

The Trouble WITH Trees

We coastal fringe dwellers have a long history of emotional dichotomy in our relationship with trees. We admire the beauty of trees. We complain about them being too close to the house. We blissfully cool ourselves in their shade. We complain they block the sun if they are not deciduous. We listen to the way they bend and whisper in the breeze. We complain that they drop leaves in the swimming pool. We delight to the sound of birdsong that the trees play host to. We complain about noisy, aucous birds waking us early in the morning.

If we were privy to the first words Governor Philip said to his fellow officers immediately after planting the flag, odds on it was something like: "Those trees will have to go. Get some convicts detailed first thing tomorrow". Well of course trees had to go, otherwise there could be no room for the first settlement, the first farms. Unfortunately we created a history of over-zealousness in our gusto to 'get all these trees out of the way' which continued right up to the late 1970s, when Pitt Street farmers would buy a property and engage a bulldozing contractor to "clear everything off the land except for that stand on the back hill. You can ringbark that". They would then claim the work off their tax, and there would be more room for running sheep or cattle. These days, some of those contractors wryly say they are now being engaged to replant native trees heavily on the very same paddocks, a few owners down the track. The irony is not lost on them, and big D9s have given way to smaller, more versatile equipages, the better for working on erosion and soil compaction which has decimated and devalued those properties.

Evening news and documentaries carry stories on soil salination, ivers in crisis and show what is being done — is it too little, too late? Cockys and graziers are finally realising the errors of their ways and besides, R.M. Williams has spoken, once again demonstrating pastoral leadership in encouraging revegetation of 'the bush'. If it's the last thing he does, it may well be the greatest.

So there we were on the coastal fringe and beyond, so many sweating bodies exhaustively engaged in chopping down every tree around. Then the dawning of big mechanism did away with the sweating bodies and used diesel and a blade which took no prisoners. Meanwhile back in the city, we were also busy tidying up the landscape to make it more productive.

By 1900 you would have been hard pressed to find a tree (particularly a native) anywhere from Millers Point to Rozelle, except in the municipal parks which must have looked like tree museums. We were also developing the 'suburban mentality' which dictated neatness above all: in that way one rose from convict ancestry or from lower class to something better. Neat buffalo lawns presided over by a hydrangea bush. Plain concrete yards and drives you could hose down. Nothing out of place. You could say one thing for Dame Edna Everage when she arrived on the scene. She made us aware of the barren, bleak urbane we had created and the mindset that engendered it, and vice versa.

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Crag-*ISSUES* Update

with CPA President, Bob McKillop

Castlecrag Traffic Study

I understand that a number of residents have shown interest in the draft Local Area Traffic Management Plan for Edinburgh Road and Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecrag, which was recently exhibited at our local library. The process of arriving at a practical and sustainable outcome for traffic management in our suburb depends on your involvement.

The Progress Association has made a submission to Council, based on the comments made by residents at the public meetings and subsequently by our members. The Association expressed its appreciation to Council for undertaking this study and its support for the participative process by which the study has been undertaken.

We noted that the report demonstrates competency by its compilers in matching the aspirations of individual residents against the technical aspects of road safety and traffic management, and the financial constraints within which Council must operate.

Our submission endorsed the high priority recommendations of the report, particularly the proposed works to separate and provide 'gateways' between the commercial and residential areas of Castlecrag, and the three slow point/pedestrian refuges proposed for Edinburgh Road. We consider these to be excellent solutions to the desire of the great majority of residents for effective structures to slow traffic along this section, the opposition of others to humps, and the need to provide for STA buses.

However, we noted there is still some discussion among residents on the most suitable location for the proposed 'slow points'. The Progress Association has also highlighted the need for all traffic structures to be carefully designed to blend in with the character of Castlecrag. They should address the criteria spelt out in Council's draft DCP16, section 4.02.02 "Desired Future Character of Castlecrag".

Lands Study, Former Warringah Transport Corridor.

The move by the Roads & Traffic Authority and the Department of Urban Affairs & Planning (DUAP) to dispose of properties in the now abandoned Warringah Freeway Corridor has raised concerns among residents of Castlecrag in terms of the potential impact of further development on the Northern Escarpment.

In October 1998, the Progress Association wrote to the Minister for Urban Affairs & Planning pointing out the importance of these sites, particularly 315-323 Edinburgh Road, on account of their undisturbed vegetation, outstanding rock formations and their role as habitat for flora and fauna (see *The Crag*, 122, p.2).

We noted that the Commission of Inquiry into the Warringah Freeway Corridor (Kirby Report of 1983) recommended that this bushland should remain in its pristine state.

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COMMUNITY BYTES

Free local indigenous plants

To Celebrate Arbor Day, Willoughby City Council is sending their bush trailer and Bushcare Department personnel to its shopping centres, to meet with locals, answer questions about native gardening and best of all — to give away free local species for your garden.

The Bush trailer will be the Quadrangle Shopping Centre, Castlecrag on WEDNESDAY 28 JULY for approximately 2 hours. For confirmation of the exact time it will be there, phone Bushcare on 9777 7755. Arbor Day slogan: 'The right tree for the right place'.

Castlecrag Wine and Food Fair

An inaugural Castlecrag Wine and Food Fair is planned for **Sunday 25 July**. Hosted by Castlecrag Cellars, the Fair will involve 10 sponsoring wine companies and local restaurants. Details will be advertised closer to the event, but the plan is to erect a marquee in the Griffin Centre car park, where sample wines and food from local restaurants will be available. A \$5 glass fee will be charged for wine tasting and all proceeds from these glass sales will be donated to the Childrens' Hospital. Castlecrag community groups will be invited to install an information display on a combined stall at the Fair. Contact Kate Westoby on 9958 0215 for stall information.

Castlecrag Library update

With Head Librarian Billie Hume recovering from an operation — our best wishes for speedy recovery, Billie — the small group of women are continuing the work of library updating; buying good, new titles of variety and wide interest and cancelling old copies that have seen too many tears and vegemite smears. Among new titles are: *Cold Mountain*, Charles Frazier, *A God Strolling in the Cool of the Evening*, Mario de Carvalho and *The Future Eaters*, Tim Flannery, plus many more. Read and enjoy!

Library hours: Tues. 3.30-4.30, Thurs. 1.30-5pm, Sat. 9-12pm

Castlecrag...the book

The book was born out of an idea by the Castlecrag Infants' School Mothers Club to raise money to revegetate the grounds, in the late 1960s. It was published by local residents Arthur and Marea Weller and proceeds were donated to the school. Both old and current residents contributed evocative articles, photographs, maps drawn by Griffin of Castlecrag and Haven estates and Max Dupain's peerless work of mid-century Castlecrag. This special book has sadly, been long out of print. Efforts are being made to have it republished and bring it back to a new generation of readers.

Uniting Church 50th Anniversary Jubilee

The Castlecrag Uniting Church at 14 Charles Street will hold its Jubilee on Sunday 27 June, with a special service at 10.30 followed by a light lunch. The Jubilee commemorates 50 years since it opened its first Hall. Contact Margaret Hunter on 9417 1996 for further information

Montessori 'Green Gardeners'

The Montessori Preschool for 3 to 6 year old children has occupied the main Church Hall at St. James Anglican Church in Edinburgh Road for almost a decade. A second Montessori Preschool for 0-3 year olds is in the smaller hall under the church itself.

Like Marion Mahony Griffin, Maria Montessori was a remarkable woman. Born in 1870 she was the first woman to be granted a medical degree from an Italian University, but her life's work was with children. Through her observations and work with children she discovered their astonishing ability to learn by themselves. This fundamental truth became the basis of her educational system which continues to be practised today all over the world.

During their Term 2 Gardening Bee, children at Castlecrag Montessori preschool went 'green'. Weeds and the remnants of an exotic garden in the main section of the playground were replaced by native plants appropriate to the region, although the scarecrow still guards the veggie patch in the corner! Council kindly donated plenty of leaf mulch for the project. For more information on Castlecrag Montessori preschool, please contact Elizabeth Rowe, Preschool President, on 9958 7302.

Reader Response

Thank you to Mr. Alan Ecob who wrote in response to *Return of the Reserves* story in the March/April issue of *The Crag*:

"I was impressed by the article *Return of the Reserves*. It was good to be given such a comprehensive overview. I agree that it is a great objective — so long as it can be secured with the positive support (not merely imposed on) our Castlecrag community."

Dog Triumphs at Birthday Bash

Ella Young, Director of the Haven Playreaders (another Castlecrag tradition), had a significant birthday in May, so it was fitting that her celebration was a performance as much as a party. Sixty locals from 8 to 80s crammed into her lounge room to watch and laugh while the comedy program that Ella had prepared was performed in front of them.

A series of fast-action Noel Coward sketches dealing with marital mishaps among upper class people of the 1930s, had 4 actors reading and reeling from entrance to exit. A one-act play by Anton Chekhov tested the performance skills of 3 actors (and found them not wanting). Another sketch (written by Ella), had an Arab oil sheik announcing the company's losses of millions of dollars in his own language (extempore gibberish) while a suitably enshrouded woman interpreted for him. Finale was a surprise comeback by 'Mavis Bramston' with a group of singers, in a tribute number to Ella.

Supper followed show, crowned by a beautifully decorated birthday cake. Ella was promised faithfully that the centrepiece of the cake would be reserved for her. Unfortunately, a local dog wandering off the street onto the deck was unaware of this arrangement and seeing that no-one else was looking at what was left of birthday cake, presumed it must have been reserved for him. Why, oh why does it always have to be the dog taking centre stage? The evening's actors were just grateful they did not have to perform with him.



Majella Lander and Bruce Wilson
in Noel Coward's "Rules of Three"



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The Trouble with Trees (continued)

About the same time farmers began to replant trees, urban dwellers in many suburbs began to plant them also, desiring a more lush environment, a garden of delights. So now when you look across a suburban valley, where once you saw only a dead sea of red roofs, you now often look upon a network of trees with the roofs dotted among them. We have moved on.

Castlecrag was one of the very few areas near the city to survive the early Battle of the Bandsaws and the later Suburban Chainsaw Massacre. Was. How ironic then that while there is a big push in 'ordinary' suburbs to regenerate, revegetate and enjoy trees for their beauty and their oxygenating, life-giving properties, we who hold the treasure of one the last remaining natural beauty spots in Sydney, are letting our trees go — one... by two...by one.

"What us? Never! We moved here because of the bush and the birds and the water. It's beautiful and we love it. The trouble is, there's this old Angophora...Scribbly Gum... right where we're thinking of putting the extension....extending the driveway...where the new front fence is going....I mean, I love this tree, but what can you do when it's in the way? It's only one...two....we need to get rid of (sorry old mate, but you've got to go). There are plenty more trees in Castlecrag, right?"


you think the above is a bit of fancy scriptwriting with little basis or truth, try checking out some DAs and tree lopping permits in Willoughby Council over the last few years.

If you think there are 'plenty more trees in Castlecrag', talk with someone who has watched the trees in their street chopped down for one 'necessity' or another over the last five years.

If you think we Australians are more advanced and green-aware these days, check out the fashions plugged in architecture and landscape gardening glossies. Tuscan and Mediterranean styles are still fashionable! Neat. Lots of terracotta paved hard surfaces. Borders of low flowering or green exotics. No native trees or shrubs throwing leaves into the pool. And not Australian.

If you think we have managed to emerge from our 'cultural cringe', then wonder why many of us do not seem to be able to live with the beauty and wildness of our native trees even after two hundred years, but continue to delete them from our habitat.

Adele Barnett



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Castlecrag: from white settlement on A HISTORY

Some years ago a series of short articles on the history of our suburb written by our honorary historian, Addie Saltis, was featured in The Crag. Our reader surveys have shown that articles such as these about Castlecrag's history are popular. We reproduce one of Addie's early articles below for newer residents. Further contributions from readers on historical topics would be very welcome.

Before Castlecrag

Although the lower North Shore and Middle Harbour were visited by Governor Phillip and carefully surveyed by land and sea within a few months of the landing of the First Fleet in 1788, the pressing need for survival of the colony did not encourage expansion into our inhospitable slopes. It was not until 1856 that the first land grants were made on the peninsula which is now Castlecrag. More than half of these, plus a large part of Northbridge, were made to a James William Bligh, who may or may not have been related to Captain Bligh of mutiny fame. James Bligh was later the first Chairman (or Mayor) of the Municipality of North Willoughby. Incidentally, this was the first municipality to be proclaimed on the North Shore, in 1856, as a direct result of a petition signed by 67 of the 400 inhabitants within the municipality's boundaries.

A rough track along the windswept, rocky ridge which is now Edinburgh Road, existed at that time, and the parcels of land were allocated on either side of it. Other land grants on the peninsula (then known as East Willoughby) were to Alfred Bradford, John Stapleton, WG Spring, Jas. Yates, Robert Phenna, JA Hunter, EM Stephen, and GR Brown.

Horse-drawn buses and a branch railway in 1890 gradually opened up Willoughby and Chatswood, but the peninsula remained bushland, subdivided into estates but virtually undeveloped. By 1920 we had the Sunnyside Estate on the north, Torquay Estate on Sugarloaf Point and Farmer & Co.'s radio transmitter 2FC along Edinburgh Road. Cows from Warner's Dairy grazed on what is now Eastern Valley Way and Chinese market gardens lined the road to Northbridge. The southern side of Edinburgh Road was bought by the North Sydney Investment and Tramway Co. Ltd, and then by the Association of North Sydney Debenture Holders. In 1921 Walter Burley Griffin and the Greater Sydney Development Association purchased 90 acres of those southern slopes and Castlecrag was born.

Quotes from Watkin Trench Sydney's first four years (1973) (available from the Castlecrag Community Library) and David Collins Account of the English Colony in NSW (1798). Addie Saltis, (The Crag No. 45, March/April 1986)

people are talking...
and with good reason!

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Crag-Issues Update (continued)

The Director-General of DUAP recently wrote to Willoughby City Council indicating that the best way forward was for Council and DUAP to undertake a joint consultancy study to examine the options for those properties in the Corridor with potential strategic significance. Properties identified for inclusion in the study include 219, 296-302, 311, 313 and 317-323 Edinburgh Road.

On 24 May 1999, Council supported an "in-principle agreement" to undertake a joint consultancy study in respect of these strategic sites. Councillors Randle and Johnston, along with the Mayor, Cllr Reilly and the Environmental Services Director, Greg Woodhams, have been appointed to the Steering Committee for this study.

Chatswood City Centre Master Plan

Willoughby City Council has sent an elaborate brochure to all residents outlining the Master Plan and Strategy for Chatswood City Centre.

This summarises very detailed and bulky documents prepared by consultants engaged to prepare a strategy and Master Plan for the future directions of our city centre. The brochure provides details of the exhibition of these documents - for 10 weeks from 24 May to 30 July 1999 - and information kiosks to be operating in the city centre to explain the Plan.

The closing date for submissions and comments is 20 August 1999. The Federation of Willoughby Progress Associations have several reservations about the Master Plan, which relate to the need to address an adequate set of alternatives developed from a long-term perspective of the future role and function of the Chatswood CBD.

These include the intensity of development proposed for the Civic Place, the amount of public open space available in the city, the degree to which short-term actions may restrict more desirable longer-term outcomes and the degree to which functions should be centralised in Chatswood or undertaken in local community centres.

Residents are urged to examine the documents and have their say in what they want from our City Centre.

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Development Controls and Guidelines

Development matters are a constant topic of discussion in Castlecrag. The development controls used by Council in its planning approvals and the guidelines to assist residents formulate development proposals that meet these controls are of particular interest to the Progress Association (*The Crag* Nos. 113 and 124).

In recent weeks, development applications for the redevelopment of boatsheds in Castlecrag have also highlighted the role of other planning authorities in development matters. The State Government has a special interest in the quality of Sydney Harbour waters and foreshores. *State Environmental Planning Policy No.56 for Middle Harbour Foreshores and Tributaries* seeks to increase public access to and use of foreshore land, and to protect and improve the unique physical qualities of the Harbour.

Councils have to take into account the character of any development, as viewed from the water, and its compatibility and sympathy with the character of the surrounding foreshores. Under draft DCP16, Willoughby Council will only permit single storey structures between the FBL and the water and any development should enhance the natural landscape character and features of the foreshore, as well as the visual amenity of adjoining property.

Council is required to uphold similar conditions under the SREP23 DCP. The Progress Association is concerned that any proposals for alterations to boatsheds should comply with these controls.

Bob McKillop
President CPA

Write to us!

The Crag is for you, Castlecrag dweller. Every two months we pop it in your letter box — at least 1,000 households. We try to keep you informed about what is happening — or not happening soon enough — in our waterbound piece of rock. You might chuck your *Crag* in the bin, you might read bits or from cover to cover. We don't really know. We do know that some people think we do a good job, while others say we're a bunch of ratbags.

From time to time we ask that you contribute, write a letter, report on things happening around you. We love to hear from younger members of the community. Send a poem. A drawing. A photograph. Whatever you like. *The Crag* is a good local forum. All we ask is that you make it fairly brief and that you append your name to it. We can withhold your name from publication if you like, but we cannot publish anything anonymous. Write to us, we would love to hear from you.

Editor

Moran Realty



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In the beginning

There was bushland typical of the Hawkesbury Sandstone ridgetops and woodlands as well as temperate rainforest gully flora on richer soils; associated fauna; several fishermen's cottages and boatsheds lining the foreshore and gradually more houses on the ridgetops. Then Marion and Walter Burley Griffins' Greater Sydney Development Association and their concept of buildings subordinate to nature. The war years followed by an influx of suburban houses; incremental development leading to loss of native bushland, fragmentation of open space, encroachments into reserves, introduction of exotic plants, pollution and erosion of our catchments, reserves and the silting up of lower section of their waterways.

Inspiration

There is no doubt that the Griffins left a legacy of a love of bushland and of the need to protect it. Their legacy included the present bushland reserves in the Castlecrag Conservation Area, but their ideas also rippled out to embrace the whole of the Castlecrag Peninsula. Their influence extended to many residents of the village and hence to the Castlecrag Progress Association.

Genesis

In the 1970s and probably earlier, the Castlecrag Progress Association formed a Conservation Committee centred around Beverley Blacklock. Beverley had a profound love of nature and pioneered the appreciation of local native plants. She also became a trained bush regenerator. In 1974 Beverley and several others decided to clear the massive overgrowth of weeds and building rubble from the Haven Amphitheatre. As they worked, they also drew in other residents. At the initiative of Di Street, they formed the Conservation Society which, while closely associated with the Progress Association functioned outside it. Present at its formative meeting were Di Street, Beverley Blacklock, Ann Korner, Sylvia Taylor, **Addie** and John Lee, Addie and Con Saltis, with Beverley as President.

Basic Principles

These were enunciated by Ted Bowen, the Society's President in 1981 as "*The preservation and conservation of all aspects of the natural and social environment that contribute to the quality of life in Castlecrag, not only for the benefit of residents of Castlecrag, but as a contribution to Australia's historic heritage*". In particular, The Conservation Society has a commitment to the Burley Griffin landscape concept and the preservation and regeneration of all bushland around the harbour foreshore and in the various reserves. The conservation of the natural landscape and of the integrity of the native flora in turn preserves the habitat of local birds, mammals, insects and other fauna (*The Crag* Jan/Feb 1981). The Constitution of the Society has since been amended to include "to encourage the planting of local indigenous trees and shrubs in gardens and streetscapes; to co-operate with and support similar organisations on local and wider environmental issues; to encourage community involvement in the above aims, and to disseminate information and advice".

L.J. HOOKER CASTLECRAG

L.J. HOOKER CASTLECRAG TEAM
Bronja, Richard, Graham, Heidi

91 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag NSW 2068
Tel: (02) 9958 1800 Fax: (02) 6063
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Achievements

Various members have trained as bush regenerators and have worked for the National Trust in regenerating reserves not only in Castlecrag but also in other parts of Willoughby and Sydney and also with the Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) on the Sugarloaf Creek Bush Regeneration Project. Information and advice has been published in *The Crag* (approx. 40 articles) since 1978 and in the Society's Bimonthly Newsletter, *Conservation Update*.

The Castlecrag Conservation Society has:

- Presented a submission to the Kirby Enquiry on the future of Warringah Transport Corridor, opposing a freeway through the Northern Escarpment. It has consistently supported the Progress Association in this regard;
- Supported the retention and maintenance of the Historic Foreshore Cottages;
- Supported the community in its campaign to keep the Castlecrag Infants' School;
- Co-operated with regional, state and national environmental organisations on a wide range of issues including opposition to uranium mining, biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, Port Hinchinbrook development, control burns in bushland, protection of Community Land, opposition to overhead cables;
- Campaigned for the adoption of a strong Foreshore Building Line in order to protect the bushland around the foreshores (still not finalised);
- Made submissions to Willoughby City Council on the Griffin Reserves Plan of Management;
- Was represented on Council's Bushland Review Committee preparing a Plan of Management for Willoughby's bushland.

This list represents the types of issues on which the Conservation Society has campaigned over the years. Some goals have been achieved, others lost. However, all were positive in the sense that environmental awareness in the community was raised to varying degrees and another voice for the environment was heard. Our basic role was and is to maintain and increase awareness and appreciation of the bushland and social heritage of Castlecrag.

What can you do to help preserve beauty and heritage?

- Make your garden environmentally friendly:
- Attend a National Trust Bush Regeneration Course (it makes a great hobby)
- Remove weeds and introduce local native plants
- Prevent dumping of garden refuse in the bushland
- Contact Council for advice and equipment on composting and worm farms
- Join Wildlife Watch

Harold Spies,
President, Castlecrag Conservation Society

Editor's note: You could also join the Castlecrag Conservation Society and/or Willoughby Environmental Protection Society. Both of these societies have a bi-monthly meeting which are friendly, informal and offer good conversation over supper after the meetings. Members also enjoy walks to sites of specific interest, organised by the associations or linking up with Council's own environmental programs.

For more information, please call/fax Harold Spies on 9958 8569 (or leave a message which will be returned ASAP).

NEXT CPA GENERAL MEETING Tuesday 22 June 1999, 8pm

at the Community Centre, The Postern

Guest Speaker: Clive Buhrich, Architect

Clive will present a talk entitled: "Sydney Harbour Strategy" which looks at future directions of Sydney Harbour and keeping the individual character of its bays.

**Agenda: IMPACT OF TRAFFIC STUDY
RTA & DUAP LAND + sundry items**

The Progress Association is there for you when you have a problem in your local area, or when you want to find out about issues that affect your neighbourhood, or bring an issue to the attention of the membership.

The CPA provides a forum in your area to discuss issues that concern you. The CPA is also active in protection and retention of the natural and historic features of unique Castlecrag. Come and meet with your neighbours and have your say about local issues.

POST OFFICE CASTLECRAG

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Guest Speakers for Castlecrag in June

At the Progress Association General Meeting - Tuesday 22 June, Clive Buhrich will be Guest Speaker. Clive grew up in Castlecrag and has been active in local community issues. He is a well-known architect who has recently served on a high-level Government committee looking at the future strategies for managing Sydney Harbour and its foreshores. Clive will speak about this work and the importance of maintaining the diverse character of the special bays and foreshores of Middle Harbour.

At the Castlecrag Conservation Society General Meeting, Wednesday 23 June, 8pm at the Community Centre, Guest Speaker will be Louise Brodie, who is Bushland Officer at the National Trust. She will be giving an illustrated talk on Bush Regeneration, after which supper will be served.

All are welcome to attend both these meetings to hear the Guest Speakers — you don't have to be a member. The Centre will have the heaters on, so you won't freeze.

Editors' note: We are fortunate in Castlecrag to have such well-organised community groups who can provide a meeting with excellent speakers expert in their field, or if not, then often an active forum. It's a good way of learning what is happening in your community.

Support our Castlecrag Business Community

We are also lucky to have a small but diverse and friendly group of shops that serve us very well, some of whom provide funds for the publishing of this rag, through which the CPA endeavours to keep Castlecragians informed. What goes around, comes around!

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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. The names of the people applying for membership should be supplied with the membership fee. A person who was a member in 1997 will automatically be eligible to vote in 1998 as soon as the 1998 membership is paid (as long as the 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.