

## Hundreds of trees already gone – Castlecrag among the suburbs worst abused by 10/50 rule

The chainsaws have been working overtime in the Castlecrag community since the 10/50 rule passed NSW law in August last year.

While there is no official figure, Willoughby Council's Dominic Johnson says they've been notified, unofficially, that as many as 500 mature trees have been lost within Willoughby City alone, and dozens of those from Castlecrag.

There has been a huge community outcry over the 10/50 legislation in Councils across the state as the ruling – introduced to decrease risk during bushfires – has been openly abused.

Kaine Johnson, from campaign group Stop the Chop, says "90-99% of the trees coming down, have nothing to do with bushfires. It's mostly about improving views, or being rid of leaf debris or possums" he said. "It overrides all consideration by council and in our view any removal of trees other than for bushfire removal is an abuse of the code."

There has been widespread misuse of the code to clear trees in Castlecrag, but the streets closest to the water have taken some of the hardest hits. At one address alone, 13 mature trees were removed in a single visit, including one towering 30 metre tall Moreton Bay Fig.

The most recent review of the legislation took into account more than 3,500 submissions from individuals and interested parties. After 10 months of consideration the thirty recommendations to come out of



*Trees lawfully coming down*

the review do little to wrest back any control to Council authorities.

"It's a totally inadequate response to community concerns" says Mark Crew of the Castlecrag Conservation Society. But there have been some welcome changes in the review including three that have particular significance for Castlecrag. (See page 5). Recommendation 19 reigns in the boundaries to exclude some areas that previously fell within the old 10/50 zone. The Rural Fire Service online mapping tool

has been updated to make clear precisely which households fall within the new code restrictions. Recommendation 6 places stricter constraints on properties within 100 metres of the foreshore by excluding them from eligibility to clear trees and vegetation under the 10/50 code. and recommendation 25 empowers council to uphold development conditions that clearly prevent clearing of vegetation within the 10/50 boundaries.

Willoughby Council Mayor Gail Giles-Gidney welcomed the changes warning that "Council will still be responsible for enforcing any breaches of the law. Anyone who does not comply with the 10/50 code may be liable to prosecution."

The Castlecrag Conservation Society will continue its campaign for tighter control of all mature tree felling.

"We want individual assessment by qualified staff – no less" says Mark Crew "We do understand that sometimes trees have to come down, but there needs to be a merit based assessment process in place."

Kaine Johnston, is also concerned by the lack of official monitoring of the tree felling, and says he is hopeful the 10/50 rule can still be repealed.

Stop the Chop campaigner Gaye White says she's bitterly disappointed with the outcome of the review and has again called for the scrapping of all "self assessment" in the code. "That way data can be collected

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### NOTICE OF CPA GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday September 16, 2015  
8.00pm

#### GUEST SPEAKER:

Peter Lisle, Sustainability Project Officer WCC  
Solar Energy in the home – the way ahead  
In the Marion Mahony Hall, Glenaeon School,  
117 Edinburgh Rd, Castlecrag.

All welcome. Refreshments will be provided.

THE CRAG

is the community newsletter of the Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

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info@castlecrag.org.au

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

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Write to us

The Crag is a community newsletter and we welcome letters and contributions from residents about local issues. We do not publish anonymous letters. Items should be sent to the editors by email to: editors@castlecrag.org.au

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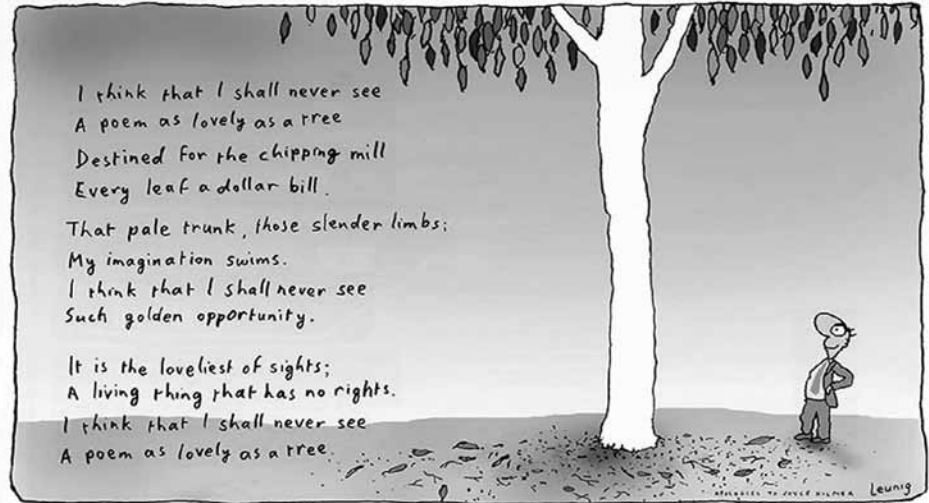
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The CPA and The Crag is not responsible for information or advice in contributed articles or letters. Readers should seek their own personal, professional advice.

From the Editors



We are so lucky to live in a bush paradise 15 minutes from the centre of an international city. Castlecrag is a unique enclave with only two main roads connecting us to the wider world. It's a hideaway with the best of everything nature has to offer. Water, bush and wildlife at everybody's front door.

So why then are so many of us ready to cut down the very assets we have moved here to enjoy? The mature bush landscape of Castlecrag is one of it's greatest assets. It's the Australian home of American architect Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony Griffin, and as residents and caretakers we have a responsibility to retain this beautiful bush identity in their memory. Griffin's architectural ethos was about creating communities for people to live harmoniously within nature.

100's of trees already gone...

and the Rural Fire Service can do a scientific review of the effectiveness of the code." Mark Crew, says he is watching the local landscape change before his very eyes. "Mature trees are an integral part of the Castlecrag landscape and they serve a

Ode to Tree – Our thanks to Leunig.

Clearing Code. As a community we should be ashamed to know that many, many mature trees have been carted out of Edinburgh road in a recurring funeral parade of log trucks over the past 12 months.

The 10-50 rule was introduced by the NSW government to protect homes in the event of bush fires. No one can argue with an owners right to protect their property and minimise risk to their family, and we know there are many valid reasons for tree removal, but the widespread and opportunistic abuse of the code to gain a "better" view or lessen leaf litter, is selfish and harmful in the long term.

We ask you to think long and hard before using this code to bypass regulations that have protected and nurtured our little bit of paradise for so long.

The Editors

continued from Page 1

purpose in nature. Our heat, wind and dust levels all risk being altered with the widespread loss of these big old trees".

"Every time I hear a chainsaw start up in Castlecrag I know it's the demise of another significant tree."

Castlecrag Progress Association Inc. Membership Form

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# From the President



### Castlecrag Fair a book-led success

The village was bustling with families enjoying the atmosphere of the 2015 Castlecrag Fair. Heartfelt thanks go to Simone and Mike Selby who are the driving force behind the organisation of this bi-annual event. They put in an enormous effort for months beforehand to ensure the success and smooth running of the day. We would also like to thank IGA and LJ Hooker for their generous support.

The Castlecrag Progress Association once again hosted a wonderful occasion and the CPA bookstall was a standout performer at the long weekend festivities on June 7. As a Librarian and a book lover I am so pleased to know that people are still very much into reading real books. I know there are plenty of alternatives out there so it's great to see proof that people are still seeking out books because no technology can replicate that special touch and smell.

The bookstall made well over \$1,000 on the day which goes into CPA coffers for publishing this newsletter and future community works. We were given so many books, (well into the thousands) and while we were selling all day, by close of business we still had half the original pile left!

Rest assured nothing goes to waste! The children's books were all packaged and sent to Papua New Guinea for dispersal to schools and preschools. They are delivered free via a generous shipping company and the rest of the day's leftovers were forwarded to the Sydney University bookstall for its own fundraising event.



### The Pinnacle bus stop re-opens



The Pinnacle bus stop re-opening in May was a well-attended event bringing locals and relatives together to celebrate the restoration of the shelter. About 100 people turned out to witness the bus stop's second ribbon cutting, again by Kathy Rosenmeyer and myself. Mayor Gail officiated after which we all shared a taste of the delicious celebration cake.

### Haven Amphitheatre

In June, along with five other community organisations, we made a brief submission regarding the redesign of the Haven Amphitheatre. Two concept design options were offered by the architects Craig Burton and Matt Markum-Lee from CAB Consulting. We were impressed by the amount of research the team had undertaken.

One option was for a proscenium stage concept with the creek flowing between the stage & audience. This is more in keeping with the Griffin's use of the space using the eastern slope as a stage. However, we felt the stage was somewhat removed from the audience. The committee preferred the first option which is a thrust stage concept more in the round and similar to what is there at present, and has been since it was built in 1976.

This is what we said:

*The Committee of Castlecrag Progress Association Inc. has considered the two options you have proposed for the Haven Amphitheatre. At the outset we should like*



*to commend you on the process of arriving at these two concepts which clearly show the detailed approach and care you have taken in assessing and respecting the heritage and cultural elements of the site whilst enabling a performance space that is consistent with scale and frequency of use. We were particularly impressed with the way in which the creek line has been adapted and retained as an integral environmental element of The Haven.*

*As far as the technical elements of each option with respect to stage productions, we do not feel qualified to comment on the pros and cons of the two concepts. However, in terms of retaining and enhancing the ambience of the site and the audience experience and involvement, we favour Option 1 – the Thrust Stage. This presents a much better sense of theatre in the round and intimacy consistent with a community amphitheatre arising from closer proximity of the audience to the performers.*

*In summary, Option 1 appears to address most of the important elements we have previously urged for in the redevelopment and retention of The Haven as a cultural and environmental gem for Castlecrag.*

Please make an effort to attend the next general meeting of the CPA on 16 September. Hear about the value of installing solar photo-voltaic(PV) and solar thermal technologies and the rebates available. Household battery storage, efficient pool equipment use, practical issues and costs will be covered as well as instillation issues in heritage conservation areas. Come with questions and stay for supper! We welcome your interest!

**Kate Westoby**




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## Obituary – Judith Keller 17 October 1922–17 August 2015



Judith Keller came to the northern escarpment in Castlecrag in 1947 and bought a block of land where she and her husband

Walter built their home and together raised their family.

The early days of the Bohemian lifestyle in Castlecrag, when Edinburgh Road was a winding bush track, were amongst her fondest memories and she had many stories of those times. She told of how the residents east of the sealed part of Edinburgh Road walked each morning up along the dirt track to the bus stop at the shops in their gumboots carrying their best shoes. They would park their gumboots in a friendly neighbour's milkbox close to the bitumen, change into their best shoes and hop onto the bus to go to work. This was reversed on their journey home in the evening and is a far cry from the Crag of today!

Judith was a "do-er" and lived a humble life filled with service to others, fully involving herself in numerous local community activities. These ranged from Neighbourhood Watch, Castlecrag Progress Association, Castlecrag Infants School, Miss Dove's Preschool, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and she was undoubtedly the longest serving delivery person for

*The Crag* newsletter. She organised an Australia Day event for her neighbours in Stoker Park for many years and was a regular parishioner at St James Church which was built upon land donated by her father and Castlecrag resident, Frederick Turton, in 1950.

Judith cared deeply about the environment and was an avid recycler well before it was fashionable. She participated in the Clean Up Australia Day Campaign every year until she was 90. Judith was passionate about Bush Regeneration, particularly on the Northern Escarpment, and for many years was an enthusiastic member of the Mill's Point Bush Care group, pulling out weeds well into her 70's.

In the days of the fundraising for the Sydney Opera House Judith held many of the so called "diminishing morning teas" with her Castlecrag neighbours and in her life made countless batches of sandwiches and cakes for those in need within the community or to raise funds for a multitude of local charities and organisations. Judith cared deeply for people and over the years every new neighbour was given a heartfelt welcome and offered her unconditional love and friendship.

As a physiotherapist Judith was keenly aware of how to maintain good health and she was one of the first early morning walkers along Edinburgh Road inspiring

others through her action. Saturday evening ballroom dance classes were held in her home for teenagers in the 1960's and her Holden station wagon was a regular transport vehicle for the Girl Guide Castlecrag to Northbridge weekly roster.

Judith was a gracious, warm hearted, generous, kind lady who touched the hearts of others with her keen sense of humour, her compassion and her willingness to help people of all walks of life. She adored living in Castlecrag and had a strong and everlasting love of the natural beauty of this peninsula.

In the latter stage of her life the daily visits by her avian friends such as the resident butcher bird roosting behind her waterpipe and the wandering brush turkey crossing her lawn every day at 9 and 3 gave her great joy.

She was so grateful that her life was enriched by the beautiful long term friendships she formed with other Castlecrag residents over the 68 years and for the enduring friendships made by her children with their childhood neighbours that continue to this very day.

As was her fervent wish, Judith died peacefully in her own home, aged 92, surrounded by many loved ones. She is survived by her 5 children, Victor, Hugh, Roland, Jenny and Rosie as well as her 13 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

**Rosie Keller**

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105 Edinburgh Road

# THE CRAG Mayor's Column



As we continue through our 150th anniversary year, our much loved Willoughby Spring Festival has been reinvigorated - with a fresh program of fabulous events

through September. The newly named Emerge Festival will feature an exciting focus on up-and-coming artists, showcase performances and talent development; while still maintaining and celebrating popular annual events like the Chatswood StreetFair on Saturday 5 September. Visit [emergefestival.com.au](http://emergefestival.com.au) for the full program of events. See you all there!

At the end of June, Council made its submission to IPART under the State Government's Fit for the Future review of local government. Council believes it can demonstrate it is in a viable position to not amalgamate. This follows thorough community consultation, in which the most common response (44.5%) indicated a first preference for Willoughby to remain a stand-alone Council. Council has now completed an in-depth review of Council's internal efficiencies and operations, supporting a stand alone proposition. IPART will announce its determination in October 2015, and a decision by the State Government is expected by the end of the year.

Design options for the new stage at the Haven Amphitheatre have been developed

by CAB Consulting. Once Council endorses a preferred option, this plan will go on public exhibition so the wider community can have input. There is strong support from the community to resume performances at the Haven as soon as possible, so please take the opportunity to have your say.

The safety of Northbridge Car Park users is also paramount, and Council is investigating various funding sources, including paid parking, for a significant upgrade, in addition to our current maintenance. Any solution needs to balance increasing demands on the centre, with maintenance of a local village character.

The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Rule Code has been a source of much angst in our community. The Code has clarified how close a tree must be to a house before it can be chopped down, removing all doubt about whether a property is a risk or not. Also important is the responsibility placed on landowners to ensure that soil erosion cannot occur after they have removed vegetation. Rules for developers have also been tightened and many loopholes have been removed. Importantly, Council will still be responsible for enforcing any breaches of the law. Anyone who does not comply with the 10/50 code may be liable to prosecution.

If you have any issues you would like to discuss with me please phone 9777 1001 or alternatively send me an email at [gail.giles-gidney@willoughby.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gail.giles-gidney@willoughby.nsw.gov.au)

Gail Giles-Gidney

**If you are considering chopping down a tree, it is really important to check the RFS online assessment tool (<http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au>) to establish whether your property is within an eligibility area.**

Three changes to the 10/50 Code of Practice are particularly relevant to Castlecrag residents:

- **Recommendation 19** proposes that small bushland reserves of Category 2 vegetation be excluded from the Code. Since all bushland reserves in Castlecrag, except for the Category 1 classified Northern Escarpment and the Harold Reid reserves, are classified as Category 2 vegetation, properties adjacent to these are now **not entitled** to clear trees and vegetation under the 10/50 scheme.
- **Recommendation 6** has amended the Code to exclude from the eligibility area all parcels of land that are wholly or partly within 100 metres of the coastline and mapped estuaries. This change affects the Middle Harbour foreshore and therefore some properties in Edinburgh Road adjacent to the Northern Escarpment reserve as well as The Tor Walk and Cheyne Walk.
- **Recommendation 25** amends the Code to prevent clearing of vegetation contrary to development consent conditions attached to the land (e.g. development consents and complying certificates).



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## The ups and downs of raising chickens in the city



Walking through Castlecrag a few weeks ago I heard the distinct crow of two roosters having a chat in somebody's backyard deep down Edinburgh Road. Beautiful sounds in the crisp cool of mid morning, but not the banter you would want to be woken by at an ungodly 3 or 4 am.

It brought back to me early memories of our own chicken rearing, and the feeling of sickness that overcame me one morning when I heard an unfamiliar warbling from my own hen house. Our family had recently acquired 3 baby bantam chicks, purchased for a dollar each from the Kiama Show, and we'd accommodated them in our recently converted cubby house. The farmer who sold them to us must have been very chuffed to be ridding his own recently hatched flock of all the baby roosters to an eager queue of visiting city folk who had no idea how to tell the sex of a baby chicken (it's a TAFE course these days, I think).

They were so cute as fluffy chicks, the children loved them and named them Lucky, Henny and Grace. They became even more beautiful as their plumage sprouted colours of black, deep gold and green. Then the warbling started. Usually somewhere between 2 and 3 am.

At first it was just one warbler, but within

a week it was two and by 12 days all three bantams were refining their warbles to a clear and cracking crow, waking everyone for blocks around us at ridiculously unsociable hours. We had no idea what to do, and in order to buy ourselves some time, we decided it would be worthwhile creeping down to the hen house each night on dusk, scooping the little buggers into a big cardboard box with airholes and clean straw, and bedding them down in the darkness and soundproofing of our garage (not sure if that's RSPCA approved). Each morning we'd open them up and return them to the backyard.

It worked, but it was never going to be a permanent solution. We managed to keep up the routine for 3 weeks until we arranged to give them back to a welcoming farm on the south coast where I suspect they were at an age to be pot ready.

After a few months, we tried again, this time exchanging \$20 a head for three guaranteed young hens (pullets) and since that time, about 8 years ago, we have continued to keep hens.

And so have many of our neighbours. It's a growing trend in our suburb and if you're half contemplating joining the club, there are a few rules to consider:

Every council has their own particular

chicken keeping rules, Willoughby Council's are fairly easy to manage. Council's website has the legislation in full but this is the main thrust of it:

- There is a household limit of 5 hens.
- They must be kept in a clean and healthy environment, with no offensive odours (which attracts vermin).
- Must be housed in an enclosed backyard so as to avoid wandering chickens.
- Roosters are not permitted. Too noisy
- They must be kept in a coop that is of adequate size for the number kept; and not have a floor area of more than 15m<sup>2</sup>
- This structure must be a minimum of 4.5m from any dwelling (including the owner's)
- Poultry must not be kept under such conditions as to create a nuisance or to be dangerous or injurious to health
- Council will investigate if there are any complaints from neighbours.

Chicken Coops come in all manner of shapes and sizes. We converted the cubby house for ours, which works a treat, but I've seen guinea pig hutches, tool sheds, as well as an assortment of custom made coops to suit any budget.



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Left and bottom right: *Glenaeon Kindergarten children caring for their chickens*

Keeping chickens has been an important part of the daily lesson at Castlecrag's Glenaeon Steiner School where they have had a thriving hen community for nearly 5 years.

"It's an extension of our Kindergarten year where we nurture and care for our environment" explains teacher Kristy Barry "The children are involved in the feeding, the caring and cleaning of the chickens and their coop. We make compost, and through the whole experience, children are part of it."

There are tasty benefits to keeping chickens at school. "We collect the chickens eggs each day and we cook with them. Sometimes it's boiled eggs, other times something different."

Life in the henhouse can sometimes mimic life in the wider world, as happened recently when one of the hens, Lucy, was the victim of "henpecking", the nasty equivalent of bullying in the chicken world. "It's a lovely lesson as they all feel they have to look after Lucy a little bit more because she's been henpecked".

"In our kindergarten we always instill with the children that we care for each other, we care for our things, we care for our place and the chickens are an extension of that."

Keeping chickens is not all easygoing in an urban setting. There are downsides. The most common complaint is that chickens do tend to attract a higher population of rats and mice to the vicinity. It's essential to make the coop vermin proof to keep rodent numbers to a minimum.

This usually entails digging the mouseproof wire enclosure a good 20 centimetres underground. Your local pet store can give advice on this. Foxes can also be a worry in the Castlecrag area, particularly if you back onto the reserve. Foxproofing your henhouse and ensuring the chickens are locked away at night will save much heartache.

Sharing the eggs with your neighbours in the more abundant months of spring and summer might be a helpful gesture too if there are any neighbourly concerns.

**Sandra Odorisio**

## CASTLECRAG NOTES...

### Vale Dr Vicki Freame



Local GP and Castlecrag resident Dr Vicki Freame passed away on July 13, after suffering an aneurysm. She was 59.

Dearly loved by her family and friends, Vicki will be remembered as a caring physician to many in the Castlecrag Community. Former patient Angela McClean paid tribute to her friend and doctor on learning of Vicki's passing. "When my kids were little she was a wonderful doctor to us. Vicki was very empathetic and a great listener. She will be very missed".

**Castlecrag residents were quick to the rescue** when Sydney's Wayside Chapel called out for warm blankets in July. Peter Moffitt, Pete Townsend and Lorraine Cairnes delivered FORTY warm blankets, doonas, quilts, and sleeping bags to the Wayside Chapel at Kings Cross. They filled the Subaru to overflowing. This was from a list of less than 30 Castlecrag email addresses: the Retreat Bushcare Group and some Castlecrag friends and neighbours.



There are a lot of street people and others sleeping warmer this winter because of Castlecrag's contribution. The CPA will take up this wonderful initiative next winter so if you are shedding such items this springtime, please hold on to them till May when we will collect, or drop them over the Bridge yourself.

The Wayside people said that they always need socks and underwear for their visitors, and we observed that their store also has racks of shoes.

The Wayside Chapel  
29 Hughes Street, Potts Point  
Tel: 9581 9100

**We welcome two new businesses to the Crag** this month, Filmotion and Off-the-Map Productions have settled into Unit One of the old squash court complex in The Postern.

Fred El Harris and Cameron Feast provide a full range of media production services to the Film and Television industry. We wish them well.

**White Wolf Dojo is looking for the services of a keen local lad or lass to lay out mats** Monday and Wednesday before martial arts classes. This would be a great regular shift for a pair of young locals to share. There may also be some Saturday shifts. Phone: 0418 282 171.



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## The Houses of Castlecrag

An interesting house in Sugarloaf Bay is visited by Ben Gerstel. Ben is a local architect and volunteer guide for the Australian Architectural Association ([www.architecture.org.au](http://www.architecture.org.au)).

### 217B Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

The cottage at this address is one of the heritage cottages that are located on the waterfront along Castlecrag's northern escarpment fronting Sugarloaf Bay. It is very significant in the history of Castlecrag because it formed part of the first European dwellings some thirty years prior to Walter Burley Griffin's arrival. It is one of the oldest buildings in the Willoughby Municipality and belonged to one of Sydney's earliest settlements on the North Shore. It is one of two cottages leased by Willoughby Council.

"In 2005, following a long campaign by the Castlecrag community, Council offered the cottages for long term lease in return for the successful applicants undertaking restoration to conserve the buildings" (i).

In 1883 the Horsley Estate existed in Castlecrag. It was a boat building foreshore community. This stone cottage was one of thirteen cottages, boat sheds and workshops that formed part of this community. Now, only three cottages survive. Two of them are Hudson prefabricated kit homes circa 1901, which



1883 Heritage Waterfront Cottages

had their building components barged in from the water.

217B Edinburgh Road is accessed either from Stoker Playground, down three hundred stone steps (no handrails provided!) or from the water. The setting is wonderful as Sugarloaf Bay is very well protected by the Northern Escarpment rendering very calm waters.

The current lessee, who grew up in Castlecrag, has restored the cottage with his two sons and through their efforts won Council's Restoration Heritage Award in 2012. One of the aims of the restoration was to conserve the significant values of the structure and the setting, using traditional building methods to restore the important fabric of the cottage. During the restoration process, a new roof was built, plus steel beams to pin the structure of the sandstone walls, repair of the external timbers, with new plumbing and electrical wiring installed. The project was funded by the lessee.

The stone cottage was originally only 2 rooms with a storeroom underneath. The sandstone was hewn from the site. Over time, elements were added like a verandah, which has now been closed in. In the 1940's, it became a residential cottage. Now it is a fully functioning one-bedroom house with a living room, bathroom, kitchen and home office. The external timbers are painted a bold terracotta colour with a dark green accent for the windows and doors. The verandah has a long, strip



Photo: B. Gerstel

window which frames a magnificent view down to the water.

Originally the house had what was known as a rotary toilet, which was like a pit with a steel blade that was turned to move the effluent away. Now, the cottage has a biological septic tank (shared with the neighbouring cottage) which acts like a biolytic worm farm and the waste is pumped to the Edinburgh Road sewerage line.

The Original Large Boat shed and original stone block sea wall were in a state of disrepair and demolished in 1975. Extensive sandstone sea walls have been rebuilt as part of the restoration. Iron relics from the boat building days have been found on the slipway and under the water.

When you arrive at the cottage, all your worries wash away and you sit down and enjoy the quiet and the wonderful surroundings. You feel you are a million miles away from anywhere. This is an excellent example of sustainable living and heritage restoration.

**Ben Gerstel**  
**Ben Gerstel Architecture Pty Ltd**  
 Email: [bgerstel@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bgerstel@optusnet.com.au)

References:

- (i) The Crag No.183 Newsletter of the Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

## Emerge

The Willoughby Spring Festival Emerges in 2015 into a new and exciting festival bringing you a mixture of emerging artists, talent development opportunities and showcase performances.

The month long festival, the largest cultural and entertainment celebration on Sydney's North Shore, features visual arts exhibitions, live entertainment, film and music performances, kids' and youth events, cultural and community celebrations and more.

For more information visit:  
[emergefestival.com.au](http://emergefestival.com.au)





**ENVIRONMENT NEWS • environment news • ENVIRONMENT NEWS**

**Southern Right whale sightings**

*Photo: John Vaughan*



It has been thrilling to hear eye-witness accounts of a Southern Right whale in our neighbourhood recently. Earliest sightings in Middle Harbour were from mid July and days later it appeared in front of a yoga class at the boatshed in Sailors Bay. Two weeks later after exploring Bantry Bay, Roseville Marina & Long Bay, it swam past houses in Tor Walk and was also seen in Sugarloaf Bay. There is some fabulous footage on you tube if you search "Whale in Middle Harbour." It includes incredible footage of the whale coming alongside a small boat clearly requesting help from the young fisherman to remove a hook and plastic bag stuck on it's head, who obliges and is then rewarded with many flaps of the dorsal fin in appreciation. An amazing encounter!

Simon Brown, Wildlife officer for WCC in the Spring edition of Bushcare News notes that this strange visitor had also caught the attention of National Parks and ORRCA (Organisation for the Rescue and Research of Cetaceans in Australia) as well as many other water users from Balmoral to Bantry Bay. National Parks put two boats on the water to chaperone the giant as water traffic and the number of onlookers increased.

A volunteer from ORRCA, Shona Lorigan, was also on the case and had been following the individual after it was first reported in the harbour almost two weeks prior. Both groups monitor the small group of Southern Right whales that move along the east coast of Australia each winter. The whales breed during this seasonal migration from where they feed south of

Australia. During last year's migration, one Southern Right gave birth just off shore from Warriewood. NPWS had suggested that the whale visiting Middle Harbour was the same one born last year, but OCCRA observers had measurements which suggested the individual was older than 12 months. Either way a truly exciting wild visitor to have, but also a reminder that there are a lot of animals that we share our local area with and that we need to look out for. Simon stresses that it is important to keep your distance so as not to stress this magnificent creature. Hopefully it's not feeling trapped in Middle Harbour & will head back down south soon.

**Seaforth Seal**

*Photo: Mike Selby*



This seal lives off Seaforth Bluff. I see him (or her) 3 times a week.

**Echidna train**

*Photo: Terese Haywood*



These well camouflaged echidnas were nevertheless spotted on Castlecrag's Northern Escarpment. They are involved in an 'echidna train' which is the first part of a fascinating mating ritual which can go on for weeks with males joining in the train where they all hang out together till

the female finally selects her mate through a rigorous circular exercise which results in a donut shaped imprint in the earth. Have you ever see one? And did you know that a baby echidna is called a puggle?

**Birds in the Crag**

Lorraine Cairnes in The Bulwark has noticed quite a few visitors of late.

"Mid-week, a pair of Boobook Owls were calling noisily in the Retreat reserve, including the "growling" call. It is possible that this was two young males "duelling", as we are in the lead-up to the nesting season. There was also evidence of the more usual; "boo-book" or "mo-poke" calls.

The Boobook is Australia's smallest and most common owl species. Boobooks nest in tree hollows, and there are very few hollows remaining in the Retreat Reserve. It might be an idea to ask Council to help them by placing nest boxes in a few of our tall trees, to compensate for the hollows which have been lost over the years by death and removal of old trees.

Other hollow-nesters here include Powerful Owl, kookaburras, and all Australian parrots. A pair of King Parrots has been calling in the reserve recently, and Black Cockatoos have also visited. And for the first time here, I heard a mob of Corellas noisily flying overhead this week."

With the approach of the bird nesting season, there will soon be spring fledglings about, and Castlecrag residents should keep their cats at home – young birds are no match for the hunting skills of wandering cats, and domestic cats behave in exactly the same way as feral cats."



This pair of King Parrots come every year to the Northern Escarpment to nest in my neighbour's chimney. We see

them come & go for months over Spring/Summer. Fortunately the chimney hasn't functioned for over forty years. (Ed)

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## Thomas Talmacs School of Music



Left:  
Thomas and Isabel Talmacs



Right:  
The Thomas Talmacs  
Orchestra features  
Musicians :  
Thomas Talmacs - Violin  
Isabel Talmacs - Violin  
Alexei Dupressoir - Clarinet  
Ezmi Pepper - Cello

Six months of lessons with an old time Hungarian Romany Gypsy inspired Thomas Talmacs-a Masters Graduate from the Conservatorium of Music- to set up his slightly alternative music school in Castlecrag.

"There was no sheet music at all, it was all by ear. He would play the piece through, record everything, and I'd imitate him. He encouraged me to do it my way, with my interpretation."

Thomas began playing violin at 5 years of age. His Hungarian grandfather instilled in him an early love for the lively Roma Gypsy sound, but his musical skills were honed at the very disciplined and traditional Conservatorium.

After decades of concert training, it was those 6 months with his old time teacher that truly opened up an appreciation for personal interpretation in the music he played... even the classical pieces he was brought up on."

"I find that's a really rich kind of music, especially those master works that keep on giving. I've learnt that you can still do the same piece a million ways and each time it can be equally great, but different".

Now he and partner Isabel Talmacs (nee Taussig) have set up the Thomas Talmacs School of Music in Edinburgh Road, hoping to launch a new style of music tuition which Thomas describes as "holistic".

"It draws from several styles and will incorporate more History. My studio will have a core of traditional style of teaching, with some Suzuki method, which is generally by ear. I think a student should know how a piece of music is built with its many different layers of music, but I also know that for the younger kids you have to encourage them and make it fun."

As a child growing up in the Crag, Isabel Talmacs learned violin by the Suzuki method and is very supportive of the more

cohesive approach Thomas' music school will take. Setting the school in Castlecrag was always the plan. "If you're going to do something a little bit different, Castlecrag is the place to be."

Isabel and Thomas regularly showcase their style and Gypsy influenced repertoire in local performances of their own chamber orchestra. True to their school principles the orchestra line up is very changeable. "It fluctuates a lot. Isabel and I are always in it but it really depends on who's available. It's got that cutting edge string quartet as its basis, then clarinet, saxophone and sometimes a double bass. We always surprise ourselves at how it always sounds great – never the same."

The Thomas Talmacs Orchestra is playing at the Gleneason Hall on Edinburgh on the 27th of September. Details will be posted on the website: [thomastalmacs.weebly.com](http://thomastalmacs.weebly.com)

Anyone interested in lessons should contact Thomas directly on 0432 123 385.

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## Improve Your Life: Volunteer at Oriel



Oriel Reserve Photo: R.Gibson

For the past 11 years, local Bushcare volunteers gather monthly every third Sunday at 9am in the little Oriel bushland reserve. We burnt, we planted and above all we weeded to transform a dark foreboding monoculture of *Pittosporum* into the light-filled diverse vegetation community that exists today.

Few original volunteers remain; some retired and others downsized and moved to less topographically challenging suburbs. As the demographics of Castlecrag shift towards time-poor families with young children the well of volunteers becomes shallower and attracting individuals more difficult.

So, to attract more volunteers to Oriel Reserve, I have made up three dubious facts/reasons to join:

### 1. Bushcare Volunteers are smarter.

It is well-known that the more Latin you know the smarter you are. Imagine yourself enjoying a night watching a troupe of Tibetan Throat Singers doing their thing at The Haven Amphitheatre. At intermission you can turn to your companion and instead of saying "Look at that beautiful spotted gum." you could say "Look at that beautiful *Eucalyptus maculata*. They are Sydney natives although not endemic to the area, more of a Cumberland Plain species." How much smarter does that sound?

### 2. Bushcare Volunteers live longer.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the median age of Australians in 2013 was 37. The median age of Willoughby's Bushcare volunteers is approximately 57. The reason for this longevity is simple: Plants grow slow. When you plant some small tree fresh from the local nursery, you want it to grow. So you stick around

day after day waiting for the time when that once tiny little plant becomes a serious obstructor of your neighbours' water views.

### 3. Bushcare Volunteers are better lovers.

Possibly not true but volunteering certainly couldn't hurt. Unless you schedule your intimate moments with your significant other on the third Sunday of every month from 9-12, in which case for the sake of your happiness and the health of your relationship better not join The Oriel Bushcare Group.

For those doubters, give it a try and join us at Oriel Reserve every third Sunday from 9am to 12 noon for the sheer enjoyment of preserving and enhancing this little gem of our environment which is shared daily by numerous commuters, school children and leisure walkers traversing the Griffin walkway between The Bartizan and The Citadel.

Not only that, as you weed you will experience a sense of community with like-minded folk interspersed with good conversation and a morning tea shared in the ambience of our special bushland.

Please email the group's trainer at [Robert.Gibson@Willoughby.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Robert.Gibson@Willoughby.nsw.gov.au) for details. You would be crazy not to.

**Robert Gibson**  
Bushcare Trainer

## CASTLECRAG BUSHCARE GROUPS MEETING DATES

### First Monday of the Month

- Tower Reserve  
9-12noon  
Contact Jocelyn Chey 9967 5136  
or Lisa Clarke 0404 806 406

### First Sunday of the Month

- Cortile Park Care  
8.30-11.30  
contact Sue Burk 0404 470 443
- Edinburgh Rd 2011  
9-12noon  
Contact Keith Ferguson  
0408 518 509

### Second Saturday of the Month

- Gargoyle Bushcare  
9-12noon  
Contact Cherrie Wilson  
0478 181 182

### Second Sunday of the Month

- Retreat Reserve  
9-12noon  
Contact Lorraine Cairnes 9958 1213  
or Jill Newton 9967 4933
- Keep Reserve  
9-12noon  
Contact Matthew Keighery  
0408 203 511

### Third Sunday of the Month

- Oriel Reserve  
9-12noon,  
Contact Mandy Wilson 9777 7875
- Casement Reserve  
8.30-11.30  
Contact Sue Burk 0404 470 443
- Torquay Estate  
9-12noon  
contact Jo Nolan 0419 234 235



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## Diary Dates • Diary Dates • Diary Dates

### France in Chatswood: French CineClub

**Date & Time:** Monday, 14 September 2015 6.15pm  
**Address:** Alliance Française, Suite 2, Level 2, 6 Spring St, Chatswood  
**Cost:** Free  
**Contact:** Alliance Française on 9292 5700

Come and discover French culture with an array of free activities including wine and cheese appreciation, cinema, literature, photography and language lessons for beginners (adults and children).

### WEPA Speaker Meeting Willoughby Environmental Protection Assn

**Date & Time:** Tuesday 15 Sept 8pm  
**Address:** Glenaeon school, Edinburgh Rd, Castlecrag

### Inventing Wildlife Spaces – Good Bug Houses

**Date & Time:** Sunday, 20 September 9am-1pm  
**Address:** Northbridge, exact meeting place to be confirmed at time of booking  
**Cost:** Free

**Contact:** Liz Powell on 9777 7871  
 Art, recycling and nature combine as you invent and create sculptures for your garden using recycled and repurposed materials for local wildlife and beneficial bugs to enjoy.

### Creatures of Night Places

**Date & Time:** Saturday, 26 September 2015 6pm-9pm  
**Address:** Meet at Incinerator Art Space before heading to Flat Rock Gully, 2 Small St, Willoughby

**Cost:** Free  
**Contact:** Liz Powell on 9777 7871  
 Join us for a nocturnal foray to meet some of Willoughby's forever inhabitants. This is an opportunity to hear hear about and see some of these species with ecologist, Narawan Williams and microbat carer, Mandi Griffith.

### Sugarbag Beekeeping workshops

**Date & Time:** Sunday, 11 October 2015 9:00 am -12:30pm  
**Address:** North Sydney, exact meeting place to be confirmed at time of booking  
**Cost:** \$20.00

**Contact:** Liz Powell on 9777 7871  
 If you want to learn about our native social bees, the stingless Sugarbag bee (*Tetragonula carbonaria*), and keeping them in a hive, then this workshop provides you with the insight into these bees as well as a practical session on beekeeping. You will have the opportunity to sample some of this native honey.

### Chemical Cleanout

**Date & Time:** 24-25 October 2015 9:00 am -3:30pm  
**Address:** Bicentennial Reserve Carpark, Small Street, Willoughby  
**Contact:** Tejinder Gill on 9777 7730

Utilise this FREE event to get rid of unwanted chemicals around the home. You can drop off paint (and paint-related products), pesticides, herbicides, poisons, gas bottles, fire extinguishers, pool chemicals, car batteries, fluorescent globes and lots more.

### Last Night of the Proms

**Date & Time:** Saturday 24 October 2015 7:00 pm  
 Sunday, 25 October 2015 4:00 pm  
**Address:** The Concourse Concert Hall, 409 Victoria Avenue, Chatswood

**Cost:** \$45.00  
**Contact:** The Concourse on 8075 8111  
 The Willoughby Symphony's Last Night of the Proms is set to take you on a glorious journey through Hungary, France, Mexico and even back in time to Ancient Rome! Sing along with the chorus in a magnificent expedition into the heartland of our shared musical traditions – music of unbridled passion in triumphant strains that will have your spine tingling.

Diary Dates is a service by the Castlecrag Progress Association.  
 Please contact: [info@castlecrag.org.au](mailto:info@castlecrag.org.au) with details of forthcoming events and activities for inclusion.

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