of the problems

such as water-carried nutrients and particularly increases in the level of phosphorus. Such increases lead to the support of the more mesic vegetation of native and especially introduced species. *Pittosporum undulatum*, a native species, becomes a weed; just as the introduced privets from Europe and China, and the Camphor Laurel, become major weed trees and the local xeromorphic and xerophytic plants, so beautifully adapted to the periodic dryness and the extraordinarily low nutritional status of the Hawkesbury Sandstone, are replaced. Add to this the change in the fire regimes, and the habitats become more and more mesic, further inhibiting the germination and growth of the once-dominant species of *Eucalyptus* native to this habitat. The result is a gradual reduction in diversity. The eucalypts are not regenerating and so are not replaced. Some of the introduced berry-fruited trees and shrubs increase enormously, being eaten and dispersed by native birds. The populations of these native birds such as the Currawong drive out the smaller insectivorous birds and so we lose the balance in controlling insect pests, further exacerbating the decline of native plant species and the invasion of better-adapted weeds. Heavy shading leads to a loss of under-storey shrubs which further reduces the protective habitat for the useful small birds.

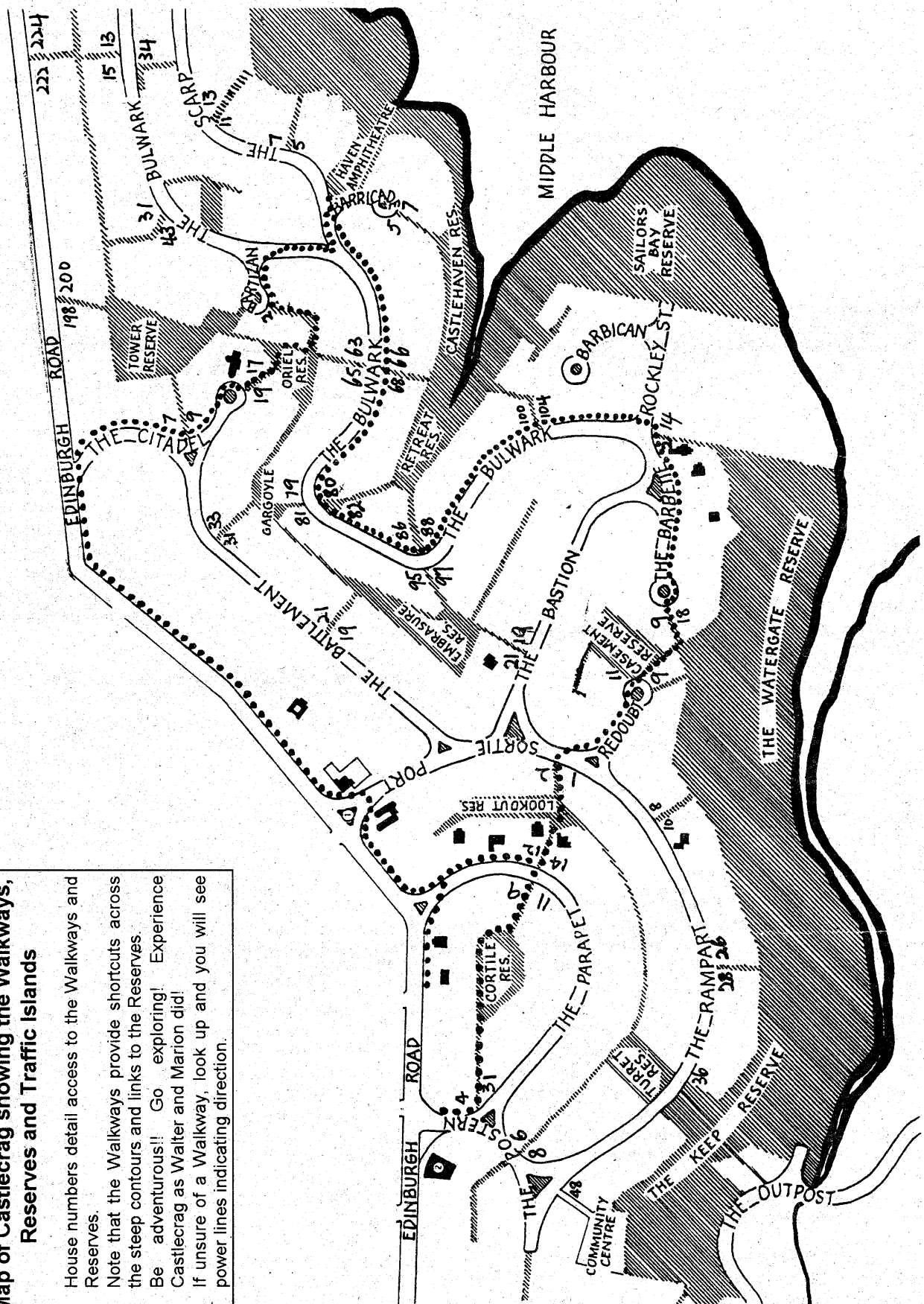
Well, it is a gloomy scenario. We must insist that sewer overflows in wet weather are not the result of illegal stormwater disposal. We must absolutely insist that construction activities have a program of total prevention of run-off and soil erosion into bush, stream and bay, prior to permits being issued for building. Regrettably one doesn't have to move very far from where I am talking to see all these problems blatantly exhibited.

There are already existing Planning Ordinances that give Councils responsibilities for many of these issues. The State Environment Planning Policy 19 (SEPP 19) is designed to protect bushland and urban areas and ensure that Management Plans are prepared for these areas, bearing in mind the need to make sure wherever possible that there is maintenance of fauna habitats and corridors. There is also mention of the control of domestic animals, and of course we should expect from our Council performance targets for each area of bushland and some positive moves to control severely degraded areas. It is ironic that some of the most degraded areas on this peninsula are areas owned by government as potential highway reserves; reserves we hope will never be used for that purpose.

While Councils need to be vigilant, most important of all are the educational programs which remind all those who live in these areas of the amenities as well as the fragility of places such as Castlecrag; and these amenities are not just the proximity to the CBD and a nice view of Middle Harbour, but rather it is an association with a very special history and a continuity which enables us to live with the natural environment. Any of you who have been on walks organised by the Griffin Society or the Castlecrag Conservation Society or WEPA will I am sure have been fascinated with all the features of interest on this small peninsula; its integrated system of reserves and pathways is unique. There are heritage sites, aboriginal sites, early European sites and much of this interest has come from the legacy of the Griffins. (to be continued.....)

Map of Castlecrag showing the Walkways, Reserves and Traffic Islands

- House numbers detail access to the Walkways and Reserves.
- Note that the Walkways provide shortcuts across the steep contours and links to the Reserves.
- Be adventurous!! Go exploring! Experience Castlecrag as Walter and Marion did!
- If unsure of a Walkway, look up and you will see power lines indicating direction.



WITH THE BURLEY GRIFFINS

BY LOUISE LIGHTFOOT WHO WAS A DRAFTSMAN IN THEIR OFFICE FOR 7 YEARS AND LIVED AT THEIR HOME IN CASTLECRAG

Imagine my dismay, when, as a young woman of 23 years, I received a request from my "boss" Walter Burley Griffin to leave Melbourne and go to Sydney as a companion and assistant to his wife, Marion, who was living and drafting on her own in Castlecrag, the safe-guarded foreshore suburb-to-be which was Mr Griffin's inspired plan for Middle Harbour, Sydney! What a shock to have to leave my home and parents for the first time, and also to leave the office in Melbourne where I had worked happily with other young draftsmen and with my girl-friend "Cappie" the typist. I had served my articles with the Griffins coincident with my course in Architecture at the Melbourne University; and now that the difficult days of evening study were over, it was "On with the Dance!" I was crazy about dancing. Dancing at Carlyons, the Palais, hostess dances at Melba Hall, at the beach palais at Mornington! My boy-friends were recruited for dance-partners. My brother, an excellent dancer, saw to it that I was never a "wallflower".

It was not only the grief I felt at leaving the Office and dancing that upset me. It was the thought of living alone with Marion. I had never been quite at home with her. She was not the companionable type, not like my mother or my delightful aunts. She was a remarkable woman, her husband's devoted and capable executrix and the supervisor of his young draftsmen. She was my instructress; and I still hear the sound of her ring scratching the paper as she rubbed out mistakes in my drawing. "Keep your mind open to the inspirations of the Creator" she would advise, "and then I will come and pick it to pieces". Her appearance was as peculiar as her manner. Her rather triangular nose, eyes a little too close together, thin shanks on loose ankles, strong Chicago accent, "mirthless" laugh and unusual clothes! I was quite in awe of her remarkable brain and ability and her lean, wiry strength. And now to be her companion and assistant! I considered myself the dunce of the Melbourne office, and scarcely dared to speak to such mature architects as Roy Lippincott (Griffin's brother-in-law) and Edward Fielder Bilson though I was quite at home with the brilliant young Henry Pynor and others. It was entirely my father's idea that I should study architecture; and this was because I won an "exhibition" in drawing and also high honours in mathematics in my final year at college. A dancing career was really what I wanted; but in those days it was "not done" to become a dancer.

After crying all day and having my meals brought to my room, I took the night train to Sydney. Arriving at the station, I then took the tram to Milson's Point Ferry, bus to Willoughby, and walked up Edinburgh Road till at length I saw two stone cottages appear on the rise; and I knew I must enter the second one. Standing on the stony road, tired and scared, I had a wild desire to turn back like a child attending school for the first time. But the old saying of my father (a headmaster) came back to me: *Do your own and do your best!* Marion appeared at the door and welcomed me with *Come right in!* I forget what happened the first day, but on the second day I was asked to cook the dinner. I did

not know how to cook. I peeled some vegetables and put them in a pot with some water, and began boiling them. After a while I returned to the stove but the water had all dried up. I poured cold water in and the steam rose up and burnt my hand cruelly. I ran and put my hand into a jug of cold water and held it there while Marion got me to the doctor near the beginning of Edinburgh Road. The good man tried many ways of giving me relief but I quickly dropped my hand back into water and went to bed that night with my hand hanging down in the jug of water. Next morning the sting had gone out and I began my drafting.

The drafting room was in the next door stone house. In a rear room of this worked a lonely, oldish surveyor's draftsman. His room reeked of tobacco. Marion advised me to make my own friends. *Join a drama club*, she said. We looked up the book and found Players' Club which I joined and was soon invited to take part in a rehearsal. I was given one sentence to say; but when it came to the time, I could not remember a word. I never went back, but the girlfriend I made that evening was from a family of young people, and my happy days of boating on Middle Harbour began. When we went out in a yacht one day in the main harbour, the yacht capsized and the men hauled me back as I hung onto the sides in the water. That rather dampened my fancy for yachting. I used to write long, long letters home describing the beauty of Sydney Harbour. One of my jobs at this time was mending ring-barked trees, for vandals used to come at night and Marion prized every tree in that bushland. She showed me how to cut splints to place across the scar using mud to bind them, and tying the injured part around with sacking.

One little incident in the house remains in my mind. I was saying my prayers one night at my bedside when Marion entered my room suddenly. She started back as though she had seen a ghost (I was wearing a long white nightgown). No doors were ever closed by Marion. *Anyone needing privacy is not living right*, she declared. Now she gasped: *Oh, you don't get much privacy here, do you?* and gently closed the door.

Towards the end of the year (1925) Mr Griffin came to live at the Crag and we now lived in a different stone house, No.17 The Parapet, with a fine view over the harbour from the glass doors between the several columns of the living room - *to bring the garden into the house*, said Marion. With Griffin, landscape and architecture were inseparable and his office stationery read *Architect and Landscape Architect*. He loved the small flowers of the Australian bush and in no time knew the botanical names for a multitude of them. *Not a weed in the Australian forest*, he said enthusiastically. He called the big cultivated garden blooms *monstrosities*. Many groups of people, inspired by Griffin's ideals, came to visit the house. At one of these evenings Marion danced around the room for her guests. Afterwards I asked her to teach me to dance. *I only make it up as I go on*, she replied..... (to be continued.....)



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For information phone Graham Ellis 9958 7594

Membership of the Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

Our Constitution stipulates that a member of the Association must be a natural person who is a resident or ratepayer of the area (designated in Rule 1.3) being over the age of 18 years and has been approved for membership of the Association by the Committee. Two months membership is obligatory for a member to be eligible to vote; but since approval by the Committee usually occurs one month after receipt of application for membership, voting eligibility usually takes three months. The names of the people applying for membership should be supplied with the membership fee.

Membership fee is for the calendar year. A person who was a member in 1995 will automatically be eligible to vote in 1996 as soon as the 1996 membership is paid (as long as the 2 or 3 months qualifying period has elapsed).

A "family" cannot be a member because a "family" is not a real person. If a company owns a property in Castlecrag, then the directors of the company do not qualify for membership of the Association if they live outside Castlecrag.

Membership fee is \$5 per person (\$3 for students and those on a fixed income). Membership is for the calendar year and is renewable from 1 January 1996. Members must be at least 18 years of age.

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Please send to the Treasurer, Diana Jones, Box 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag (can be hand delivered to Newsagency).

CASTLECrag MEATS

Christmas fare 1995

Hams: Leg (bone in), boneless, champagne leg, wholesale price for larger quantities.

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The competition to design a new capital city for Australia caused controversy in 1912 and remains a fascinating chapter in the history of Australian town planning. *An Ideal City?* shows 46 of the surviving entries including Walter Burley Griffin's winning design, exquisitely rendered in gold leaf on silk by Marion Mahony Griffin.



Callicoma serratifolia

Dear Editors,

Madge and I were amused and intrigued to read Margaret Chambers' article *What's in a name?* in **The Crag** of Sept/Oct. Margaret mentioned a number of CastleCrag streets but somehow failed to include our little section of CastleCrag, **The Battlement**.

We have lived in *The Battlement* since December 1957 and have had our street called *The Battleneck*, *The Battlecock*, *The Bottleneck*, and *The Settlement*. Our first address in CastleCrag was 2 *Sortie Port* (from July 1950 to December 1957) and a not-uncommon address on envelopes was 2 *Sortie, Port CastleCrag*. Once, when we had occasion to give our "unique" address over the phone to a bemused shop assistant, great difficulty was encountered in convincing the assistant that we lived in "Sortie Port", not "Sortie Port Street", and even after minutes of explanation, the ordered article was addressed to "2 *Sortie Port Street*".

Over the past 45 years, letters have been addressed to: *Castlereagh*, *Castle Hill*, *Castle Craig*, and *CastleCrag*. Even now, the occasional envelope is delayed because it has *Castle Cove* on it.

Neville and Madge Milston

CastleCrag Library News

The Community Centre, The Rampart

TUESDAYS 3.30-4.30 pm

THURSDAYS 1-5 pm

SATURDAYS 10 am-noon

CastleCrag Community Library which is funded by Willoughby City Council and administered by a small group of local volunteers, has been functioning since 1948. We regularly buy new books which are listed in most issues of *The Crag*, and we have a comprehensive range of fiction, non-fiction, childrens' books and reference books on a variety of subjects. If you have not already joined the Library, come for a visit and see what we have to offer. The Librarians work on a monthly roster and can always use extra helpers. So, if you would like to assist in this worthwhile interesting community service, call in. You will receive a warm welcome.

Joyce Batterham

momo

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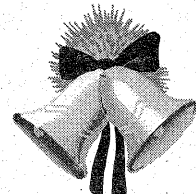
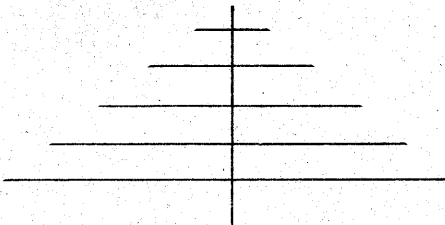
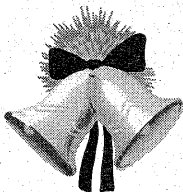
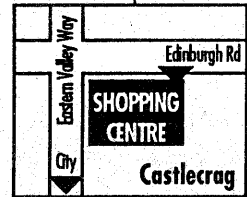
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L. J. HOOKER CASTLECRAG

Seasons greetings from the
L.J. HOOKER CASTLECRAG team
Bronja, Richard, Graham

91 Edinbrough Road, Castlecrag NSW 2068
Tel: (02) 9958 1800 Facsimile: (02) 9958 6063
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Please do not deface our new bus shelter with notices. We are fortunate that the shelter does not have advertising panels and its transparency allows full vision of our native vegetation. A community notice board will soon be erected nearby.

Willoughby City Council's Draft LEP 65 has been gazetted and now becomes LEP 1995.

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association (Box 6/77 Edinbrough Road, Castlecrag) by **Kerry McKillop** (958 4516) and **Helen Levett** (958 3510). Contributions and letters are most welcome. All contributions and letters received will be considered for publication. The editors' decision to shorten or otherwise edit copy is final. The deadline for the next issue is 30 January.

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