



NEWSLETTER OF CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

seventy six years of community development ISSN 0814 - 2054

No. 140

February 2002

Progress Association Committee

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Committee: Adele Barnett

Peter Moffitt

Gay Spies

John Steel

Howard Rubie

Next meeting

Tuesday 26 February 8pm

at the Community Centre

Draft Tree Preservation Order

Our Public Liability Insurance

Castlecrag Community Fair: to be held on a biennial basis? (ideas for 2003?)

Refreshments will be served

Castlecrag Progress Association Inc. 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

> The Crag is edited by Kerry McKillop 9958 4516 Elizabeth Lander 9958 5384

Please send all correspondence and membership renewals to the above address.

Membership fees for 2002 are now due (see membership form on last page)

Australia Day 2002

Willoughby Civic Centre provided the perfect venue, the sky was blue, Willoughby City Band played entertainingly, the Australia Day Ambassadors Gough and Margaret Whitlam spoke inspiringly, the Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year Awards were presented, sausages and drinks were provided by Rotary and the many people who attended had an enjoyable and memorable time. Congratulations to Willoughby Council on a job well done!

The Mayor, Cr Pat Reilly, introducing the celebrations, said that there is a 'village feel' in Willoughby, generating community consciousness, and that this was very much in evidence at the gathering to celebrate Australia Day in the heart of Chatswood.

Mr Whitlam spoke of his life in Chatswood as a child in the 1920s when he attended local primary schools. He noted the tremendous changes that have occurred in Australian society



Gay and Harold Spies with Pat Reilly and her Citizen of the Year Award

since his schooldays, giving emphasis to the cultural diversity of today's society. He then took the opportunity to argue for fixed-term elections, commenting that New South Wales and Willoughby were trend-setters in this matter, as they are also in cultural diversity.

Mrs Whitlam spoke on citizenship and the importance of Australia Day. She noted that a citizen owed allegiance to a government and was entitled to its protection. She reminisced about her early connections with Willoughby, having participated in the opening of the (now demolished) Roseville Baths, spent time as a new mother with her first baby at the Tresillian Home in Second Avenue, and regularly visited friends in Castlecrag.

Citizen of the Year Award

This year's Australia Day celebrations at the Civic Centre had a special bonus for Castlecrag, as a Citizen of the Year Award was presented to well-known local resident Gay Spies. The criteria for the award include:

- a significant contribution to the well-being of the community through personal service
- personal effort which has made a lasting and significant difference to the quality of life

of the community

 an exceptional or extraordinary history of achievement in the community service.

In presenting the award, Mayor Pat Reilly said: 'Gay is an outstanding citizen and community worker with an exceptional commitment and dedication to the conservation of the natural environment. Her commitment to the conservation of our natural heri-

tage has led her to take on the responsibilities of officer or committee member of numerous organizations and committees as well as the coordination of the outstanding Sugarloaf Bush Regeneration Project.'

We join in congratulating Gay on the award and for her remarkable community efforts for Castlecrag and Willoughby City.

Editors

Warner's Park update

ave you tried the Griffin Federation Walking Track yet? It provides a delightful walk through the bushland of The Keep Reserve to Warner's Park, from where you can continue to Northbridge or Bicentennial Reserve in Willoughby.

Castlecrag residents are encouraged to experience the delights of Warner's Park and to become involved in the planning process for its future use.

In The Crag No.139, we outlined the process used by Council to determine the future use of the former Northbridge Women's Bowling Club site. Council has decided to use the facility as a multi-use recreational centre, incorporating environment education and school workshops, local playgroups, rehearsal and exhibition spaces along similar lines to the exist-

ing centre at Willoughby Park. In addition, a Landscape & Recreation Master Plan will be prepared for Warner's Park in consultation with community and user groups. Council's Master Plan will include a feasibility study for the Environment Centre.

The Environment Education Centre would be used for school awareness activities, bushcare workshops and training, a community nursery, energy and water conservation programs and demonstrations of sustainable practices. A feature would be a walk-through-landform model of Willoughby City.

Castlecrag residents will have the opportunity to participate in the planning process over the coming months. The Master Plan will be reported back to Council after public exhibition.

Editors

Au Revoir

Edith Le Mesurier, who has lived in Castlecrag since discovering it in 1941, has sold her house and will be moving. She and her husband built their house in Charles Street in 1948. They were foundation members of the Anglican Church in Castlecrag, and Mrs Le Mesurier will be remembered with affection by many.

Ella Young has sold her beautiful house down near the waters of Sugarloaf Bay and is leaving Castlecrag. Ella and her husband came to this bushland suburb during the early 1940s and later, after their son Michael was born, built and lived in three different houses. The Castlecrag Playreading group, inaugurated in the early 1950s and reborn in 1992, owes its sustained existence to Ella's delight in and wish to share the creative world of the dramatist. You've given meaning to Castlecrag's cultural life Ella and we miss you. Don't go too far away, your swansong is still in the wings!

Ann Sheahan

The Castlecrag community was saddened to learn of the sudden and very tragic death of Ann Sheahan. Ann was a friend to all and a volunteer, for more than 25 years, to many different community organisations in Willoughby. Our condolences go to her husband Kevin, her sons John, Richard and Robert and to her many grandchildren of whom she was so loving and so proud of their achievements.

Draft Tree Preservation Order

Willoughby City's **Tree Preservation Order** (TPO) has been reviewed by Council and an amended draft TPO is now on public exhibition for comment. Copies are available at the Castlecrag Library and the draft TPO will be a major topic at the Progress Association meeting on 26 February. Written submissions on the draft TPO will be received by Council up to 28 February 2002.

Progress Association Meeting Dates 2002

February 26

March 24 (Annual General Meeting)

August 27

October 22

Deadlines for the newsletter are the third week of the month before the meeting dates.

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A walk through the Castle: road and place names in Castlecrag (Part 2)

At the end of the Part 1 (Crag 139) we reached Warner's Reserve, The Outpost and The Palisade. Before leaving this area where Castlecrag borders Northbridge, we need to consider and visit The Keep Reserve. The word 'keep' has many meanings; it comes from the Anglo-Saxon, cêpan 'to preserve from danger', 'to take care of', 'to continue or to maintain' and 'to reserve'. It also refers to 'the stronghold of an ancient castle to which the besieged inmates could retreat in an emergency', 'the most secure part of a castle', and so it sometimes came to refer to the place where prisoners were held. The Keep in Castlecrag is an area of protected native vegetation through which the new Federation Track leads from The Rampart just below The Turret down to The Outpost.

To continue our tour we must retrace our steps up through the bush of The Keep to The Rampart and turn right heading in an easterly direction towards Edinburgh Road. This will first bring us to a triangular, vegetated traffic island leading into The Redoubt. A 'redoubt' is the general name in a fort or castle for an undefended but secure enclosed area. Our Redoubt is appropriately the name for this cul-de-sac terminating in a round traffic island and a pathway leading into The Casement Reserve. The Casement links via a steep narrow pathway to The Barbette, a cul de sac we will come to later in this tour. The Casement, currently being weeded and restored by a group of local residents, was named prior to the houses below being developed when, dominated by a stand of trees of Kunzea, it would have offered a window towards Middle Har-

Return to The Rampart that now curves in a northerly direction and in a short distance at a large triangular traffic island, notable for its remnant native vegetation, The Rampart now changes its name to **The Sortie Port**. A 'sortie port' is the gateway of the castle from where the besieged troops would emerge. It is well named! Just watch the vehicular and foot traffic emerging during a weekday morning and at the same time tradesmen in their vans and delivery trucks moving into the area.

The Sortie Port leads up to Edinburgh Road. It is worth walking the short distance to Edinburgh Road where amongst the trees in the traffic island there is a fine bronze fountain designed some years ago by a local resident, Bim Hilder, to commemorate the work of Walter Burley Griffin.

As we return down The Sortie Port we will pass on our left a small traffic island, planted with native vegetation in honour of Edgar

Deans, the entrance to **The Battlement**. In castle terminology a 'battlement' is a structure for defence. But since the invention of firearms, battlements have been widely used as ornamental structures to cap high walls in ecclesiastical and other buildings. Our Battlement appropriately dominates the high ground beneath which is a series of reserves (see later) and further downhill several roads and cul-de-sacs. The Battlement is almost level and follows the contour to terminate at **The Citadel** before rejoining Edinburgh Road. We will visit this area towards the end of the walk.

The Sortie Port just past The Battlement, joins **The Bastion**, well named, for in castle terminology this would be 'a mass of earth and rocks' often faced with sods, brick etc. 'standing out from a rampart' and in a commanding position. This is one of the few roads cutting directly across contours. It is said that this was forced upon Griffin by the Council in order to maintain continuity with the now shortened Rockley Street, one of the oldest roads on the peninsula, terminating at Sailors Bay Reserve and predating the Griffins' influence.

At the base of this steep Bastion on the right a triangular traffic island leads us to **The Barbette**. In its ancient meaning this is 'a platform in a fortification from which a cannon may be fired'. Our Barbette is a linear platform of land where some of the houses enjoy views to Sailors Bay and Northbridge.

The Barbette terminates in a round vegetated traffic island and a pathway leading steeply back to The Casement Reserve.

Rockley Street is worth exploring; on the left it branches to The Barbican another wooded residential cul-de-sac overlooking The Retreat Reserve and with views through the trees to the water. A 'barbican' is the gateway and watchtower for defending the castle entrance and may also refer to a channel for the discharge of water. Our Barbican fits both these meanings for here a stream leads into Middle Harbour and for the local residents it is a short walk through the bush clad Retreat Reserve to the foreshore. On rejoining Rockley Street, walk to its easterly end for attractive glimpses of the harbour, its boats and bush-clad shores and be sure to read the plaque dedicated to the memory of Leonard Teale, a noted member of the community of Castlecrag. These glimpses are further enhanced if one ventures down the steep road to the boat shed.

From here about 30m back up the road an entrance to a walking track leads through the **The Retreat** to the shore with its white sandy beach which once had a sharkproof enclosure when it was a popular place for bathing. A 'retreat' has many meanings; here it refers to 'a secluded situation', 'a place to which one may withdraw'.

Carrick Chambers (to be continued....)

Bill Lucas, Architect 1924-2001



"Occasionally a city gives birth to a genius who will remain unknown to the general public until well after their death. Bill Lucas, the architect. teacher, ventor and

philosopher, who died last September aged 76, is one of those people."

- Neville Gruzman

Bill Lucas was a Castlecrag resident from 1957 until 1962 and his legacy remains very much with us today.

In 1956 Bill and his new wife Ruth, who was also an architect and Bill's collaborator, bought three adjoining blocks of land in The Bulwark at a point where the road turns sharply around a stone bridge over a rainforest-covered creek. In 1957, in consultation with Ruth, Bill designed and built a house for themselves. This house at 80 The Bulwark is known today as the Glass House, and remains as one of Australia's most significant modern houses.

Built on a site which in conventional 1957 terms would generally have been regarded as almost unbuildable, the Glass House turns the challenge of its site to great advantage. Audaciously simple in its concept, it stands on tiptoes amongst the boulders and the ferns on four slender steel posts. The whole single storey structure is suspended by cables from the post tops at roof level and stabilised by slender steel cross bracing. This skeleton of steel supports a house of timber and glass, forming a hollow rectangle with a hole in the middle where half of the hole is a timber deck open to the sky and the other half is an open void with the trees of the site growing up through it. The house appears to barely touch the ground, suspended amongst the trees. All of the rooms look outward to the bush and inward to the central void.

The house appears deceptively simple to our eyes today, 45 years on. But in 1957 it was radical stuff, throwing aside every precept of house design and construction of its day. It was built for minimal cost (Bill and Ruth didn't have much money), it had minimal structure, minimal materials, minimal energy use, and it is beautiful in a timeless way.

Most importantly, it was designed to have minimal impact on the natural bushland. The house was inserted amongst the carefully preserved trees, becoming part of them. Unlike the present fashion in Castlecrag for neo-Tuscan houses where almost every square metre of

the site is excavated and replaced with fake stone paving and Buxus hedges, the Glass House leaves its beautiful bushland site almost intact, as undisturbed as possible. Its use of dark stained timber and dark painted steel blend beautifully with the bush.

The house is entirely subservient to the surrounding landscape in a way that makes it difficult to see clearly from the street. In this sense Bill Lucas truly carried the torch of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin in their concept for Castlecrag as a place where landscape would dominate over buildings and the houses would be lost amongst the trees. Lucas and the Griffins shared a passionate love affair with Australian plants and especially the rugged character of the Castlecrag bush.

Bill designed and built, in collaboration with his brother Neville, the two houses next-door to the Glass House at 76 and 78 The Bulwark. He had bought the land very cheaply, and in turn he offered each block to his clients for nothing and they paid only the cost of the houses. Both of these houses have been altered to some degree in more recent times. No.76, which originally had a roof garden, has had this replaced by an additional floor of living space. Nevertheless they both retain much of their original fabric and, most importantly, they retain their essential relationship with the landscape.

Five houses up the street from the Glass House at 70 The Bulwark, Bill designed a house in 1960 for Con and Addie Saltis. Con, a structural engineer, was president at one time of the Castlecrag Progress Association and Addie is well remembered in Castlecrag for her Bushcare work and her major contribution to restoring The Haven amphitheatre. Known sometimes today as the Block House because it is built of natural coloured concrete block, it steps down the steep rocky site onto which it has been grafted so as to become intimately joined as if to grow out from it. The design juxtaposes solid masses of concrete blockwork with large walls of glass. The walls of the living

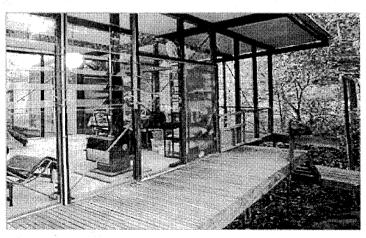
area are mainly glass, providing an intimate relationship with the surrounding tree canopies. The natural colours of the building blend very comfortably with the landscape.

Although Bill designed over 450 projects of which at least 200 were built, he did not seek publicity for his buildings. Nevertheless, his work has been widely celebrated. He is one of the five Australian architects cited in Curtis' Definitive Modern Architecture Since 1900. In 1972 the Royal Australian Institute of Architects published a guide book to Sydney architecture titled 444 Sydney Buildings in which notable houses are listed by suburb. Five houses are listed in Castlecrag, two of which are by Walter Burley Griffin and two by Bill Lucas - 80 The Bulwark (the Glass House) and 70 The Bulwark (the Block House). In an exhibition Architecture into Millennium III at the Rex Irwin Gallery in 1993, the Lucas Glass House was exhibited as an exemplar of international seminal houses of the 20th Century. It is exhibited at the present time by the Historic Houses Trust in an exhibition at Rose Seidler House of five daringly modern houses of the 1950s.

Bill and Ruth lived in the Glass House from 1957 until 1962 when they moved with their six children to Paddington. Bill was passionately concerned with urban design issues and in Paddington he joined with others to form The Paddington Society to fight for the preservation of Paddington from demolition and unsympathetic redevelopment. The greatest galvanising threat was the proposal by the Department of Main Roads to widen Jersey Road, ploughing through a tract of fine terraces and cutting an intact community in half.

The Paddington Society became the model for successful resident action in Sydney. As a result of its opposition to the widening of Jersey Road, the Government set up a Royal Commission. The Paddington Society, with huge effort by many including Bill Lucas, presented the conservation case and was ultimately successful. The Royal Commission reported to the Government that Paddington was an area of architectural and historical importance which warranted preservation. >>>

Below: The Glass House, The Bulwark, Castlecrag



Bill Lucas (contd)

These were groundbreaking words in 1968 and resulted in the abandonment of the DMR plans and ultimately in the conservation zoning of the Paddington area. It was Sydney's first conservation zoning in a local planning scheme and the forerunner of the many we have in Sydney today, including the Griffin Conservation Area in Castlecrag.

Bill Lucas was a passionate activist for many other issues in which he held a strong belief. He was a passionate defender of Joern Utzon against his dismissal from the Sydney Opera House and he was secretary of the Bring Back Utzon campaign. He was the designer of the original Paddington Markets and was involved with the Paddington Arts Festival, The Nimbin Aquarius Festival, Aboriginal housing in Bourke, the BLF's Green Ban movement and a proposal for the conservation and regeneration of Woolloomooloo at a time when it was proposed for comprehensive demolition.

Bill was a great teacher of architecture. He taught for many years as a part time university tutor, but his willingness to help his students went far beyond the allotted time spent at university. He was interested not just in the philosophy of architecture, but in the philosophy of life in full because he could not separate architecture from life. Over the many years that he taught, he became an inspiring influence to many young Sydney architects whom he helped to "think outside the square".

Neville Gruzman said in his obituary for Bill published in the Sydney Morning Herald, "The careers of some of the world's most notable architects and artists have been characterised by unconventional relationships with money and Bill was no exception". For the last 22 years Bill offered his architectural and technical services entirely on an honorary basis, maintaining himself on his small war service pension.

His very large funeral was a celebration of his intellectual passion, his creative energy and his humanity. Bill had a utopian vision of ecological sustainability for communities and whole cities and he pursued this vision relentlessly and with great zeal.

Castlecrag is fortunate to have four Bill Lucas houses, which so truly embody the essence of the Griffins' concept of the integration of building and site, the respect for the character of Castlecrag's bushland and the dominance of landscape over buildings.

Peter Moffitt

<< Photo by Ray Joyce for NSW Historic Houses Trust, 2001

Foreshore Building Line

Last December, the Land and Environment Court handed down its judgment on the Bowen v WCC case.

Judge Bignold held that the Foreshore Building Line (FBL) acts as an 'absolute prohibition' and held that houses cannot be built below this line. It was a resounding win for the environment, one that greatly strengthens the FBL.

Legal issues:

Mr Bowen had appealed against Willoughby City Council's (WCC) refusal to grant development consent for a subdivision and roadway that would service five blocks – three entirely below the FBL. He argued that his Development Application (DA) had merit and deserved approval. He used a State Environmental Planning Policy 1 (SEPP 1) objection to argue that although the FBL prohibits building below the FBL (with a few exceptions) his proposal was not contrary to the objectives of the FBL and could therefore be approved.

In March 2000, Judge Bignold, in a preliminary decision, indicated that the FBL was a 'development standard' and not an 'absolute prohibition'. This would mean that the FBL could be constantly challenged and weakened by SEPP 1 objections. However, this preliminary decision was based on the subdivision and road proposal alone and WCC, concerned about the future impact of three houses below the FBL, then asked the Court to determine whether the erection of houses on the three proposed lots would be prohibited by the FBL.

These matters were presented to the Court

from 29 May to June 2001. Community support was evident as the Court was packed every day. Evidence was given by community members and representatives from Environmental Groups and WCC's legal team told us that they played a crucial role in the case.

In the judgment, the judge recognised the immediate environmental damage that would be caused by this development proposal, but just as importantly he also acknowledged broader issues such as the regional importance of the area, the extensive FBL review, supportive planning legislation, Ministe-

rial intervention, cumulative impacts, and precedent. He dealt with the FBL issue in a comprehensive way and applied the criteria of a recent and authoritative Court of Appeal case to justify his new decision to make the FBL an absolute prohibition.

Summary of the Court Decision:

Judge Bignold held in this case that :-

- The Foreshore Building Line (FBL) is not a development standard but is an absolute prohibition to the building of houses below the FBL. A SEPP 1 objection cannot be used to vary the line.
- The use of SEPP 1 was considered to be unfounded on the grounds that the "The proposed development is repugnant to the stated objectives of the FBL"
- The DA for the subdivision and road was rejected on merits. "The accumulative adverse impacts are plainly unacceptable".

(The Judge noted that the determination of issues 2 and 3 were not strictly necessary, but were made in response to a request from the applicant.)

The future:

WCC has been waiting for the results of this case before completing its review of the FBL. Hopefully this will be the last stage of the FBL saga, and again community support for a strong FBL will guide the process.

We will await news from Council on this matter and let you know of its progress.

Louise Mitchell

Richardson & Wrench Castlecrag 9958 1200

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Doggie Matters

We all love our dogs, but we also need to keep in mind the impact of unrestrained dogs on our wonderful bushland environment. Many residents appear to believe that their animals can be let off the leash to run free in the reserves. Dogs in this situation - and unleashed on the streets - are being actively encouraged to do their 'toilet jobs' in the reserves or on street nature strips. Nutrient-rich do droppings are very detrimental to both bushland and to vegetation generally. Our Council, as with others across Australia, has designated areas that may be used by responsible dog owners for the purpose of exercising their dogs unleashed. They are the only public areas within the City of Willoughby where dogs may be exercised without being restrained by a leash. Those within easy access of Castlecrag are:

Open space alongside 52 Mowbray Road, bordering Eastern Valley Way, Willoughby

Willoughby Park Oval No.2, Warrane Road (6-8am; 4.30-6.30pm only; Daylight Saving 5.30-7.30am and 6.30-8.30pm)

Muston Park, Penshurst Street, Chatswood, southern portion only, 4-10pm.

Responsible dog owners walk their dogs on a leash and carry a "scooper bag". We ask that their example be followed by all.

Pat Starch

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Council's Guided Bushwalks

A Bush Poetry reading at Dusk Sunday 24 February 6:30pm-8pm

Enjoy a summer's evening at Henry Lawson Cave, Naremburn, listening to poems of the bush with a cup of billy tea by the camp fire. Bring a mug, a rug or a camp chair to sit on, and a poem to read if you wish!

This activity is free but bookings are essential. Contact **Di Eva**, Council's Bushland Interpretive Officer on **9777 7755**. If you would like to be on the mailing list for the quarterly Guided Bushwalks program, please give Di a call at Council.

The Supermarket under Siege

Coles Express report they are experiencing problems with a gang of youths, well-dressed and possibly local residents, descending on them at quiet times during the night, stealing and harassing staff and patrons.

This sounds like a scene from *The Bill* rather than Castlecrag. Could parents 'have a word' with their 12-15 year olds to ensure they are not responsible for this anti-social behaviour?

History Corner

Wanda Spathopoulos is seeking information about Willoughby musical societies in the 1930s, for a cultural history study. She advises that during the 1930s, a company used to present operettas in a hall adjacent to the old Willoughby Council Chambers in Victoria Avenue opposite the present Civic Centre site. She has collected recollections of this from two people, one of whom danced in a production of Naughty Marietta. Wanda is seeking further information, including the name of the company, any connection with Council, works performed, names of performers, etc.

Please contact Wanda at: 185 Australia Street, Newtown 2042 Phone: 9557 3527

Reminder:

Progress Association Meeting
Tuesday 26 February 8pm
Community Centre
cnr The Rampart and The Postern

cnr The Rampart and The Poster Refreshments will be served

Name:	and the second	Signature: _		
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