

THE CRAG

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

No. 113

Seventy three years of community development

March/April 1997

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CPA

the ROAD AHEAD

The recent AGM of our Progress Association saw the Community Centre packed with members keenly interested in the outcome of a highly contested election of executive and committee. Bob McKillop was elected as President for 1997. We present his first President's Report and concepts for future running of the CPA.

Our Progress Association is experiencing an upturn in community involvement. On 18 March some 200 members (plus observers) assembled at the Community Centre for the Annual General Meeting. Apart from demonstrating our hall's lack of capacity to cater for large groups, this remarkable turnout to a community meeting is unparalleled in Willoughby, and probably Sydney.

The action for the night centred on the claims of two groups for election to the Progress Association committee. In the event, six members of the previous committee were re-elected and four new committee members were elected (see box). I was persuaded to stand for President by residents deeply concerned by the divisiveness and disruption which characterised Association meetings in recent times. I believe I have an appropriate background and experience to take on this challenge.

My starting point is that our rapidly expanding membership and the divergent viewpoints this represents are both positive indications of a healthy organisation. What has not been satisfactory has been the combative nature of the conflict which has emerged in our community on environmental issues. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing, for it can signal the need to change in terms of how we manage our natural environment/heritage. If the conflict within our community can be successfully managed to achieve positive outcomes for our environment and quality of life we will all be better off.

I hope to make a positive contribution by facilitating and guiding the divergent viewpoints which exist in our community toward a more co-operative approach to the

issues which affect us all. Your committee has met to consider how we should approach this task. We will be putting a number of proposals to the April meeting which seek to address the concerns widely expressed over the past year (see Meeting Notice p.5).

These include a survey of residents to provide them with an additional vehicle to express their views on issues which they would like the Association to address and steps to improve the two-way flow of communication between the executive and members. Also, many of the proposals put to the Association require additional resources, particularly finance, and we need to consider how these can be mobilised.

A more fundamental issue concerns the role — or mandate — of the Association, particularly in terms of how it responds to the changes (developments) which are occurring in Castlecrag. Some claim the Association should fulfil a watchdog role monitoring the decisions of Council. This is easier said than done. Previous Committees have found that they "generated outrage if they did and were damned if they didn't" comment on individual DAs. We are open to constructive suggestions as to how we might establish a clear and even-handed policy on the Association's role in responding to the changes occurring in Castlecrag's built and natural environment. One approach may be to refrain from comment on individual cases and to focus our attention on the standards and regulations which set the parameters for physical development and protection of our heritage.

Bob McKillop

1997 Progress Association Committee:

President: Bob McKillop (9958 4516)

Vice-Presidents: Howard Rubie, Kate Westoby

Secretary: Elizabeth Lander (9958 5384)

Treasurer: Diana Jones

Committee: Adele Barnett, David Harrop, Andrew Kirk, Craig McCarthy, Gay Spies

SEE UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS ON PAGE 5

proposed D.A. Assessment

State Government's Integrated Development Assessment Initiative

The Department of Urban Affairs & Planning (DUAP) has initiated reforms to the development assessment process in NSW. The reforms maintain established principles of thorough environmental assessment and public participation. They seek to streamline the assessment process and focus resources on developments with potential environmental impacts through:

Integrating development consents

The aim is to establish a clearer, simpler and more certain process for obtaining approvals to commence a project such as a building or setting up a new business. A single system will be introduced to control the development of building and subdivision aspects of a project under the EP&A Act. Subsequent approval under the Local Government Act will no longer be required. Associated licenses, permits and approvals required under other environmental legislation will be linked with the development consent.

Providing appropriate consent

A more streamlined decision-making system will be established to ensure that developments are assessed according to their complexity and likely environmental impact. Four categories of applications are proposed: exempt development, complying development, local development and state-significant development.

Increasing the role of the private sector in the assessment system

Private sector professionals, called accredited certifiers, will play a greater role in the compliance of non-discretionary parts of the assessment process.

The reforms are based on extensive Australian experience which has established basic principles for effective environmental management and protection. A central principle is the establishment of agreed and clear assessment criteria and standards of performance which minimise the environmental impacts of development activities. This provides certainty to applicants with respect of the impacts which are acceptable, and reduces reliance on the discretionary powers of officials and politicians to approve applications which do not meet minimum standards.

The development assessment proposals have significant implications for local government. Their effective implementation will require significant resources to improve and develop the criteria and standards against

which applications will be assessed on the one hand; while reducing the red tape and resources devoted to negotiating development approval deals on the other. The outcome is intended to be a streamlined, but more effective development assessment and approval system.

According to the *North Shore Times*, initial reaction by local councils was one of concern that the reforms may mean 'less say for residents'. Concerns included claims of potential undermining of notification and objection procedures, staffing and revenue-raising implications and private enterprise endorsement which could be left open to corruption.

DUAP have issued a White Paper and Exposure Draft Bill outlining the reform proposals. Copies are available from DUAP offices and the material may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.duap.nsw.gov.au/whitepaper/>.

If residents are interested, the Progress Association can initiate a forum to assess the proposals in more detail.

Bob McKillop

CASTLECrag

TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

Initial action to tackle traffic problems in Castlecrag was agreed between members of the *Local Area Traffic Management (LATM)* committee and Council officers on 21 February 1997. This follows the submission of detailed proposals for traffic calming by the LATM committee in 1992 and 1993 and a public meeting in February 1996 to discuss proposals for Edinburgh Road. At the February meeting it was agreed that:

1. Council will design and construct a *wombat* crossing at the Glenaeon school and a roundabout at Charles Street in temporary materials to LATM drawings as a trial measure to monitor public response.
2. The Traffic Engineer will arrange a site inspection of the Sortie Port situation with members of LATM to discuss possible refinements to the design and its construction in permanent materials.
3. Council will cost construction of permanent Castlecrag traffic calming measures with sandstone flagging and the use of appropriate indigenous vegetation.

The Sugarloaf Valley is a different world, an area of public bushland being restored after degenerating over the years into a weedy dump. Motorists zooming along the Eastern Valley Way are mostly unaware of the special valley a few hundred metres away, so close to the centre of Sydney.

On Good Friday a group of 25 people from six to seventy years walked into in the 'Valley of the Water Dragon'. The walk had been pre-empted by a presentation given by Harold and Gay Spies at the Castlecrag Conservation Society Annual General Meeting on the 26 March. We heard about the Sugarloaf regeneration project, begun in November 1985 with a National Estate grant to the Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA). The 'before regeneration' photos show whole cliff faces obscured by rampant bamboo, privet and lantana.

First stop on the walk was the lookout behind Sugarloaf Crescent. On the rocks below were small water dragons running or freezing into camouflage. We identified some of the areas shown in the photos as formerly hidden and now cleared of weeds.

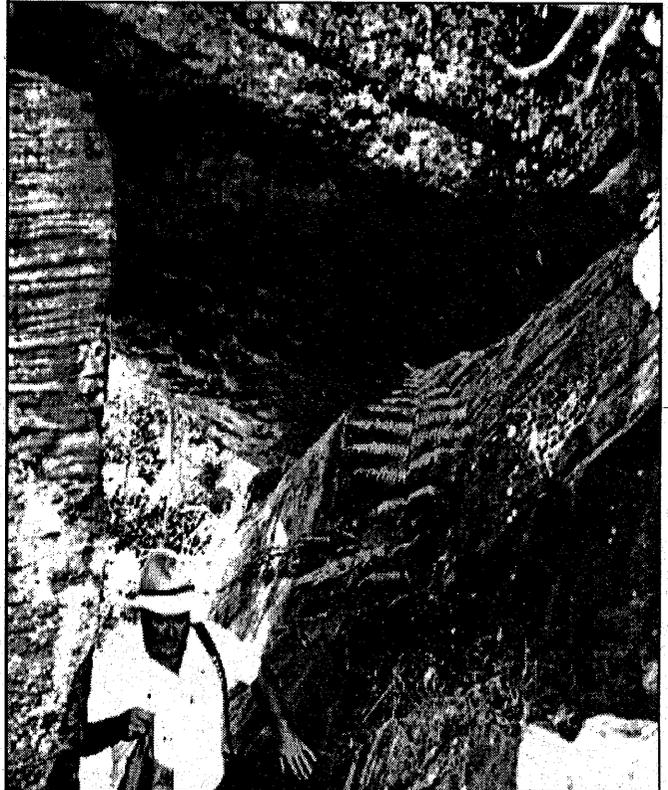
In the distance below we could see 'The Grot', a large silt plug at the bottom of the valley where huge trees are covered with creepers and weeds — blackberry, balloon vine and *Tradescantia* — and garden escapees such as phoenix palms and cannas have vanquished the native vegetation. Regeneration of this area, once an impossible goal, is now underway.

The creek runs through three fine waterfalls and at the third, the party enjoyed hot cross buns and companionship in the Autumn sunshine. The more intrepid continued to the second flood plain below, formerly a tangled mass of lantana and invasive vines such as *Anredera* and Turkey Rhubarb but now substantially cleared of weed and colonised by the healing plant *Persicaria*. Below was the dreaded 'Grot', perhaps the place for a future expedition.

The rock formations in the valley are spectacular. One rock face in particular, above the second or main waterfall, was cleared with the help of an abseiling team

Buns in the Bush

Margaret Chambers & party checking out the Sugarloaf Bush Regeneration at Easter time



from the *Roseville Venturers*. Access by conventional means was impossible in this almost vertical terrain. Another formation, known locally as *Hanging Rock*, forms the entrance to bushland at the base of the second waterfall and the creek. It is a place of great atmosphere and mystery. There is a double-decked sandstone overhang below the third waterfall.

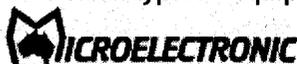
Small birds, driven from most Sydney bushland by the loss of protective vegetation and attacks from larger predatory species, are enjoying the improved habitat in the valley. Species such as yellow robins, finches, eastern spinebills, pardalotes and grey shrike thrush are commonly seen. Various lizards and small snakes are common, and, in the creeks are native fish and eels.

In retrospect it is amazing that a small group of people had sufficient vision, imagination and determination to take on this mammoth task. The team, currently eight WEPA members trained as bush regenerators, has changed over the eleven years, and been assisted by members of community working bees removing rubbish. The numbers of furious funnel web spiders disturbed during these bees have become a local myth.

(Continued page 6)

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SEE UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS ON PAGE 5

STOP THE ROT

Join the local BushCare Volunteer Program for Castlecrag Bush Regeneration

For more years than we care to remember, Castlecrag has been slowly infiltrated by insidious growth — some of which (*gasp*) we planted, dumped — or just forgot to trim the honeysuckle. Whatever, now is the time for restitution. You too can help fight the *Invasion of the Exotics* before they kill off the last flannel flower and throttle the angophoras.

The Council is starting a Local BushCare volunteer program for bush regeneration. This is your opportunity to learn how to turn your weeds back into bush.

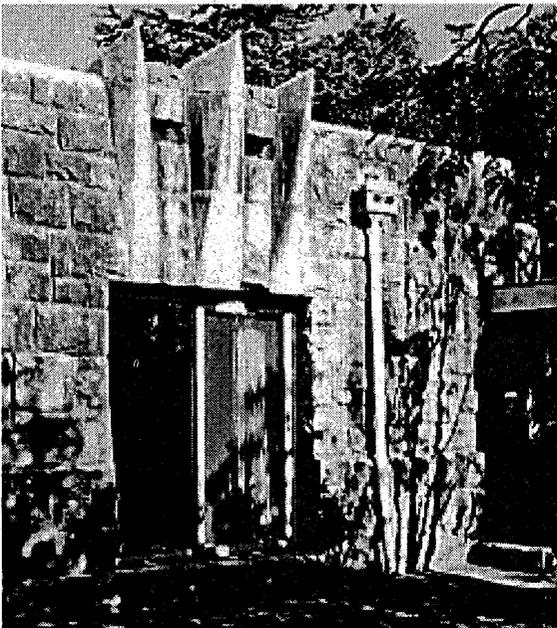
BushCare will work behind 169 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag on the second Sunday of every month from 9-12 midday.

For further information on this site please call Michael Burke (local resident) on 9958 2012 or Willoughby City Council Bushland Department on 9777 1000.

On-site training given to volunteers by trained supervisors. Tools and equipment are provided, also morning tea. Everybody welcome!

a bit o' rubbish!

The recent Clean-Up Australia Day yielded in Castlecrag: 6 bagfuls in Sugarloaf Creek, a slippery dip in Upper Sugarloaf Creek, Car Park Edinburgh Rd. traffic lights: 50 beer bottles. Below Rockley St.: 18 bags of rubbish including dumped vegetation and a lot of bongs, and below Castlehaven, 3 bagfuls and much broken glass. Thanks to those who laboured.



GRIFFIN HOUSE GOES QUICKLY AT AUCTION

The *Cheong House* where Friedl Souhami lived for 57 years (*The Crag No. 109*), was auctioned at what could be described as a community event, on Saturday 5 April. Nearly every Griffin house owner (including the Melcherts of the Melchert House in Telopea), came to watch, along with eighty or so interested local residents. The bidding was serious and fast, with Mr. Paul Marshall, an enthusiastic supporter of Griffin's work, emerging as the new owner with a \$600,000 bid. The sale price for the 1922 original but obviously dilapidated house, was a strong indication of the recognition and esteem in which WBG's small collection of houses is now held. *The Crag* offers best wishes to Mr Marshall as a new 'Griffin householder'.

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MEETINGS AND EVENTS

CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION NEXT GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 22 April 1997, 8pm
at the Castlecrag Community Centre.

Draft Agenda items include:

- Proposed Walter Burley Griffin sculpture for the Griffin Centre
- Residents' input to the Association: proposed survey
- Community notice board (funding & location)
- New Residents' information kit (update)
- Improved meeting format (and schedule for 1997)

HERITAGE WEEK 1997

Sunday April 20: an all day bushwalk
around the harbour foreshores of Middle Cove, taking in the urban bushland, Griffin landscape design, Griffin houses and the heritage Foreshore cottages. Provide your own lunch, drink, hat and suitable walking shoes — there are some *steep* sections. Afternoon tea and a car shuttle is provided. Commentary by Prof. James Weirick and heritage architect, Trevor Waters.
Numbers limited. Bookings essential, \$5. Starts 9.15 am.

Henry Lawson readings Tuesday April 22
adjacent to the cave where Henry Lawson took shelter in the early years of this century — in Bicentennial Reserve, Willoughby. Each session app. 1 hr. *Free, donation welcome, 10 & 11am.*

Open Houses and Guided Walk, Sunday April 27
Two historic houses in the South Chatswood Conservation Area open to visitors, 2-4pm: option of taking a guided walk of the area. *2pm or 3pm. Tickets \$5/\$10. Tickets & information from Willoughby Library Victoria Ave., Chatswood, Tel. 9777 7900*

Griffin Sculpture for Griffin Centre

A proposal to donate a bronze cast bust of Walter Burley Griffin to be mounted on a 600mm high sandstone plinth in the garden area will be presented at the April CPA general meeting. The work is to be donated by Mr. Newell Shead and created by Judith Englert-Shead, a sculptor with works in European and Australian collections.

Next WEPA General Meeting

Monday May 12, 8pm, at Artarmon Library in Elizabeth St. Guest speaker Andy Burton, Co-Author of the recent bird survey of Willoughby.

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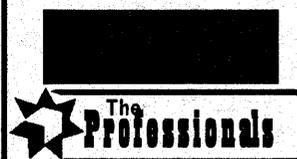
Definitely no parking at Amphitheatre
Free bus from Castlecrag shops

The Amphitheatre is supported by Willoughby City Council

Castlecrag Community Library

With a little extra cash in the book-buying kitty for 1997, the library is constantly buying new titles in fiction and non-fiction. Authors include Fay Weldon, Robert Dessaix, Di Morrissey, Robert Drewe and Margaret Drabble.

Sunday readers can make the library a port-of-call on Saturday morning between 9-12 mid, or otherwise on Tuesday 3.30-5pm and Thursday 1-5pm. Members with long-overdue books are asked to return them ASAP please.



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DRAFT LEP FOR FORESHORE BUILDING LINES to go on public exhibition

The Court of Appeal decision which held in Council's favour regarding the FBLs has now enabled the long-awaited draft plan to be exhibited for public comment. The draft lines are based on the recommendations of Mitchell McCotter Planning Consultants engaged by Willoughby Council to review the current FBLs under Willoughby LEP 1995. The Council is also having an option of a blanket 100m (from high water mark) FBL on exhibition with the draft LEP.

The draft plans will be placed on display at Level 1 of the Council Administration building, 411 Victoria Avenue, until 3 May and then in the new Council premises on the 4th floor of 31-37 Victor Street, Chatswood.

Keep an eye out in the *North Shore Times* for details of the exhibition. Property owners with proposed FBLs will be notified by Council. All interested persons are invited by Council to examine the draft Plan and the 100m option and provide comments to Council by the end of May.

The difference between the two options of placing FBLs is this: the '100m line' refers to a distance from the mean high water mark — i.e. from Middle Harbour. In this situation, it would be an arbitrary line with no reference to topography or vegetation. FBLs are traditionally placed as a line fixed in relation to a variety of waterways — any bay, creek, harbour, river, lake or lagoon, many of which are not tidal. FBLs also take into account the contours of the land adjacent to the waterway. (Editor)

(Buns in the Bush, continued from p.3)

At the end of the walk we knew how privileged we are to live beside this bushclad valley with its waterfalls, rocks and wildlife, only 12km from the centre of one of the world's great cities. Congratulations are due to Gay and Harold Spies and all those who have assisted in this remarkable project. Meanwhile the work goes on...

Donations to help continue the project are welcome; please send to The Treasurer, WEPA, 60 Sugarloaf Crescent, Castlecrag 2068.

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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 1996 will automatically be eligible to vote in 1997 as soon as the 1997 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.