

This land is our land...

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Annual General Meeting

Sunday 3 June 2.30pm

Guest Speaker

Belinda Mason

on the making of the film
City of Dreams

with special reference to
Griffin's Fishwick House
in Castlecrag

Annual membership now due
Please see page 6

CASTLECRAG PROGRESS
ASSOCIATION INC.

6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

The Crag is edited by

Kerry McKillop (9958 4516) and
Elizabeth Lander (9958 5384).

Please send all correspondence and
renewals to the above address.

In May 1999 Willoughby City Council received a report concerning the disposal of properties owned by the RTA and DUAP on the abandoned Warringah Freeway Corridor through Willoughby and Castlecrag. The report proposed a joint study to be undertaken by Council, DUAP and RTA. The agreement, in particular, contains a requirement of the state Government that the outcome of the study be revenue-neutral in maintaining DUAP's and RTA's current asset value of the land. The in-principle agreement provides that the Study conclusions are not binding on Council or other parties but that the parties will work together to achieve appropriate planning outcomes, with the disposal of any land which is agreed by the parties to occur at the earliest possible date. In June 1999 Council resolved to proceed with the joint study; in October 1999 JBA Planning Consultants Pty Ltd was appointed to undertake the planning study and Council's Steering Committee was set up to direct and coordinate the planning study. Reference Group meetings were established to involve local community and interest groups at an early stage of the process. During the period between October '99 and August 2000 meetings of the Steering Committee and Reference Group took place and two public workshops were held.

The Progress Association held public meetings in January and August 2000 to gain comment from and give information to local residents on the effects

of the proposed sale of the land would have. It attended every Reference Group meeting, every public workshop, and submitted a detailed response to the JBA draft planning study when it was placed on public exhibition. JBA's final report, which among other issues makes recommendations and prepares a strategy with concept plans on the preferred options for the future use of the land, was submitted in February 2001. Willoughby City Council has prepared a detailed response to JBA's report and is to be complimented and thanked for the outstanding effort which this has entailed and for the way it has sought the community's participation in the debate.

To reiterate, the surplus land falls into four precincts: **Precinct 1** is two small grassy knolls opposite the Leisure Centre in Small Street, Willoughby; **Precinct 2** is the 3.9 hectare area between Eastern Valley Way and Mowbray and Windsor Roads (Willoughby Paddocks) plus two blocks in Warners Avenue; **Precinct 3** covers the car parking space adjacent to the newsagent and 3 blocks in Raeburn Avenue and **Precinct 4** relates to various land parcels on the northern escarpment of Edinburgh Road and 4 blocks facing Seaforth. Almost without exception, development of these lands has not occurred.

Council is at variance with many of JBA's recommendations, and proposes that:

Precinct 1 sites be disposed

of by the Government under their current zoning of residential 2(a), that drainage investigation (eg an easement) be made and that parking problems in the area be addressed separately.

Precinct 2 sites in Willoughby Paddocks be given deferred consideration pending development of a Masterplan with Council, DUAP, RTA and the local community, and the Warners Avenue sites be re-zoned residential 2(a) subject to examination of drainage issues.

Precinct 3 The car park site remains, is dedicated to WCC, with vehicular access prevented from Eastern Valley Way. The Raeburn Ave sites be re-zoned to residential 2(a) and a drainage easement be investigated.

Precinct 4 consists of 8 sites on Edinburgh Road:

Site 7 (no.209): Agree to disposal of the existing 2(a) land, transfer the proposed open space zoned land to Council ownership and rezone to 6(a);

Site 8 (Nos. 243-245) Agree to disposal of the existing 2(a) zoned land, transfer the open space land to Council ownership and rezone to 6(a);

Site 9 (Nos. 289-295) Agree to rezone to Open Space 6(a) when transferred to Council;

Site 10 (Nos. 311-313) The 2 allotments be amalgamated and one house only be permitted on the site. Not to be disposed of until fire access issues and access to the harbour cottage has been resolved. Site contains aboriginal heritage. (cont. p.6)

How to create a Bush Friendly Backyard

If you live in Castlecrag there is a good chance that your home backs onto a bushland reserve. If this is the case, the type of plants you have in your garden and what you do in your garden can have a significant effect on the health of the bushland behind your back fence. For example, a large weedy privet tree in the backyard can drop hundreds of berries into the neighbouring bush where they will grow into many new weed seedlings. Birds that eat the berries will also spread the seeds into surrounding bushland.

There are a number of things you can do to create a bush friendly backyard, which will help to improve the health of Castlecrag's bushland reserves. Here are some simple tips on how to create this type of garden:

- remove any weeds to stop them spreading into the bush.
- plant a range of trees, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers and vines that are native to the Willoughby area. Different vegetation layers will provide habitat for possums, large and small birds, lizards, frogs and insects. (Council has a detailed list of native plants local to the Willoughby area with a list of nurseries that supply these plants).
- provide a safe area in your garden for native fauna, free from cats and dogs;
- use mulch on your garden beds to suppress weeds and retain soil moisture- the worms will love it! (you'll also reduce your water bill);

- reduce your use of fertiliser, as when it rains this runs off into the bush and can encourage weed growth and pollute your local creek;
- try not to use snail bait, as Blue Tongue lizards eat snails and will be harmed by eating the poisoned snails.

If you would like more information on how to create a bush friendly backyard, please call Erika Klimpsch, Catchment Education Officer, Willoughby Council on 9777-7942.

e.restore snippets

Creek restoration works, including preliminary track construction, native plantings and bush regeneration are being undertaken along **Upper Sailors Bay Creek**, from the Willoughby Paddocks down into Warners Park.

The harvesting of weedy **bamboo** from bushland near Edinburgh Rd and The Scarp is continuing. This bamboo is sent to Taronga Zoo where it is fed to the Pandas, Antelopes and Camels and used by the Elephants as tooth-picks!

The **pathway** from The Scarp to the foreshore has been upgraded following the completion of the adjacent residential construction.

An update on the activities mentioned in the last issue of *The Crag*: work on the seawalls has been completed and both the control of **morning glory** vine along the northern escarp-

ment and the works on **stormwater outlets** behind Cheyne Walk are continuing.

These activities are funded by Council's e.restore environmental levy. If you would like more information on these activities please call Erika Klimpsch at Council on 9777-7942.



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| Commonwealth Bank | St George 'green' card |

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Notes from a Southern Slope

My heart sank when I first looked at the bush slope behind the house we had bought on the southern side of Castlecrag. The winding Water Board trail along the bay was enticing in the springtime with pink towering Christmas bush and graceful white-starred blueberry ash, interspersed with twisted angophora leaning over the water. If you sat a while, you heard, not traffic but whipbirds, parrots and wrens. Near the water's edge there was pristine open forest like I remembered from my childhood in Sydney, but higher up, below the formal garden, I saw only weeds and rubbish. I gathered that the previous owners had planned to cut a tennis court into the hillside so they had no interest in preserving the natural environment. Looking down from the top of the slope, over the tree cover, all I could see was a web of morning glory and honeysuckle, obscuring an apparently impassable rock overhang. I could see no path down to the lower level and no possibility of opening a passage through the dense undergrowth. I felt that I had a duty to prevent the weeds spreading even further and I wanted to restore the original natural balance, but it was an enormous task. What was I to do?

I rang the Bushland Office of Willoughby Council. Alfred Bernhard and his team were enormously helpful with advice and suggestions. Encouraged by their comments about how diverse the plant species were near the shoreline where there was less run-off from gardens, I got a quote from a gardener with expertise in bush regeneration to work to restore the slope. Unfortunately, because it was such an enormous task, the budget seemed prohibitive. Not sure whether I could do anything myself, being a complete novice at such things, I went to a training course sponsored by the Council and run by the National Trust. This was very useful and in fact provided more knowledge than I could assimilate. Knowing little botany, I decided to concentrate on identifying noxious weeds. "A Gardener's Companion to Weeds" was a useful companion volume. (Later I supplemented this with Robinson's "Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney".) One piece of advice from Alfred Bernhard stayed in my mind, "Start with the easy part, work out from the good stuff, ignore the hard part to begin with." As the cooler autumn sunshine beckoned, I put on a long-sleeved shirt and trousers to ward off ticks and mosquitoes and decided to give it a go, to see whether I could make a difference even on a small scale.

Getting started

On hands and knees, I explored a square foot or so, removing ladder fern, wild ginger and asparagus fern (each needs a different technique). I rolled up miles of morning glory and honeysuckle vines and left them hanging in the trees like spools of cotton. I cut and poisoned camphor laurel seedlings, ochna and privets (a useful tip from the National Trust was to beg a used hair colour bottle from my hairdresser, and to add some food colour to the clear "industrial strength" glyphosate poison so that I could see where it had dripped). At the end of one afternoon, I straightened my back and stood up to admire a handsome russet sandstone boulder that had appeared apparently from nowhere. I returned to the house flushed with the exercise and celebrated with a pot of tea, determined to return as soon as I could.

Some lessons I learned quickly – I needed shoes with a good grip to balance on the steep slope, sodden because of the overgrowth of weeds. I needed to vary tasks, sometimes kneeling to deal with ground weeds and sometimes standing and stretching to deal with vines. It was a problem how to dispose of the mountains of weeds that I pulled. Ideally I would have liked to remove it all from the slope, but the bags were too many and too heavy to carry. Calling on the Council for more advice, I built piles of ferns and weeds, raised from the ground so that they dried and could later be used for "pile burns" to stimulate new plant growth. Not being able to judge the lie of the land because of the tangle of weeds, it was tricky to judge where to place these piles, and I had to move them several times. Larger trees I poisoned and left standing, rather than felling them which would add to the confusion on the ground.

Discoveries

Like an explorer hacking my way through impenetrable jungle, I pressed on, working up the slope from the bottom. As the shape of the hillside was exposed, I discovered treasures, flowers that begged to be identified, mosses, birds' nests and suspended ringtail possum bowers, sometimes with a snoozing occupant blinking when disturbed during a noonday nap. Where I thought there were two slender young angophoras, when I disrobed the base of its cover of vines and ferns, I found they were branches of a giant that had toppled in a gale, now lying prone on the hillside. White cockatoos nesting in the high angophora made caustic comments about my work. Kookaburras and magpies welcomed me warmly and followed my progress, snapping at any grubs and beetles I exposed.

Castlecrag's history was brought to light with the boles of great turpentine and other trees felled by early foresters. Other logs, less useful, had been left lying among the rocks. Bottles and broken glass, rusty cans and building rubbish, flowerpots, plastic wrappings and lost toys, even shoes, were scattered across the hillside. I found signs of a path meandering up the hill, marked by two rusty wagon wheels – an ornamental addition, not from the original settlers, I think! Dry stone walls marked "improvements" with introduced ornamental trees and plants, some of which had survived years of neglect. Lopping a curtain of vines, I found a rock shelter overhang containing coils of monstera like a slumbering dragon and a rough wooden cross. This discovery made me wonder about the previous inhabitants. What corpses had they buried here – a pet dog, perhaps, or something more sinister?



Notes from a Southern Slope (continued)

One day a taxi driver taking me home confided that he remembered playing in the Castlecrag bush as a child during the Second World War. His grandmother had told him not to go near the bay because there was a strange man living there, but he and his sister went all the same. He was not sure where they had been playing, but he remembered there was a large rock with an engraving of a face. To his great surprise, I led him down the slope and showed him the carving, exactly as he remembered it. Footholds lead up a great boulder half way up the hillside, to a vantage point offering a wide view across Sailors Bay. A grinning face incised into the rock face leers in the direction of the Northbridge Baths with an expression something like Bugs Bunny. I think it must be the work of that wartime hermit – it is certainly not an Aboriginal carving!

New growth

During the first season I worked on the slope I twisted my ankle, got alternately sunburnt and soaked by the rain, bitten by jumping ants and attacked by tiny ticks, but nothing deterred me from the task in hand. As spring came I watched the birds build new nests and young seedlings grow tall. I learnt some of the botanical names for shrubs I had never knowingly set eyes on before. I set a trap (provided by the Council) and caught a rangy feral cat that I had seen one morning chewing a possum on my lawn. I grieved when I saw nearby trees die back and worried whether neighbours' swimming pools were leaking chlorinated water into the bush. Every day brought a new lesson or a new challenge.

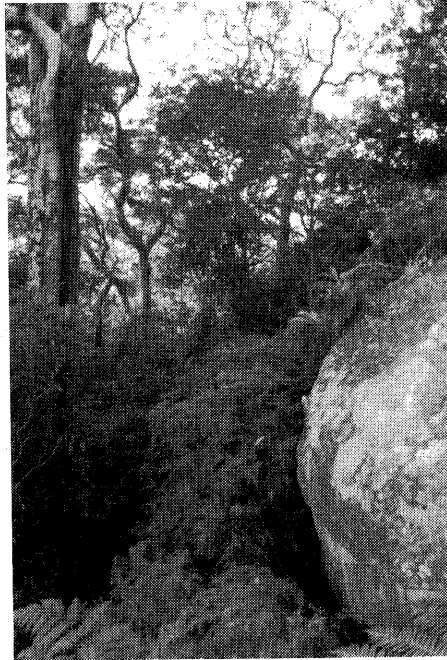
Late last year a team from Willoughby Council spent one day burning my piles of rubbish. They collected cones from Old Man Banksia and threw them into the embers, hoping seeds might germinate. Since then I have watched as dozens of small seedlings have emerged in the black patches left by the "spot burns". By next summer I hope to identify the newcomers that are going to add to the extraordinary diversity of plantlife.

As time allows from other tasks, week by week I enlarge my clearing, working back towards the formal garden level. As rocks are exposed and dense cover from garden escapees removed, the sunshine begins to dry out the soil and change the micro-climate. Run-off from the garden is still a problem. A stormwater drain empties onto the hillside from which water spreads out, encouraging weed growth. I have dug a shallow channel in a partially successful attempt to contain it. Under the rock ledge a small soak attracts frogs and their drumming chorus fills out the summer afternoons.

This is land that once belonged to the Gami-gal people. I am sure they knew every rock and every plant for their medicinal and nutritional value. How I wish they were still here to teach us how to appreciate the land! Unfortunately they are gone. Since their departure the land has suffered great damage, invaded by animal and plant pests. I feel that in a small way I am restoring the balance of nature and natural justice, repairing some of the historic hurts. Most of all, through my work I feel connected with this place in a spiritual way. I have rediscovered a feeling I once had as a child when I knew every stone and every corner of my native place. I am healing the land and being healed by it.

Jocelyn Chey

March 2001

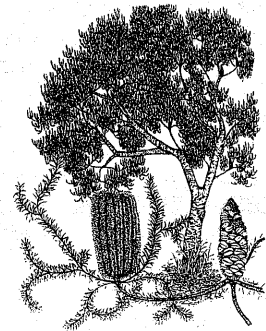


Vale Dorothy O'Connor

Castlecrag Says Farewell to a Gracious Lady

On Friday 9th February St James Anglican Church was overflowing as family and long-time friends thronged to pay tribute and give thanks for the life of Dorothy O'Connor, a resident of Edith street for exactly sixty years. Dorothy with her husband Jack moved to Castlecrag when this suburb was considered to be 'in the bush', but they and their three children quickly became part of a growing community. Devout Anglicans, the O'Connors lacked a place of local worship and not having a car, they began in 1947 a church fellowship in their own home and later became the driving force behind the building of the present St James Church in Edinburgh Road. Dorothy taught Scripture in the local schools for many years, sang in the choir, playing the organ when called upon, and was a stalwart at every church function, especially the annual Spring Fair. She was renowned for her cooking. At her Memorial Service there were many who recalled with affection her productions of Gilbert and Sullivan musicals which were for years part of the Castlecrag tradition. There were tears but also much laughter as friends recalled Dorothy as a queen of musical comedy, but more especially as a wise, generous and gracious friend. She will be enshrined in the memory of hundreds of past pupils and an unnumbered host of friends.

Joan Gunz



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Community News

Griffin Reserves Discovery Walks

Have you been to Embrasure, Turret, Casement, Lookout and Tower Reserve?

Willoughby Council would like to invite you to a **Griffin Reserves Discovery Walk at the Castlecrag Community Fair on Sunday 27th May**. This is a 2km guided walk where you will discover the beauty of these Walter Burley Griffin Reserves, learn about their history and how they are being transformed back into bushland.

Walks are **free** and will leave from Council's Bushcare Trailer at the Fair at 11am and 2pm.

Tennis Club News

Now that the weather is cooler, the club looks forward to seeing more members playing tennis on Saturday afternoons. Numbers have improved since Christmas but more players are needed, so please come along. The new courts are a big improvement! We warmly welcome nine new full members, all Castlecrag residents, and hope they will enjoy their tennis with the club.

Don't forget that one court is available for occasional public hire and that bookings can be made at the Castlecrag video shop in the Griffin Centre.

For membership enquiries please contact Membership Secretary Judy Grieve on 9958 0294 or Susan Kirk on 9967 2327.

Susan Kirk

Mothers' Day Cake Stall

Saturday May 12

Castlecrag Quadrangle

Home-made cakes, biscuits, jams and pickles. Jewellery items.

Donations of cakes would be gratefully received.

St James Anglican Church, Castlecrag

Please contact **Joan Gunz** 9958 1364

Fox baiting program resumed

Willoughby Council's bi-annual fox baiting program will start again in May 2001. During May and June baits will be laid in the Northern Escarpment bushland reserve, Sailors Bay Park and Harold Reid Reserve (as well as other bushland reserves across Willoughby) and these areas will be closed to dogs.

This baiting is part of a regional program by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Pittwater, Warringah and Willoughby Councils.

City of Dreams

Did you miss this interesting documentary by *Film Australia* shown on ABCTV just before Easter? The **Walter Burley Griffin Society** will have copies of the video at its stall at the Castlecrag Fair on 27th May.

**ROLL UP...
ROLL UP...**

**The Castlecrag
Community Fair
is on again!**

**Sunday May 27
10.30 - 3.00**

**Wow!! Put it in
your diary now!!**

Space available for local artists
Contact **Kate Westoby** 9958 0215

The Great Weed Show

Now the Easter Show is over, come to another great show! At the General Meeting of **Castlecrag Conservation Society** on **Thursday 17th May 8pm, Castlecrag Community Centre**.

Bring along your 'favourite' weed, learn all about it and the really bad ones. Tell us all about 'your' weed and give us your definition of a weed. You may also like to show some slides. Everyone welcome.

Join us for supper. For further information ring **Harold Spies** 9958 8569.


WEPA meeting

On **Tuesday 15 May** John Martin from STEP Inc. will speak at WEPA's General Meeting on the preparation of STEP's walking track map for Lane Cove River Catchment and the proposal to prepare a similar map for the Middle Harbour Catchment. **8pm Artarmon Library, Elizabeth Street, Artarmon**.

Everyone is welcome.

WEPA will have a **native plant stall** at the **Castlecrag Community Fair** on **Sunday 27th May** and we welcome orders.

Phone 9958 8569


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This land is our land... (contd)

Site 11 (Nos.317-323) Agree with JBA recommendation that land be rezoned for Open Space and given to Council;

Site 12 (No. 327) Subdivision to allow a public easement from road along existing stone stairs to the open space and current zoning to remain;

Site 13 (No.333) Agree with JBA recommendation to investigate increasing the open space of the site, prior to subdivision;

Site 14 (Nos. 296-302) Site of such significance that it should be considered outside the parameters of this study, on its merits in relation to its Sydney Harbour context. Further consideration of this site should be deferred until the Council agreement on a Masterplan for the Willoughby Paddocks site.

Council has endorsed the above recommendation for Sites 1 to 14 and a response is to be sent by the Mayor to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning proposing agreement to the strategy outlined above. The Progress Association has maintained throughout this long process that all this land should remain as open space. We realise that Council's recommendations do not achieve an outcome which results in none of

the Freeway land being sold, but it is not capitulating to the planning solutions the RTA and DUAP wish. **Council takes great cognisance of the significant urban bushland found on Castlecrag's northern escarpment and also of the need present-day communities have for adequate open space. Its efforts are to be encouraged and applauded.**

Editors

Trash and Treasure Stall at the Castlecrag Fair 27 May

The Progress Association will run its famous **Trash and Treasure** stall, and would welcome your donations of interesting old goods. (toys, books, plants, bric-a-brac).

For pickup of contributions, please contact
**Kate on 9958 0215 or
Kathy on 9958 5103**

The Castlecrag Progress Association Annual General Meeting Sunday 3 June 2.30pm

at Castlecrag Community Centre

Guest Speaker

Belinda Mason

will speak on

the making of the film *City of Dreams*, with special emphasis on Griffin's Fishwick House in Castlecrag and the owner of the house will also speak about its history

Everyone very welcome!

The playground facilities are available so families can bring their children.

Refreshments will provide time to chat with other residents.

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