

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

No. 111

Seventy two years of community development

December/January 1996-1997

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TELSTRA TOWER for CASTLECRAG

Castlecrag is threatened by the real prospect of another mobile telephone tower, similar to the large Optus tower in the Northbridge Plaza car park.

Late in 1995, Telstra submitted to Willoughby City Council a proposal for a 25 metre high tower to be located alongside Eastern Valley Way at *The Quadrangle* shopping centre. Plans show that this tower would dominate the skyline to rise well above the tree-line. Council declined to support the proposal because of its negative visual impact and because of uncertainties as to health risks.

The owners of *The Quadrangle* have indicated to CPA representatives that they have never been willing to enter into a site lease with Telstra unless the proposal had received the support of Council.

Meanwhile, despite community and Council concern, Telstra have proceeded with the application process and in September 1996 referred the proposal to the EPA who are still considering it, and will take into account any submission from the CPA. Under the present Telecommunications National Code, companies are exempt from local planning codes until 1 July 1997; hence their extraordinary efforts by Optus, Vodaphone and Telstra) to construct wherever possible prior to the deadline.

We are appreciative of the *The Quadrangle* owners' stance on this issue. Should such a high tower be erected, it would be visible from all the approaches to Castlecrag and from many points within the suburb — not a pretty sight.

Many residents are concerned about the accumulative effects of micro waves already radiating from the Vodaphone antenna on the Griffin Centre roof. The Telstra tower in close proximity will double that emission. The kindergarten is in the middle of the emission zone, like many residences and shopping centre workplaces.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT THE HAVEN

AMPHITHEATRE, CASTLECRAG

CHRISTMAS EVE AT 7.30PM



Castlecrag Choir, Santa will visit,
Candles available

Free bus from shops from 6.45pm

DEFINATELY NO PARKING AT THE THEATRE

CPA issues during 1996

At our Special Meeting held on 26 November, over 80 of our members met to consider the Special Resolution "That the Constitution of the Castlecrag Progress Association Inc., dated April 1992, be rescinded and the draft Constitution, dated 31 October 1996, be adopted". The result of the vote was that 53% of members present voted 'yes' but this was less than the required majority of 75% and therefore the motion was lost. We would like to express our thanks to the sub-committee for its having completed the task of review of the Constitution.

Optus has visited Castlecrag and left forever the environmental vandalism of its aerial cabling and accessories. Our residents put up a wonderful fight, but in the end, we were powerless against the might of Federal legislation. Be warned, Telstra advances!

If you do not belong to the Castlecrag Progress Association, you are encouraged to become a member. We have been in existence for seventy two years and hope to be around for many more. An application form is on the back of *The Crag*.

On behalf of the committee, Seasons Greetings and best wishes for the coming year.

Elizabeth Lander, President

A FAREWELL TO FRIEDEL

Friedel Souhami lived in Castlecrag for 56 years, at 14 The Parapet since 1940. She died on the 12 October 1996, aged 96. Had she lived 4 more years, she would have achieved her desire to have lived in three centuries.

Frieda Christine Hedwig Hoffman was born in Meissen, Germany in 1899, and with her husband Manfred and daughter Renate, came to Australia in 1939 as war refugees.

As a young woman, Friedel left home at 18, just after the 1st World War and later obtained a scholarship to study social work, and she worked in that field. In 1924 she married Manfred Souhami, of a Jewish family from Turkey. Their only child, Renate, was born in Berlin at the time when inflation was rampant. The Souhamis moved to Heidleberg and in the Depression, to Rastatt, finally leaving Germany in 1938 because of Manfred's Jewish background.

In 1940 the family moved into the Griffin house at 14 The Parapet, Castlecrag. Life was a struggle, with Friedel taking on odd jobs such as cleaning and ironing. The Souhamis soon became involved in



Castlecrag community life; they were active in the fundraising for and building of the Community Centre and assisted in establishing the library, where Manfred spent many hours cataloguing books in the Dewey system. He died suddenly in 1959.

From 1949, Friedel had taught German at the Berlitz Language school in Sydney, where she was known as Frau Hoffman until her retirement in 1985. Friedel's many friends in Castlecrag, her students and contemporaries from Europe were constant visitors to No.14 for coffee, whiskey and exhilarating conversation on a wide range of subjects.

Friedel spent her later years in her favourite armchair in the lounge room where she welcomed visitors. An album containing photos of her great grandchildren was at her side. She always wanted to know what was going on in Castlecrag and the 'outside world'. You knew you would always have an interesting couple of hours with her.

Even in her later years, Friedel stayed in her own home, on her own, but with outside help organised by Renate. It was not until some weeks before her death she finally left Castlecrag for a nursing home.



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WILLOUGHBY INCINERATOR RESTORATION

The Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator in Small Street, Willoughby, has been described as a building of highest quality and international heritage significance. Professor James Weirick sketched the history and significance of the incinerator in a lecture to the Walter Burley Griffin Society's Annual General Meeting at the incinerator on 28 October.

A Heritage Impact Assessment of the former incinerator has been prepared by Grahame Brooks following a serious fire in July 1996 which destroyed the roof and internal fittings of the building. Built in 1934 to the design of Griffin and Eric Nicholls for the Reverberatory Incinerator and Engineering Company, it fell into disuse by the 1960s. Despite local pressure for its demolition, its social, technological and architectural significance was recognised by several local residents, including David Turner of Castlecrag, who lobbied for its restoration. The National Trust classified the building in 1970 and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects included it on their list of significant 20th century buildings in 1973.

Colin Dillworth approached Willoughby Council to restore the building as a restaurant in 1980. This was approved and the building, restored with the assistance of the NSW Heritage Council, reopened in 1982. Much of the internal equipment was removed in this process and alterations made to the internal floors and stairs. The restaurant became a victim of economic pressure in 1988 and was subsequently converted to an office complex.

Grahame Brooks has provided an interim statement of the heritage importance of the building. It is listed on the Register of the National Estate, indicating it is an item of national significance; it is listed as an item of state significance under Willoughby Council's LEP73 and has a permanent Conservation Order by the Heritage Council of NSW. Its significance is based on historic, aesthetic, social and scientific grounds.

Historically, the incinerator is associated with the efforts of local governments on the eastern Australian seaboard to tackle waste management problems through the adoption of new technology.

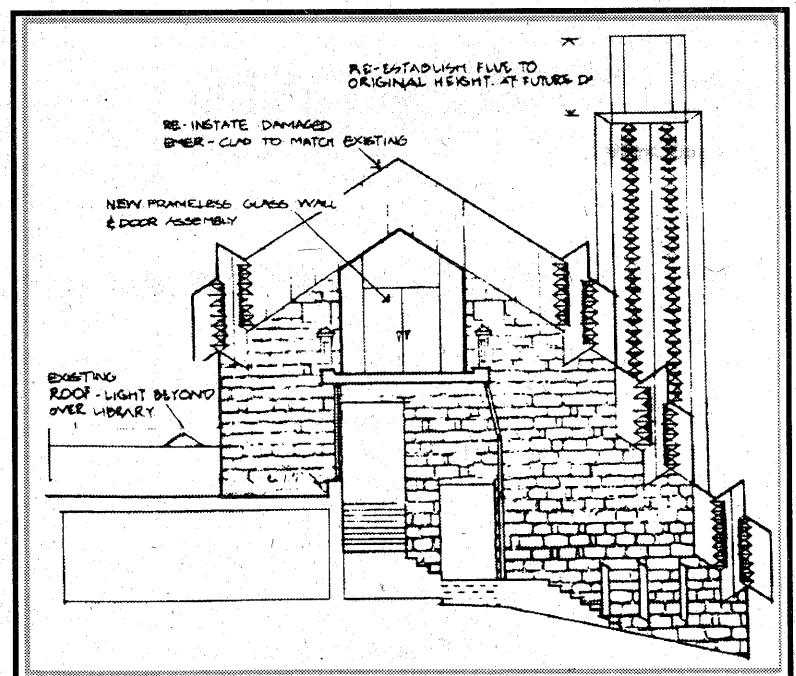
RIGHT: Architect's sketch of the reinstatement work, showing west elevation.

Aesthetically, the building is the best surviving example of Griffin's industrial work, expressing a marvellous architectural composition which makes maximum advantage of the hillside setting.

Socially, the incinerator was formerly held in low esteem by local residents who called it 'the Instinkerator', but recognition of its architectural significance and subsequent restoration has generated a sense of pride that Willoughby City has received acclaim for saving the building. This is reinforced by the marvellous visual backdrop the building provides to the adjacent parklands. Scientifically, the industrial plant represented an important response to new techniques for incinerating waste.

Professor Weirick noted that while the fire was a tragedy for this heritage building, it provides an opportunity for reconstruction to sound conservation principles. Although the efforts to save the building over the past 25 years were heroic, changing the attitudes of city aldermen, the work was not done in the context of the type of conservation study we would expect today.

The internal industrial technology fabric of the building was changed for other uses, major alterations were made to the southern facade and the original Griffin smokestack was truncated. The preliminary assessment by Grahame Brooks provides a starting point for a quality restoration of this most significant building.



LIVING WITH the INCINERATOR

When a little girl moved into her family's new home built on the edge of Flat Rock Gully in 1926, she had no idea that her child's paradise of bushland plunging into a sandstone bedded creek would soon have a rubbish tip cloaking it — with an incinerator as its crown.

Before 1930, the residents of Garland Road, Naremburn were visited by Willoughby Council officers, who explained that they were planning to build an incinerator — 'but it will only be for a few years' they promised 'then the gully will all be filled in and there will be a beautiful park instead'.

Thirty years later, the incinerator was still spewing smoke across the gully, the hillside was still choked with rubbish and the flies were still massing.

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The residents had not been convinced by council assurances. They had rallied, lobbied, protested, and had meetings, including a large public meeting at the theatre in Sailors Bay Road.... to no avail.

On 'rubbish days' you shut the doors and windows, and gazed across the gully at the trucks dumping rubbish over the slope and the chimney belching out disgusting smoke. On hot days, the smell from the tip was really putrid. The incinerator was not designed to cope with the amount of rubbish from the burgeoning council area. Short-sighted forward planning.

The locals learned to live with it; they had to, since they could only sell at a loss. Naremburn was still a new suburb of young families in California bungalows in the 1920s and 30s and promised large allotments for pretty gardens, small orchards and vegetable plots, as my family had — all with a tranquil view of the bush, much space for children to roam and a clean creek for them to paddle in.

What a thing for a council to do to the families they had encouraged to move there! Nowadays, there would be environmental impact studies. The affects on health (especially childrens') would be a strong issue. The tip would be dumped.

The only aspect of the rubbish tip that locals did not despise was the design of the incinerator itself. 'At least *it's* not ugly' they said. Thanks, Mr. Griffin. If it had not been for your design, we would have had something akin to a brick toilet block on a beach headland.

My grandmother thought she was building a house in a little paradise for her family to live, next door to her parents. My mother grew up there with her five brothers and sisters. I knew it well and could imagine what it had been, but the reality was 'paradise lost'.

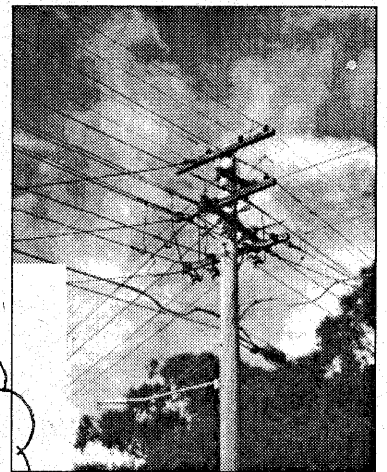
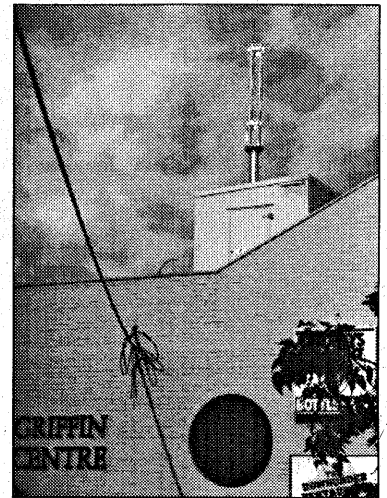
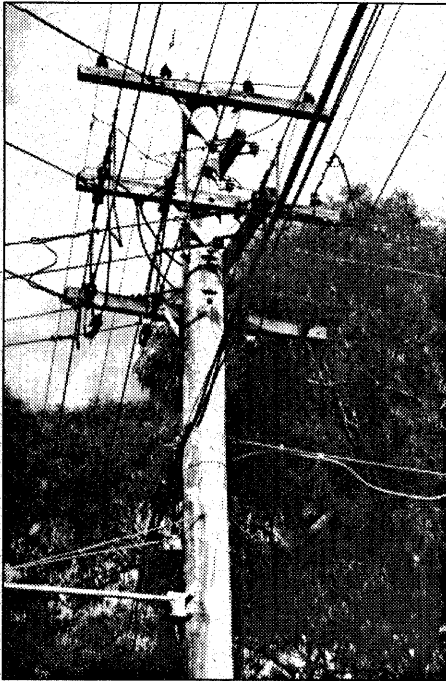
Adele Barnett

Foreshore Building Lines: Supreme Court Decision

The full bench of the Supreme Court handed down its judgement on 15 November, in favour of the Appeal mounted by Willoughby City Council and the Dept. of Urban Affairs & Planning, to reverse the decision of the Land & Environment Court (Justice Bannon) to abolish the Foreshore Building Lines below Edinburgh Road and Sugarloaf Crescent, Castlecrag.

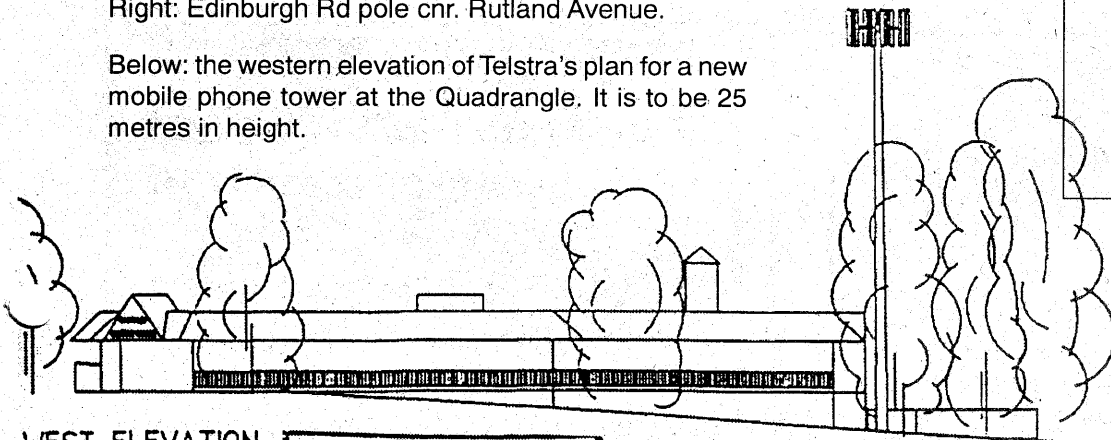
Judge Advocates Meagher, Sheller and Abadee found that the technicality used by Justice Bannon to define the meaning of 'foreshore' was not relevant to the every day use of the term. They regarded that '...the land, the protection and regeneration of which the foreshore building line encouraged, could be said to form an integral part of the foreshore setting' and that '...the action of the Minister in making the lines is neither manifestly unreasonable nor disproportionate to the objects of the EPA Act 1979'. (Editor)

Beautifying Castlecrag 1996-97



Above left: the pole outside the Castlecrag butcher shop cnr. of Raeburn Ave. Middle & right: the Vodaphone antenna on its structure atop the Griffin Centre. Right: Edinburgh Rd pole cnr. Rutland Avenue.

Below: the western elevation of Telstra's plan for a new mobile phone tower at the Quadrangle. It is to be 25 metres in height.



Below: Edinburgh Road looking toward The Pinnacle, in the early 1940s.

Photo courtesy of E. & R. Kaye

WEST ELEVATION
SCALE 1:250



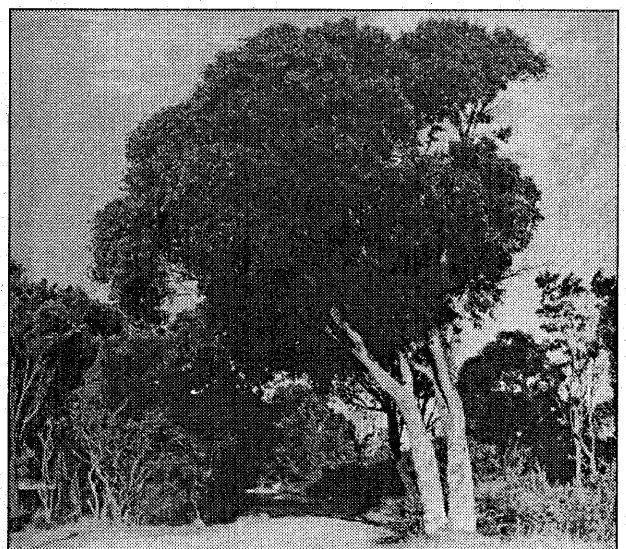
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Community Bytes

Madge Milston, a resident of Castlecrag since 1950, was presented with a Life Governor Certificate and elected an Honorary Life Governor of the RSL Veterans' Retirement Villages of Narrabeen and Yass, at their 57th AGM and Luncheon held on 26 November 1996. Madge Milston and her husband Neville are well known in Castlecrag for their continuing efforts to support community and charity organisations.

Willoughby Retirement Village Hostel has acquired a Numbus vehicle and needs volunteer drivers to help the hostel residents in meeting their medical business and shopping commitments. Please phone Eddie Britt on 9417 3095 or Annette Duthie on 9417 8443 if you can help.

Last October, The Castlecrag Progress Association ran the traditional *Trash and Treasure* stall at the Willoughby Community Festival. Our thanks to Kathy Burgess, Katie Cooney, Marie Bassett, Mark Crew, Mike Burgess and Richard Blacklock who did the work which raised \$550 this year. Our membership fees do not raise enough money to carry on the business of the CPA, so some form of extra revenue is always needed.

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

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.

Name: _____ \$

Signature: _____

Name: _____ \$

Signature: _____

Name: _____ \$

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Donation: _____ \$

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.