



THE CRAG

A voice for the community since 1925

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FEBRUARY 2021

Citadel in Suburbia Reprint of SMH article 1946 about Castlecrag's early days. See page 6.

Bim Hilder Our 'Artist-in-Residence' for over 70 years. His story page 8.



Happy Sesquicentenary, Marion!

Marion Mahony Griffin (14 February 1921-10 August 1961) was an architect, artist, environmentalist, social observer and community builder, yet her work has been constantly overshadowed by the famous men in her life. A woman with a fierce sense of idealism and a passion for nature, Marion always had a mind of her own. She developed fine artistic and architectural skills which helped to make [Frank Lloyd] Wright and then Griffin famous. A woman in a man's world, she made history with her pioneering role as a female architect. Her creative work was sheer magic. Faced with her own challenges, she drew on her energy and creativity to refashion her role in a new country... She was instrumental in setting up a unique community in the Sydney suburb of Castlecrag. Her paintings, drawings and descriptions of the Australian bushland produced another exercise in magic. (Glenda Korporaal, Making Magic: The Marion Mahony Griffin Story).

On Sunday 14 February, spare a thought and perhaps light a birthday candle with your family and toast Marion, the Co-designer and Mother of Castlecrag. This year marks 150 years since her birth. The Progress Association had planned to host a birthday party to celebrate and pay tribute to Marion, but Covid-19 restrictions have unfortunately forced the postponement of the community event for now.

Although Marion had no children of her own, Castlecrag would have to be seen as her baby, which she and Walter created, nurtured, educated, inspired and financially supported for two decades. As developers, they gifted the community land that the kindergarten / community centre / library sits on in The Postern, as well as all the interconnecting walking paths and reserves on the southern side of the peninsula in the Griffin Conservation area.

This year we celebrate the Centenary and give thanks to the precious gift and foundation the Griffins endowed to the community of Castlecrag.

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Above MMG the artist. Lace Fabrics - As delicate as a spider's web, as dainty as the fairies weave.

THINK LOCALLY!

SHOP LOCALLY!

EMPLOY LOCALLY!

THE CRAG

is the community magazine of the
Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

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Please send all correspondence and
membership renewals to the above
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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

They should be concise (preferably
less than 250 words for letters). Please
include your email address or phone
number as we may need to edit items
to fit the space available. Editorial
guidelines are on the web page.

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*Disclaimer 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 Editor

In this Centenary year *The Crag* celebrates
and encourages appreciation of our unique
cultural, natural and built heritage and
highlights our rich past with stories of our
place and people old, but also new.

Bernard Hesling was a well-known artist/
cartoonist / journalist who first visited the
suburb in 1929. He attended events at The
Haven and got to know the Griffins. In the
early 1940's, with his wife Flo, he moved
to the "White House" in The Redoubt. In
1946 he co-wrote and illustrated a feature
article for the *SMH* about Castlecrag which
is reproduced on p6. He also drew 'The Map'
of Castlecrag (p 16) in the book of the same
name, which was created as a fundraiser for
the landscaping of the then Infants School
grounds and launched by Bim Hilder &
co-contributors in 1972.

Bim's much loved fountain and memorial
to Walter BG sits on the island beside the
hospital. Read about his story as a well-
known artist and prominent figure in the
Crag for over 70 years until his death. In this
Centenary year the CPA has proposed to
fund and install a seat and plaque at the
top of Sortie Port, facing the fountain
and hospital, to honour his valuable
contribution. Bim created the banksia logo
of the CPA that is also found on the brass
plaques around Castlecrag. He always

supported the association.

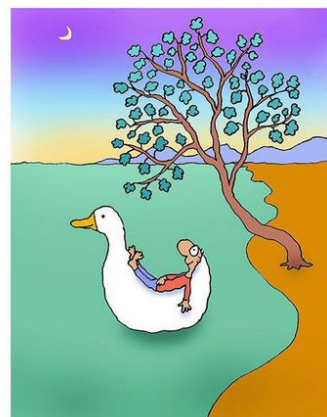
The claim by many that Marion was
undervalued as a professional and not
given due credit for her achievements in
her lifetime (like many women of her time),
is borne out in Hesling's article. Although
we know she was the primary community
builder, and understand from historians
that she collaborated with Walter regarding
much of the design of the suburb and houses
that he was given sole credit for, she barely
rates a mention in the article, other than a
comment that she was "drama-conscious",
and wore slacks, (which was very unusual at
that time.) It's all about Walter ... He planned
a community, and a community he made...,
so it's refreshing to see that Marion is finally
getting the professional credit she deserves
with the exhibition at the Museum of Sydney
which highlights HER achievements and
rich contribution to both our community's
development and international architecture.

Marion died a pauper in 1961, having used
her inheritance to buy part of the southern
peninsula as a parting gesture to her beloved
Castlecrag before returning to the US. She
was committed to communitarianism as
well as understanding the restorative power
of nature and art, and through a Deed of
Trust, bequeathed the Haven Estate to every
one of us who live, visit and walk here to
cherish. The CPA remains committed to the
same ideals.

JOMO (Joy Of Missing Out.)

Oh the joy of missing out.
When the world begins to shout
And rush towards that shining thing;
The latest bit of mental bling -
Trying to have it, see it, do it,
You simply know you won't go through it;
The anxious clamouring and need
This restless hungry thing to feed.

Instead, you feel the loveliness;
The pleasure of your emptiness.
You spurn the treasure on the shelf
In favour of your peaceful self;
Without regret, without a doubt.
Oh the joy of missing out.



Leung

Keep The Crag coming to your door! Join or renew your membership to CPA

Visit www.castlecrag.org.au or post form to The Treasurer: PO Box 4259 Castlecrag 2068

I wish to renew / apply for membership for the CPA Inc., and enclose payment of: \$

Cheque or direct debit to Castlecrag Progress Association Inc. BSB: 032 199 Account no. 355621

\$20 per person | \$10 per student

If you wish to make a donation, it will be most welcome. I enclose my donation of: \$

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From the President



I hope that everyone has had a relaxing and fulfilling Christmas and New Year and that the return to work has not been too onerous. Committee meetings are still being conducted by Zoom and we are planning to hold our AGM by Zoom as well (see Notice of Meeting below).

CPA was advised, on 18 December 2020, that conditions for redevelopment at 3 The Postern had now been agreed between Willoughby Council and the developer and filed with the Land and Environment Court. This followed a second round of community submissions wherein we again opposed the development on the bases of scale and bulk and particularly as the new structure

would have no connection to the village centre and was inconsistent with Councils Local Centres Strategy. The Court orders, amended plans and conditions of consent have been placed on NSW Caselaw website and revisions to some of the diagrams are on the Council website. CPA remains unhappy with the outcome but it is now out of our hands.

The Quadrangle redevelopment Planning Proposal has now been submitted to Council by Dr Quek's company, Greycliff, and was due to be considered by Council in December last year. Council Officers had reviewed the Proposal but had recommended that Councillors not support sending it through to the State Government's "Gateway" for determination.

There was little or no time for CPA to review either the Proposal or the Officers' report before the Council meeting. Accordingly, we requested, and were granted, a deferral of consideration until Council's next meeting in February. CPA reviewed Greycliff's Proposal and the Council Officers' report and have made our submission, raising some concerns about the nature of the comparison between the Proposal and Council's Draft LEP. In particular, whether the Building Height limits have been calculated on the same basis.

We have had no news regarding possible redevelopment of three of the shops on the northern side of Edinburgh Rd. There has been no DA or any other proposal submitted for this and we are not aware, at the time of writing, of any new information on the matter.

Finally, the EIS for the Northern Beaches tunnel, was released before Christmas 2020 with a closing date for comment of 1 March 2021. This document has not, in our view, adequately addressed possible public transport options to the tunnel, such as a high capacity link between Chatswood and Dee Why along the Warringah Road corridor and we also consider the timeframe for comment to be far too short. Our emerging view is that we oppose the tunnel unless its superiority over public transport alternatives can be demonstrated by a transparent process of public consultation.

Council has compiled local information regarding the Tunnel and is asking residents to participate in a quick poll, to understand community sentiment on the proposal to help inform a Willoughby Council submission. Have your say!

<https://www.haveyoursaywilloughby.com.au/beaches-link>

Goodbye Robin, Hello Lucy!

Many thanks to Robin Phelan, *The Crag's* long-time designer who has now retired. Lucy Boyle, grew up first in Sugarloaf Crescent, then later in Edinburgh road, has taken on the job. Welcome Lucy!

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NOTICE OF MEETING

CPA
Annual General Meeting
8:00 pm Wednesday,
10 March 2021

Presentation of Reports
for 2019 & 2020

Election of Office Holders
To be held by Zoom –
Financial Members will be sent a link.

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From the Mayor



This year is the 150th anniversary of Marion Mahony Griffin's birth and the centenary of the Griffins in Castlecrag. To celebrate, we hope to install a 'pop up' park in the Council car park on the corner of The Postern and Edinburgh Road. We aim to submit a development application early this year, which will be open for your comments. Also, find out more about Marion Mahony Griffin's life and vision in a fascinating exhibition at Sydney Living Museums until 18 April.

A proposal for a "mixed-use" development at the Quadrangle was submitted to Council. Council voted at the December council meeting to defer a decision until February to give more time for those concerned about the proposal to review it. The proposal includes 67 residential units, 1,942m² of retail/commercial floor space and 166 car parks. Council is aware that the applicants have concurrently sought a "Gateway Review" from the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPIE) which effectively takes the planning proposal out of Council's hands, and could result in an approval for public exhibition. At that point the planning proposal would be formally exhibited for public comment before any decision is made on whether it can proceed to be made as a new rezoning amendment. A development application could then be lodged for development.

The new playground facilities at Stoker Park on Edinburgh Rd have been popular over the holiday break. Signage outlining the site's history will be added to explain the role of boat repairs on the foreshore below and

the naming of reserves and streets inspired by castle architecture.

If you'd like to become actively involved, in addition to the existing *Bushcare* volunteer groups, there is a new group that's started in The Turret, which will meet on the second Wednesday of each month 10am – 12pm. For more information or if you would like to join, contact Council's *Bushcare* Supervisor, Monique, on 9777 7875.

There has been abundant growth in our bushland areas following the summer rains and the creeks are flowing. There's also been plenty of wildlife sightings including a very active echidna on the Northern Escarpment. Lyrebirds, Powerful Owls, Blue Wrens, Book Book Owls and many more have been spotted on the Southern Escarpment.

There are upcoming upgrades and maintenance for the walking track entry point off Sugarloaf Crescent which leads to Harold Reid Reserve. Fox Baiting on the Northern Escarpment is planned from 15 February – 3 March. Note that no dogs are allowed - especially from 15 February - 1 April.

I'm keeping a close eye on the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection project. I wrote to the Premier and relevant Ministers

to express council's disappointment at the short turnaround time in which to view and make comment on the Environmental Impact Statement. I'm asking for an extension to the March deadline to allow the community and Council enough time to properly consider it and make a submission. Given the impact on local traffic, I encourage you to view it and make your own submission to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Many of our traditional Christmas celebrations were disrupted including the much-loved Carols in the Haven. Instead, we filmed a video of a trio from Willoughby Symphony Orchestra performing carols in this beautiful location and shared it across our social media. The Willoughby Symphony trio also performed carols in 'pop up' performances in Castlecrag and other locations in our local government area. I hope you saw them and enjoyed the Christmas cheer.

All the best for a safe and happy 2021. Please get in touch if you have any questions or comments:

Gail.Giles-Gidney@Willoughby.nsw.gov.au



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From the President of WEPA – the Beaches Link

Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) believes that the proposed Beaches Link motorway is going to have a massive and negative effect on the Castlecrag community due to matters such as:

1. Traffic congestion, noise, vibration etc during the five-year construction period due to 60 B-double truck movements per hour on and off Flat Rock Drive
2. Destruction of bushland to the east of Flat Rock Drive
3. Disturbance of contaminated fill underlying Bicentennial Reserve and the netball courts, the nature of which previously led to Tunks Park being managed under the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997
4. Unfiltered stacks pumping out pollution over schools in North Sydney
5. Damage to the marine environment of Middle Harbour by disturbing toxic sludge

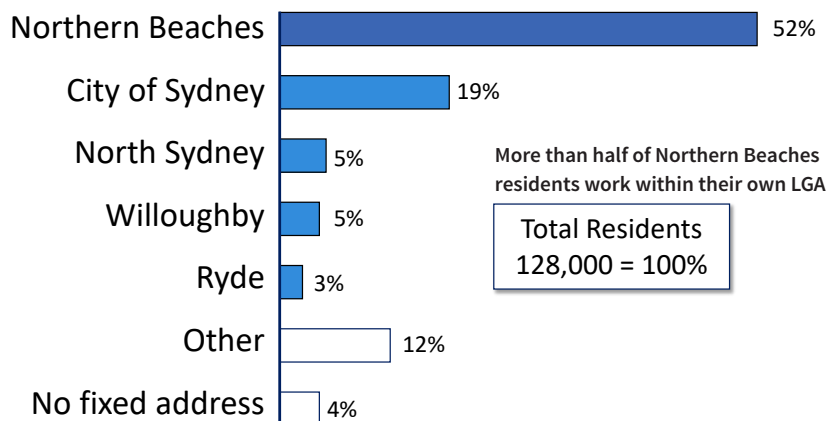
It is extremely disappointing that the EIS was released just before Christmas when people take holidays and P&Cs won't operate until schools resume and elections held. The closing date is 1 March, even though **contracts are not due for signature until late - 2022.**

The EIS has also failed to address properly the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) in Appendix A to the EIS, as to the need for the project, in the context of other alternatives being considered. Two examples of the proponent's dismissive attitude to the SEARs suffice.

First, the impact on congestion of the combination of the planned rapid bus service from Dee Why to Chatswood and the new Metro from Chatswood to the city (completion due 2024), is dismissed with -

While these projects would contribute to reducing congestion on the existing road network, they would not be sufficient to resolve the existing road network capacity constraints between the lower North Shore and the Northern Beaches. This is due to the complexity

LGA Where Northern Beaches Residents Worked Pre-COVID



of journey patterns and trip purposes within Greater Sydney and the dispersed nature of origin and destination points for an individual journey. This means that roads remain a critical element in the integrated transport network, servicing buses, freight, commercial and many other individual journey needs. But journey to work data for the Northern Beaches LGA (ignored in the EIS) shows the following destinations, the vast bulk of which will be serviced by the rapid bus / metro combo!

Second, for the impact of COVID we get: *In Greater Sydney, traffic levels on most roads have returned to those experienced before NSW Government restrictions for COVID-19 were put in place. This indicates a relatively rapid response to the event by the city, and suggests that the movement of people, goods and services and demand for road capacity is returning to conditions similar to those prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Given the abandonment of public transport in the midst of a pandemic this type of information from Infrastructure Australia's December 2020 report "Infrastructure beyond Covid-19" (ignored in the EIS) is surely more relevant: *A 2020 Gartner CFO survey reports that 74% (CFOs) expect a shift whereby some employees remote work permanently, indicating significant uncertainty for CBDs following COVID-19.*

Will public transport be slow or lack capacity? The EIS says: *The Sydney Metro*

City & Southwest project will enhance the Sydney rail network and enable it to carry an additional 100,000 people per hour in peak periods, delivering sufficient capacity to serve the city well into the future.

By comparison, the ABS' estimated resident population for the Northern Beaches LGA for 2019 is 273,499 of whom, using 2016 census data, 129,684 were employed. It will take 9 minutes from Chatswood to Barangaroo. Trains will run at 4 minute intervals during peak periods. There will be a connection to the new Metro West with stops including Pyrmont and Parramatta.

The missing link is the planned high frequency express public transport service from Dee Why to Chatswood, which could be upgraded for a fraction of the cost and within a fraction of the time of the Beaches Link. What can you do?

1. Ring and/or write to your State and local representatives objecting to this project proceeding when public transport alternatives have not been properly considered. Ask for the closing date for submissions to be extended
2. Put in an objection to the EIS
3. Contact your local councillors to ask them what they are doing to bring these issues to the attention of residents
4. Talk to friends and family and encourage them to do the same

John Moratelli www.wepa.org.au

Have your say about the Humps!

Some months ago Council installed "slow down" humps at the Linden Way/Edinburgh Road intersection with the aim of slowing down speedsters in Edinburgh Road. The installations were not popular, frustrated the east-enders and caused back discomfort for some, who then drove around the humps, thus increasing the traffic hazard.

Late last year the Linden Way hump was removed when the road was resurfaced. Given the negative feedback, Council is now considering whether to reinstall it.

"Monitoring will be undertaken to assess whether traffic operation is satisfactory in accordance with the original objectives including safety, speed management and driver compliance to NSW road rules.

Community feedback of the new arrangements will be assessed through consideration of submissions received. A formal decision on whether to reinstate (or not) the Linden Way speed cushion will be made following the completion of the trial"

Gordon Farrelly, WCC's Traffic and Transport Team Leader.



Left A direct but polite submission painted on the road where the hump had been.

The trial without the hump ends on 1 March, so if you have an opinion, write beforehand to Gordon.Farrelly@Willoughby.nsw.gov.au



**Reprint from: Sydney Morning Herald
Tuesday 20 August 1946, page 2**

By C. C. D. BRAMMALL and BERNARD HESLING

Not for them those tailored streets with buttoned rows of bungalows. Dwellers on Sydney's Castlecrag "go bush" in a city bus. In names and nature their retreat is a...

Citadel in Suburbia

TREES crowd in on flat-topped stone houses, which crouch close to the earth like big North Shore boulders, for which at a distance you might mistake them. Scrub overshadows the curving roadways which Walter Burley Griffin put there 20 years ago, the curious ring-tailed dead-ends which lead to the houses. Up and down and round about among the trees and scrub and dead-ends on Sundays crawls a procession of motorists, lost in the labyrinth.

They have come to look at Sydney's most unusual suburb - Castlecrag.

It is Sydney's most attractive suburb, too, to those who have succumbed to its old attraction. To others, it is merely funny - a crazy conglomeration of bushland maze, incomprehensible street-names, and squat dwellings.

CASTLECRAg is a dream which almost came true.

Griffin, the American who won the international prize offered by the Australian Government for a layout for Canberra, later came to Australia, turned his attention to what he hoped would be his life-work, the building of a community settlement.

Castlecrag, on the rocky, wooded slopes leading down to Middle Harbour, was his site.

The "castle" flavour of the streets on the estate - The Redoubt, The Bastion, The Barbette, The Parapet, The Barbican - is in keeping with the name Castlecrag. But Griffin apparently did not think of the difficulty that a Castlecrag resident would encounter in directing a taxi company by telephone where to send a car, or explaining to a delivery firm just where The Redoubt is, and why it isn't Redoubt Street.

Sortie Port is the roadway leading from streets named in a more commonplace manner into Castlecrag proper. It is not inappropriate that at Sortie Port should be placed the nursing home at which Castlecrag babies are ushered into their new surroundings.

Griffin's idea of architecture was that not only should houses conform to the landscape, they should be indistinguishable from it. For every block of land at Castlecrag, he had a house design ready, and with loving care inserted his squat creations into the nooks among the trees and rocks so that until a visitor is right on top of it, a house among his trees is naturally camouflaged and practically invisible.

Although Griffin was a dynamo of a man, a born leader, and gathered round him disciples who accepted his ideas with the fervour of Christian martyrs, some of the people who wanted to build at Castlecrag found that they simply could not accept his plans at any price.

It was hardly to be expected that they should, really. Stone houses with flat roofs may be all right, but the ceiling of one of the houses was designed as a goldfish tank, with little fishes swimming round continually above the glass. Eventually this leaked so

badly that it had to go. The main room in another house was built cross-shaped, with a domed ceiling which fell three times before it finally was fixed to "stay put."

Few hinges were used in the buildings: doors and windows were pivoted. Fireplaces were low down to the floor, so that you had almost to crawl into them to light a fire.

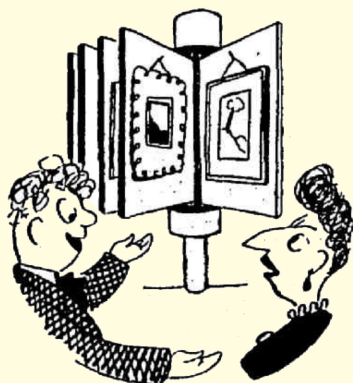
It is related that one potential Castlecrag resident moved elsewhere when Griffin produced the design he had made for the block that had been purchased. The house as planned was perfectly circular.

The design he produced for the widow of J. J. Hilder, famous landscape artist, also did not appeal to her. The only stipulation she made was that provision should be made for the display of her late husband's pictures somewhere in the house.

When the design was produced, its walls were all windows, but Mrs. Hilder's protest was met with, "Yes, I have thought of that." Griffin had, too. His plan was that between the windows, there should be swinging frames, opening out like a book, so that the pictures could be inspected, one by one.

Mrs. Hilder would have none of it. She built her house outside the estate, on the other side of Edinburgh Road, and there remain representatives of the Hilder family to this day.

YET unpractical though some of his ideas may appear, Griffin was putting double kitchen-sinks and plate drying racks into his houses long before they were common in Sydney. He set aside areas in his community as public property; he devised a new type of tile which is used in walls and roofs of some of the houses with great success; he laid down roadways which are still as good as ever; his passionate devotion to trees and native plants was worthy of wider emulation.



"His plan was that . . . there should be swinging frames, opening out like a book . . ."

Castlecrag people declare that Griffin bent back the trees to build his houses, then allowed them to snap into place, and the trees are close enough to the houses to support this legend. He could see no reason for clearing the land, preferred to crowd it even more thickly with his beloved native flora, and made no provision at all for gardens as other suburbs know them.

It is a fact that in the early days of Castlecrag no resident would ever dream of cutting a dead tree for kind-ling without a written permit from Griffin, and his rangers - everyone had a whistle to summon help would descend like avenging angels on any offender who laid covetous hands on native growth.

Harassed mowers of lawns in other suburbs would find Castlecrag a haven of refuge. The lawns are rock!

The founder of this place - he was once described as having "a head like a chrysanthemum" - gave parties at which the food was served on banana leaves, who regarded a house as somewhere to sleep, no matter whether it was on a divan in the

lounge or a camp stretcher in the bedroom, and saw no occasion for internal doors. But he left behind him when he went to India - where he died - something else than the memory of an extraordinary personality, and his monuments of stone.

He planned a community, and a community he made. Though the forbidden red roofs of orthodox homes, which do not fit in with his ideas at all, are creeping into Castlecrag, the community plan is stronger than ever.

Urged on by Griffin, and his drama-conscious wife Marion, with her maroon slacks and hats covered with flowers and vegetables, the residents built an open air theatre, with stone seats facing across a gully, and the morality and nativity plays staged there in the open air before Pearl Harbour brought visitors across Sydney. Smeared with citronella to keep mosquitoes off, hundreds sat in the warm summer nights and watched Shakespeare long before there was any talk of a National Theatre or a music shell in Sydney.

THIS was a beginning at community effort in the arts. Since then the Pangloss Theatre - named after the optimistic philosopher in Voltaire's "Candide" - has taken its

"Smeared with citronella to keep mosquitoes off, hundreds sat in the warm summer nights and watched Shakespeare . . ."



place in the Little Theatre movement, with plays staged on the portico of one of the Castlecrag homes. Musical recitals, plays, addresses, other entertainments have kept the community theatre alive.

Alive - and kicking, for their shows helped to raise money for the community's main effort, a Community Centre and Kindergarten.

In 1943 there were fewer than a dozen small children in the district, so residents took it in turn to let them chase each other round back verandahs from nine to three each day. Then a woman with many children and many verandahs offered one as a fixed site for a kindergarten.

Parents formed a co-operative society, were aided by the council, bought fittings and engaged teachers. Soon people were sending their children from as far away as Chatswood and Northbridge, and the verandah showed signs of strain. A round of entertainments began - bridge, chess, housie-housie and bazaars - and £800 was raised to start a kindergarten building.

Eight hundred pounds is not enough to make a real job of it, but it is enough to build the first stage of a kindergarten-theatre community - centre. Castlecraggers found that Griffin had set aside three acres

for a community centre, so they did not have to buy land. They put up an open shed, laid tanbark, built sandpits and swings. That is the kindergarten to-day. To-morrow, there will be a proper building with indoor facilities - the day after, a community theatre where the Pangloss may extend itself, and again bring audiences by special bus from the other side of Sydney.

But the £20,000 cost of the community centre puts that day a long way ahead.

Left page Group effort: laying the drainage pipes at the Community Centre. **Photo** Max Dupain **This page** **Left** Hilder, J.J. (1907) Coogee, (Watercolour), AGNSW **Below** Fathers Ken Thomas and Rawson Deans building kindergarten equipment. **Photo** Max Dupain **Cartoons** Bernard Hesling



The Story Of ‘Bim’s Seat’

In the stone front fence of our house at 177 Edinburgh Road is a seat I had built in memory of Bim Hilder MBE. I never knew the man nor - I’m ashamed to say - even heard of him before my wife and I bought and razed his house 26 years ago.

But during the months of negotiating with Willoughby Council and neighbours over plans for our new home, I learnt why long-time Castlecrag residents and some family members wanted a local heritage order placed on “Bim’s place”.

This remarkable man was not only much-loved within the community but also a veritable titan of the Australian Arts scene. His sculptures and other works exist today from one end of the country to the other and his many etchings and aquatints are valuable collectors’ items.

Bim’s listing on The Centre for Australian Art website describes him thus: Art teacher/Artist(painter)/Designer/Printmaker/Sculptor. In 1978 he was recognised with an MBE gong for his Services to the Arts. He continued to work and teach in the studio adjacent to his home until close to his death, aged 80, in 1990.

Bim was a founding member and twice President of the Sculptors Society of Australia, his most famous work being a grand creation on the large facing wall which greets visitors in the foyer of the heritage-listed Reserve Bank of Australia building in Martin Place.

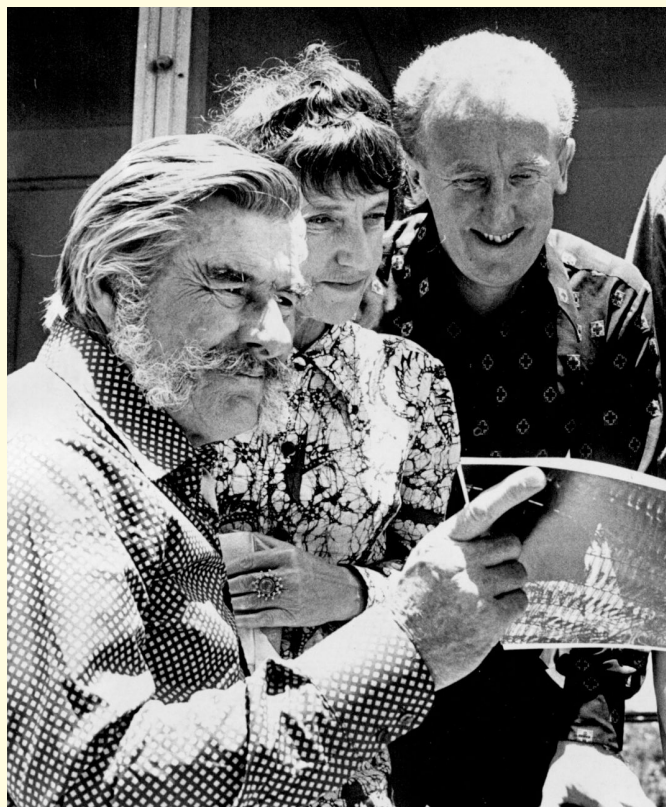
Bim’s sculptures are dotted around Sydney suburbs and in regional cities and towns like Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong. Others are in Canberra and Perth.

Long-time Castlecrag habitués will know of his Walter Burley Griffin memorial fountain on the road island at the top of Sortie Port, the five houses he designed and built around the suburb; the seats and steps at The Haven Amphitheatre; and the wall decoration in the St James Anglican Church foyer in Edinburgh Road.

In 1963 Bim won the Federal Government’s Wall Enrichment Competition for the Reserve Bank. He describes his design as:

“an arrangement of metals forming an integrated and disintegrating galaxy, representative of the manner in which nations come together and separate”.

From top right (L to R) Bim Hilder, Eva Buhrich and Arthur Weller at launch of book Castlecrag 1973. Fountain in lane prior to erection at top of Sortie Port. Below Enrichment Wall, 1963.



Arts historians will know of his design and fabrication of display and exhibition equipment including floats for street parades and public events; camouflage for the ADF during World War 2; and window displays for long-gone Sydney CBD retailers Peapes and Co, Grace Bros and Farmers.

The list continues ... sets for the *Ballet Corroboree* performed for one of Queen Elizabeth's visits; the River Caves at Luna Park; props and staging for numerous movies; and the Punch and Judy puppets now housed in both the National Museum of Australia and the Museum of Applied Arts and Science.

Born Vernon Arthur ('Bim') Hilder in Parramatta in 1909, Bim lost his father - the noted Australian watercolourist J.J. Hilder - when he was just six years old. By then, Bim had adopted the nickname his father gave him and by which he was known throughout his life.

Leaving school at 15, he decided to pursue a career as a painter and studied Commercial Art for a year at East Sydney Technical College. By the age of 17 however, he had started work with Eric Nicholls, the architect and business associate of Walter and Marion Griffin, initially as a carpenter and then as a stonemason.

Bim later recalled his epiphany - visiting the inner-city Pakies Club frequented by artists, writers, actors and painters in the late 1920s - when Griffin's entire staff arrived in a flourish, dressed as Aztec Gods for the Club's Mexican Night theme.

Soon after he was working for Griffin and, by 1929 at the relatively tender age of 20, Bim had acquired the necessary skills to design and supervise construction of the stone house, Wildflower, for his widowed mother, Phyllis near The Pinnacle on Edinburgh Road.

The family bought 3 adjoining blocks further along the road. In 1931 Bim designed and built the first house on this land for his brother, Commodore Brett Hilder, the maritime artist and author. In 1935, when their mother remarried, he designed and built the second house on the estate for them and did the same again in 1936 for his artist wife Roma and himself, which included a studio made mostly of glass, set in amongst the trees.

These houses were all perfectly situated on their north-sloping blocks, and built from local sandstone with pivoting metal windows. Among other touches, the prism-shaped apertures reflected Griffin's design influence.

Bim's own house featured a triangular fire-place and stone chimney which we have retained in our house, along with the metal windows, some doors and tallowwood architraves and all the sandstone. The same chimney is seen in the 5th house Bim designed, down in The Bartizan around 1947, for Roma's brother Noel and his wife Blossom Hopkinson, which also remains standing.

Bim only started sculpting - literally by accident - when he was about 40. At the time, he was recovering from a broken ankle sustained while working on an early restoration of Charles Kingsford-Smith's famous Southern Cross airplane.

Though he worked with stone and metal, he once declared his favourite medium was wood. His Sydney Morning Herald obituary quotes Bim declaring:

"All natural phenomena fascinate me. The flight of birds, wave formation, patterns of erosion, characteristics of plant growth, marine life crystal structure ... I don't have any great aims or direction ... I just do the best I can with the ability I have."

One of Bim's most endearing qualities was his love of sharing his artisan gifts with students of all ages. He taught sculpture at East Sydney Tech from 1961-1973, after which he became a part-time teacher at the University of NSW. The following year, he established the Summer School at Randwick Technical College.

For more than 60 years, Bim immersed himself in Castlecrag community life. He both worked and played here and his talented fingerprints seemed to be on everything everywhere.



His *Punch and Judy* puppet shows at Christmas were legendary among both young and old and, for many decades, Bim opened his studio once a week to help a small group of interested locals with their personal art projects.

The idea for the seat in our front fence was a passing suggestion of Bim's son, Kim. It seems a fitting memorial to a man who loved to linger, to take time to smell the flowers and find inspiration in the natural world.

Craig McCarthy



Above Bim's Salamander above the fireplace and chimney of 1 The Bartizan. Model of a sculpture submitted by Bim for the NSW Bicentenary Competition, never built. Stipendiary magistrate puppet. Craig with his 3 grandsons, on Bim's seat.

Marion's Gift To Us

Whilst deliberations slowly continue over the rebuilding of a stage, the Haven Amphitheatre's plant life is tossing its seeds to the wind and re-wilding itself, back as it became after Marion's departure from Castlecrag in 1938 when nature last took over. Performances were abandoned during the black-outs of the war years, then disinterest reigned into the 50's and 60's, by which time it had become a weed-infested dumping ground.

The second wave began in 1975 after the Conservation Society weeded and uncovered the stone seating and local architect Robert Sheldon was commissioned to design a simple stage spanning the creek. In 1976 the first production *Salome* was presented in a 3 week season.

The third wave was in the early 1990's, when a grant from the NSW Ministry of Arts made it possible to create an undercroft below the stage with green room, kitchen, toilet and storage. Over the next two decades, the Council-appointed Haven committee presented a vast array of theatrical, musical and other cultural experiences. The last performance on the Haven stage prior to demolition was in Spring 2013. It was a very successful stand-up comedy night, accompanied by a screening of *The Castle*.

As noted previously, apart from the community having to raise 50% of the costs, the sticking point to the rebuild is that legislation seems to require a new stage to provide disabled access. The approved DA does this, by including a ramp that zig zags its way down from the Scarp and across the

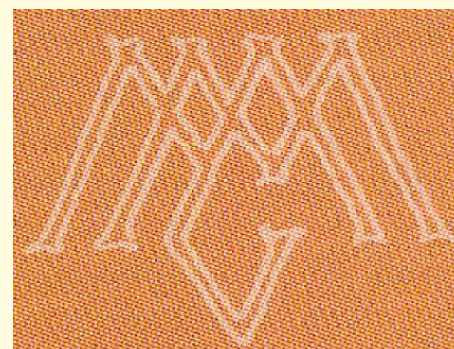


western terrace. However, community groups are united in their opposition, believing that such a structure (and accompanying disabled toilet below The Scarp) would ruin the beautiful little glen and ambience of the bushland amphitheatre. Access advocates have suggested a small inclinator could suffice.

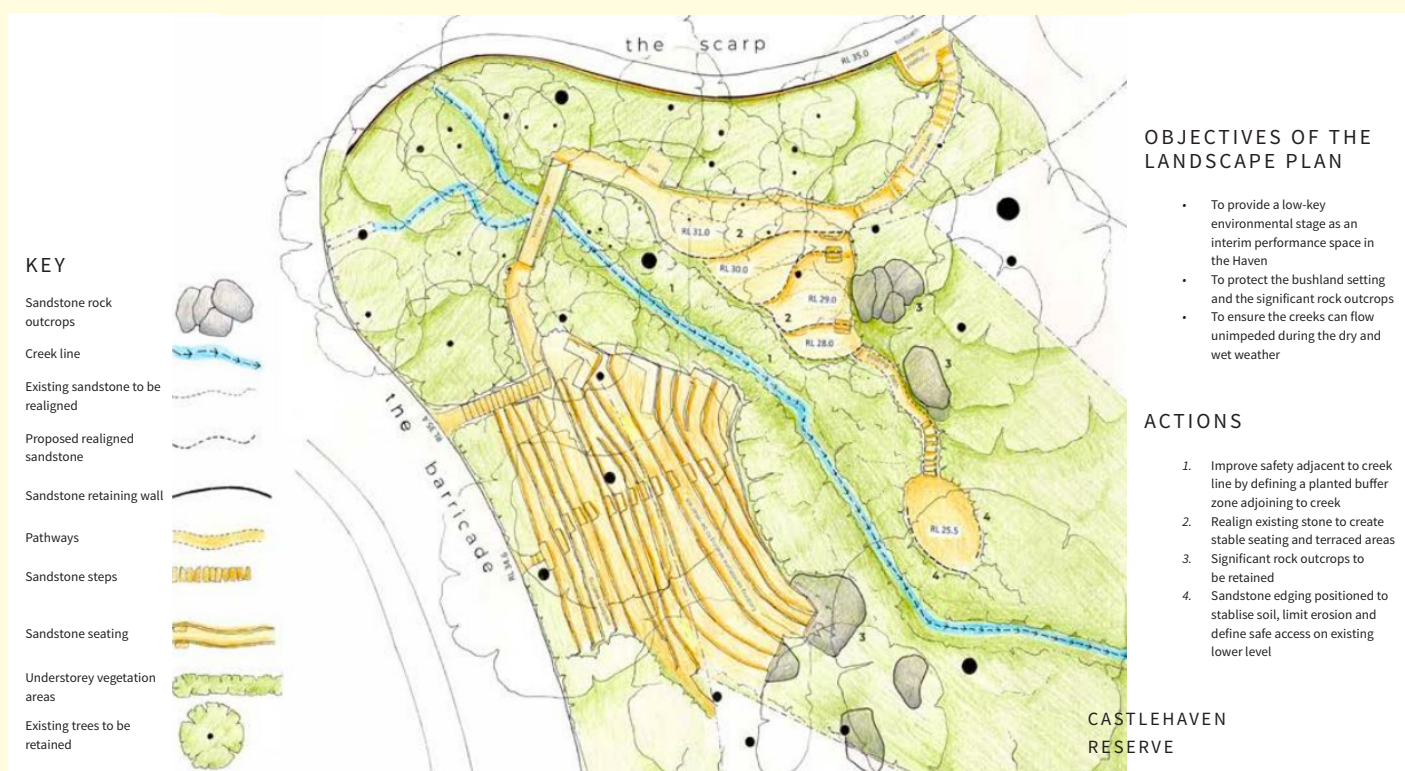
Jan Felton, Council's Landscape Architect, has drawn up a landscape plan for the amphitheatre that provides for more level and safer ledges and spaces from which to perform without a stage. It will be a positive first step in restoring the amphitheatre to a more performance-friendly space without evoking the requirements for access. Both the Landscape Plan and a Plan of Management are up for adoption, most likely at the March 2021 Council meeting. They were subject to a public hearing last December, a report of which is on WCC's Have your say page.

Subject to both Plans being adopted, it

is intended that the landscape work for the site be completed before the Centenary in November 2021, so the community can come together with an event to celebrate & enjoy Marion's Gift to us all once again.



Top MoS 'Paradise on Earth' exhibition image of The Haven Amphitheatre. photo Mary Anne Veliscek *Middle* Marion Mahony Griffin's logo. Can you see it hidden in p1 illustration? *Below* WCC's proposed Landscape Plan designed to enhance interim performance spaces



Celebrating 2021

Schedule of Special events

Paradise on Earth exhibition.

Until 18 April 2021

Museum of Sydney, Bridge St., Sydney.

Marion Mahony Griffin Lecture 2021

'What made Marion's Hair Stand on End?'

14 February (Marion Mahony Griffin's 150th birthday) at 11.00am

Museum of Sydney Theatre, Bridge St., Sydney

Guest speaker Dr Anne Watson's talk explores Marion's pioneering role as an environmentalist and urban planning advocate in Australia through her art, architecture and writing. Bookings essential at www.trybooking.com/BNFTF

Griffin Open Houses at Castlecrag.

2 May – This is a rare opportunity to see interiors and special design features.



Tickets to visit two or four houses will be available online from 1 March at griffinsociety.org/events/

Outdoor Historic Photo Exhibition – guided tours.

2, 5, 8 and 9 May

Be transported back in time on these 1.5 hour guided tours as you view rare historical photos at stopping points along some of the walkways, reserves and nature strips in the Griffin Conservation Area, Castlecrag. Tickets essential at www.griffinsociety.org. Funded with the support of a Willoughby City Council grant. Further information at www.griffinsociety.org

Donate to the sculpture.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society is commissioning a prominent artist to produce an exciting contemporary sculpture in honour of Marion Mahony Griffin in her sesquicentenary. It will take pride of place in a new community park being planned by Council in the Castlecrag shopping village which is hoped to open in late 2021.

Donations can be made via the website <https://www.trybooking.com/au/donate/mmgsculpture>

Alternatively, you can email info@griffinsociety.org to receive our banking details.

Or send a cheque payable to the Walter Burley Griffin Society addressed to the



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Community Gardens

As this wettish Summer unfolds it's difficult not to remember last year's drought and searing heat. There's relief, gratitude and a desire to support our environment. On top of this the presence of coronavirus remains in the forefront of our daily awareness. One positive from the lockdown has been a spike in interest and activity around home gardening and self-sufficiency.

Warners Park

With a spring in the step, energy at Warners was directed into refurbishing an empty bed so that all the raised beds were available for planting. Enriched soil, seed-raising, netting and consistent watering delivered good harvests of cavolo nero and kale, leeks, broccolini, beans, basil, coriander, goji leaf, galangal, turmeric, parsley and salad greens. The asparagus also yielded nicely.

Looking slightly ahead we can see many interesting crops maturing well. Cucumbers (right) and chillies are already delivering. Closely following are sweet corn, hairy melons, pepinos, tomatoes, cucamelons, winged beans and leaf amaranth. Strawberries, while sweet, have not been as abundant as was hoped.

Looking even further ahead the tamarillo tree has responded well to a good pruning at the end of last fruiting and all bodes well for next autumn with many fruits visible on the vines.



Along with edibles, the garden has enjoyed the pleasure of growing gardeners including two students undertaking community service requirements for Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and two mothers with their young children.

The arrival of Spring brought increased activity around composting with LoSurdos at Northbridge Plaza joining long term contributors Harris Farm at Willoughby and IGA at Castlecrag. So too Bunnings continue to support the community garden with regular donations of seedlings and equipment.

With the addition of a water feature pot, fresh wood chips on cleared pathways and healthy growth, the garden is looking lovely (below). Meetings are on Wednesday and Sunday mornings from 10am. For more information contact Hilary on 0414 502 771.



Market Garden Park

This season's warm climate crops at MGP included a super harvest of snap peas and snow peas, long harvests of silverbeet and rainbow chard, red and white (daikon)

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Clockwise from top left Spring Breakfast and seedling planting in September 2020. Sweet corn reaching for the sky. Sugar snap peas. Prolific cucumber crop. Jutta behind the scenes at the garage sale. Potted strawberries for sale. Maggie with a selection of her handmade face masks.



radish, strawberries, sweetcorn, various bean varieties (bush, broad, butter, purple climbing, snake) as well as salad greens including rocket, endives, mizuna and cos lettuce. Coming on well now are cucumbers, okra, zucchini, eggplants, capsicums, chillies, tomatoes .. and bien sur more salad greens.

Alongside horticulture, and mindful of coronavirus restrictions, the community at Market Garden Park ushered in the new season with a Spring Breakfast where generous seedling donations from Bunnings were bedded in.

During October new beds were enthusiastically created in the orchard section of the garden, including a 'flower superhighway' to attract pollinating insects. November brought a flurry of activity around potting up strawberries, making masks and much more to be sold at our first 'Garage Sale Trail' stall. This turned out to be a wonderful event, as a fundraiser, as a community builder and as an awareness raiser for reducing landfill. In December, with thanks to Willoughby Council, the storage



areas of the garden were relocated and plans created to refurbish the composting area.

Looking further ahead, covid-permitting, MGP will participate in the Sydney Edible Gardens Trail on Sat 20 March 2021. Over this weekend more than 60 gardens will be open for viewing, ranging from private gardens to school and community gardens. Meetings are on Wednesday mornings, plus 1st and 3rd Sat of the month, from 9.30am. For more information visit mgpcommunitygarden.com or contact Janet via email janetfrance753@gmail.com

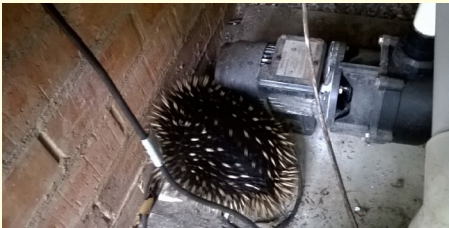
Mary Anne Veliscek



Notes

Winter habitat for Crag Echidnas.

Talk about adapting to one's environment! David Baldock from The Bastion reported that this echidna decided the best way to deal with winter 2020 was to cuddle up with their pool heater, like we would a hot water bottle. With the warmth of Spring it moved on...



Slow down!

We are fortunate to live in this bushland suburb with all our native friends, but unfortunately roadkill has become a problem in our streets. Sightings of echidnas, wallabies and lyrebirds in Sunnyside Crescent prompted the installation of 'WILDLIFE AREA' signs. Recently, a dead bandicoot was found on the road near the Linden Way Reserve so please slow down and be on the lookout for wandering wildlife!

Correction.

The Crag #209 report on Cortile Parkcare stated that the Tennis Clubhouse was built in 1928. My mistake. The loam court was built in that year but the clubhouse wasn't completed until 1956, with limited financial support from Council.

Crag deliverers.

Many thanks to our loyal team of deliverers who bring this magazine to your letterbox each issue. Our oldest are in their 80's and the youngest started when she was under 10 years. Lately others have helped out, but the Hastings girls usually do the very steep Linden Way, which would have to be the hardest run. Their great grandmother Rita Kaye, was a long-time editor of The Crag and their great grandfather Eric was Castlecrag's Alderman of Council for many years, so admirably, the girls are carrying on the family tradition of giving service to their community. Right Ingrid and Iris on the job



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Australia Day at Stokers Park

Long time Castlecrag resident Judith Keller Initiated the Australia Day gathering in Stokers Park over twenty years ago. On her passing the tradition was passed on to Tony Stephens and Chris Charody who have organised it since.

It was held this year at 6pm, by which time the temperature had cooled somewhat. It was a very convivial meeting of neighbours who have lived in the area for a long time and an opportunity to welcome people who have recently moved. It is always an occasion to pass on local knowledge and the colourful local history, and to extend the sense of community which has always been part of Castlecrag.

Below Due to covid-19 restrictions, the 30th birthday of Castlecrag Montessori School was celebrated with a small morning tea attended by Mayor Gail, Anglican Minister Tony Wright, past and present teachers, parents and children.



Legends from Lockdown

2020 was a year like no other, and with lockdown, restrictions and no overseas nor interstate travel, people looked for new activities to extend and entertain themselves.

Bastion resident James Cryer discovered the app Strava - an internet service for tracking human exercise which incorporates social network features. It is mostly used for cycling and running using GPS data.

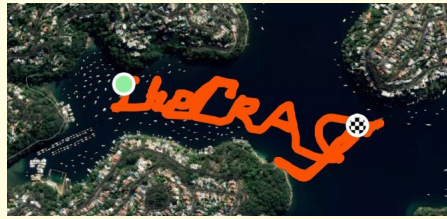
His first fun project, was to cycle through every street in Castlecrag (in one go). The measured distance was 13.3 kilometres and it took an hour and a quarter. Naturally, he had to double back through some streets. Not bad for a septuagenarian!

James then came up with the idea of using the tracking system to write a word. He explains

"My first attempt was walking along Edinburgh Rd (from Stoker Playground to Linden Way) creating the word "Castlecrag" by Strava. It was only moderately successful with some people unable to decipher my "scrawl" and others seeing all kinds of rude words.

"I needed a larger palette: something the size of two football fields Mmm!! aha!!! Sailors Bay! But this was new territory, where no kayaker had gone before - so off I went starting somewhere just off the boatshed - planning to scrawl my way into posterity by paddling vaguely towards The Spit - while simultaneously trying to gauge the height and spacing of each letter -

The Crag - so it wouldn't be an incoherent shambles by the time I finished.



"What I didn't bargain on was a brisk NE'er that sprang up - a bit like someone trying to push your pen sideways when you're trying to write. Just try balancing the paddle, glancing at your phone and trying to guess where one should turn left or right to complete the "r" or "a" or whatever letter it was.

"The nerve-racking thing about Strava is that once you start you can't retrace or eliminate what you've done - so the tension mounts as you approach the last letter, fearful that some mistake will ruin the whole thing.

"Anyway, I will claim this as a world first for a suburb and a magazine to have its name emblazoned across the world's surface via Strava. For those interested, the words stretch nearly one kilometre in length."

James has thrown down the gauntlet and asked others to nominate the silliest / most creative / bizarre activity you engaged in during the



Covid lockdown that one can talk about in public! Can anyone rival James' Strava writing effort on the land or seascape? Or perhaps you can work out how to cover the peninsula streets as James did (not Moratai nor Sugarloaf) in less than 13.3 km...



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