



CASTLECRAG
PROGRESS
ASSOCIATION

THE CRAG

A voice for the community since 1925

ISSN: 0814 2054

No. 219

MARCH 2025

There's Something About Mary

A story about our favourite pharmacist. *Story p6*

A Gripping Personal Tale

Local author uncovers much more than his family history. *Story p8*



*A Walk around Sailors Bay /
photo Anne Armstrong*

QuadWrangle is Over!

After 46 years as CastleCrag's go-to shopping spot, the old Quadrangle will finally receive a new lease on life. On 29 November 2024, the Sydney North Planning Panel approved the \$70.6 million development application for 100 Edinburgh Road, pursuant to s4.16 of the *Environmental Planning Assessment Act 1979*. The decision was unanimous. The approval decision comes after years of community consultation over the dated property.

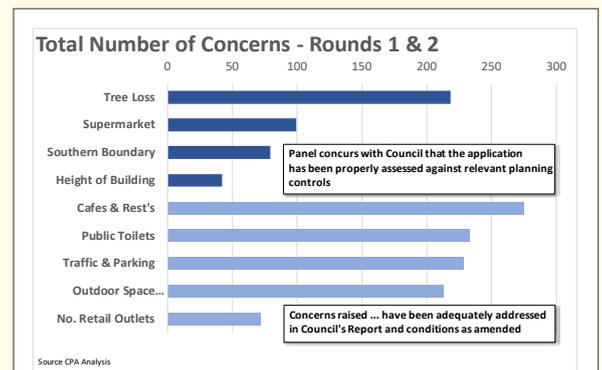
In its decision, the Panel noted, that a Planning Proposal had been submitted in June 2023 and that the Willoughby DCP (Design Control Plan) was updated to incorporate the necessary site-specific planning controls.

A DA for the site was lodged in January 2024 after having been significantly amended following extensive feedback from the community, Council departments, the Design Excellence Review Panel and Government Agencies. The two periods of exhibition produced submissions from 487 community members, many writing more than once. Council then prepared a report for the Planning Panel, in which it addressed all of the concerns raised in the submissions.

In all, there were nearly 1,500 individual concerns raised, of which 30% related to matters that were subject to planning controls. They included the level of tree loss, the size of the proposed supermarket, overshadowing and encroachment on the southern boundary and the height of the

building. The latter accounted for only 3% of issues raised. For each of these, the Panel stated that it "concur[s] with Council that the application has been properly assessed against relevant planning controls", "is suitable for the site" and that "it would be in the public interest for the proposal to be approved".

The remaining 1000 or so concerns related predominantly to cafes and restaurants, public toilets, traffic and parking, alfresco dining and the number of retail outlets. In all of these areas, the Panel determined that the "concerns raised by the community have been adequately addressed in the Assessment Report [from Council] and conditions as amended and notes that no new issues requiring assessment were raised during the public meeting".



Demolition is expected to begin in early March. In the meantime, Greencliff has leased the shop at 87 Edinburgh Road to be used as a display space and sales office for the development.

At long last, things are underway.

Paul Stokes

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MEET THE CANDIDATES - 19 MARCH

THE CRAG

is the community magazine of the
Castlecrag Progress Association Inc.

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Send to: editors@castlecrag.org.au

Letters should be concise (preferably less
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From the Editor

Welcome to my first edition as the new
Editor of *The Crag*. Following in the
(figurately) immense footsteps of previous
Editor Lindy Batterham is somewhat
daunting, as she set such a high standard
of output. I can do only my best and I
hope that you find much of interest in the
following pages.

A bit about me. I've been a resident of
Raeburn Avenue since 1961 (with the
exception of a three year work stint in
Melbourne in the 1990s). My parents,
Harry and Dorothy, moved to Castlecrag
in 1958 and I was privileged to grow up
in our beautiful surroundings. I attended
Castlecrag Pre School (Miss Dove's
Kindergarten, for those with 1960s
memories), Castlecrag Infants' School,
Willoughby Public School and North
Sydney Boys' High. I live with my wife
Liliya and daughter Amelia, who followed
the Castlecrag KU and Willoughby Public
path and is now in Year 10 at Willoughby
Girls' High. So, I think it's fair to say I
have a strong connection to the area! I
retired from paid work last year, having
spent nearly 40 years in the banking and
finance sector.

The pleasing and long-awaited approval
for The Quadrangle development will
allow that project to progress, with our
community hub eventually returning.
The final design will not please everyone,
however universal endorsement of any
design was never a likely outcome. The risk
of seeking complete community consensus
is prolonged inertia and it's doubtful that
anyone finds pleasure in the now deserted
and deteriorating site. The way is clear



for us to ultimately enjoy a modern and
functional residential and commercial
facility that will, overall, enhance
our suburb.

The CPA's Centenary year is now upon us
and the highlight will be the Castlecrag
Fair. More on this great event in the pages
following. We feature local identities
Mary Bogнар and Michael Visontay
(coincidentally both of Hungarian
heritage), coverage of various local
events from recent months, some useful
advice on recycling, news on the Marion
Mahony sculpture and our usual features
on outstanding local architecture and the
community gardens.

Speaking of Lindy, her numerous creative
talents were recognised at the recent
Women's International Film Festival, where
The Paradise Plan received a merit award
in the short film category. Lindy wrote,
directed and produced the film, which is a
loving tribute to the Castlecrag legacy left
to us by the Griffins. Lindy, we salute you!

This is your newspaper, so please let
me know what you think. All and any
feedback will be gratefully received. If I can
make it better, I will!

Tim Donahoo



From the President



A reasonably tumultuous year of 2024 for Castlecrag has come to an end, but finally the approval has been given for the redevelopment of the Quadrangle site. The Sydney North Planning Panel met in December and heard from all interested parties who had registered to address the Panel. They were all individuals or organisations who had made submissions previously. I represented the CPA supporting our earlier submission and our Secretary Tim Donahoo also listened in. The conclusion reached, a week later, with amendments, was that the development proposal be given the go ahead.

From my straw polling of residents, despite some concerns, revealed that to a person bar one, so far, they are all relieved the redevelopment will be proceeding. Let's hope that means we can move on to be a relieved community.

Which brings me excitedly to the prospect of the Castlecrag Biennial Fair for 2025. This will be most significant, since this is the Centenary celebration of the foundation of your Progress Association. Again, we will be calling on local artists, entrepreneurs, community organisations and musicians to take this opportunity to engage with their fellow neighbours. Here is an opportunity to promote your wares, skills, talents or your volunteering prowess. Our volunteer co-ordinator Lisa Andrews has thrown her hat in the ring and is more than happy to accept any help or ideas.

The Castlecrag Community Fair has always brought delight to our younger community members and helped introduce us all to one another. I thank previous volunteers, attendees and contributors in the hope they will be reinvigorated to join us again for the festivities. Castlecrag has, from its earliest days, always been a community that has revelled in the arts and social engagement. This year will be no different.

Future projects of your Progress Association will be to campaign for the continued use of Advisory Committees in the Willoughby Council community engagement process. We will also advocate for the continuation of community members being given the opportunity to address Council through the Open and Public Forum channels that are currently in place. That opportunity is now under threat, given the proposed

changes within the Draft Code of Meeting Practice proposed by your council.

I will make a statement here: Councillors are elected to represent the views and interests of constituents, not rule. That is the platform on which they were elected. Under the proposed changes to the Code, the sole method for members of the public to address Council on issues that concern them will be via a forum one week prior to the Council meeting at which that issue will be considered.

Surprisingly, the suggestion is that only two speakers from either the 'yes' or 'no' position would be permitted to address the forum, that Councillors are not obligated to attend. I ask the question: 'if the speakers for a proposal are twenty and those against are two, how is that proportional representation?' The General Manager will have the discretion to select who those advocates or opponents would be. Poor form and undemocratic, from my perspective.

We have joined the Natural Turf Alliance that campaigns for the restriction of plastic turf in public spaces due to the environmental impacts of unintended runoff of micro plastics into the riparian, estuarine and marine environments. Additionally, we are campaigning to stop Council using inappropriate introduced plant species in favour of native species. We have an application before the Nature Conservation Council to join as a member association. That Council advocates on behalf of member groups for best practice of environmental and social legislation that the State Government should adopt. The list goes on.

If you have issues of concern that the Association may be able to address on the community's behalf, please bring them to our attention via the info@ website.

Mark Crew

NOTICE of CPA GENERAL MEETING

**Wednesday, 19 March 2025 7:30pm
WILLOUGHBY BOWLING CLUB**

Guest Speakers: Bradfield Candidates for the upcoming Federal election have been invited to address the meeting.

If you're coming for dinner (from 6pm), please RSVP [info@ castlecrag.org.au](mailto:info@castlecrag.org.au)

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From the Mayor



Hello and thank you for the opportunity to provide an update from Council in this edition of *The Crag*.

Summer is drawing to a close and while we farewell our busy season for events and outdoor activities, there's no slowing down for Council, as we continue with a range of projects and initiatives for the community in 2025.

A pressing topic for our community is trees, their preservation and the increasing need for concern over tree vandalism in our Local Government Area. Following the disastrous destruction of 256 trees in H.D.

Robb Reserve, Castle Cove two years ago, I've been sorely disheartened to have seen no reduction in the number of tree vandalism cases since. To combat this, I've been meeting with relevant ministers and consulting with community groups to raise this topic and the need for more effective action. To help us combat tree vandalism, I implore you to stay vigilant and report suspicious behaviour to Council.

On a similar note, I understand that there have been some cases of illegal dumping of rubbish around the Castlecrag community recently. This is another problem of particular concern to Council, which can be reported to us by phone or using our MyWilloughby online portal.

In much better news, I'm please to report that the development at 100 Edinburgh Road has been approved and a development application for the demolition of the current structure also approved for the site, so good progress should now be seen. Traffic improvements on Edinburgh Road will be delayed until after the development, so my thanks for

your patience as this project comes to completion.

In further good news and to end on a very positive note; I would like to congratulate the Northbridge Swimming Club on their recent centenary celebration. It was a privilege and a joy to attend the celebration event of the baths last year and to be welcomed to the club's birthday event this February. One hundred years of fostering community cohesion and spirit and encouraging fitness and wellbeing is a simply astounding achievement for the generations of residents involved. My congratulations to you all.

My thanks to the Castlecrag Progress Association for your hard work and advocacy for our community and as always; please don't hesitate to reach out at any time.

Warm regards,

Tanya Taylor, Mayor of Willoughby

e: Tanya.Taylor@Willoughby.nsw.gov.au



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CASTLECRAG NOTES:

The Biennial Fair is on again!

Save the date – the Castlecrag Community Fair will be held on Sunday 2 November. An exciting and engaging program of events and attractions is being planned, as the CPA celebrates its centenary, so this promises to be a once-in-a hundred years extravaganza! The ever-popular CPA book stall will be a feature. Lisa Andrews has graciously accepted to act as

Fair Co-Ordinator: she can be reached at lisaandrews20@gmail.com if you wish to book a stall, have any enquiries or would like to volunteer to assist. All willing hands will be very gratefully welcomed.

Be on the lookout for future announcements as plans take shape. This will be HUGE!



Fire drama in The Citadel

Last October 14, almost to the day of our first anniversary of living in Castlecrag, we had an unwelcome experience. It was a very hot day and by early evening strong winds swept up. My son was cooking dinner when he looked out the front window to see our bush roundabout on fire! He called out to my husband, who rushed out and saw our neighbour Tim, who said a spark from the power pole had ignited the fire while he was out the front.

We pulled out our garden hose, but it was not long enough, so our neighbour got his and attached it to our tap as we were the closest location to the fire. I closed all our windows and doors as the house quickly filled with smoke. My biggest worry, because of the strong winds, was that the fire would jump across to trees in our front courtyard or any of the near touching

trees in the street and set houses ablaze. It was a very tense and dramatic time, but fortunately in half an hour or so the guys had the fire under control by the time two fire trucks arrived and completely doused the area.

I could not believe how something like that could progress so quickly and if our neighbour and son had not seen it start, it could have been a different outcome due to the strong winds. We have ended up buying a much longer hose for the front and back of our house and have attended to clearing some of the overgrowth on the circular outcrop. We learned a valuable lesson in this lovely bush neighbourhood of ours regarding bush management and fire preparation!

Lisa Andrews



Photo courtesy of Lisa Andrews and Wendy Radcliffe

Installation of the Marion Mahony Memorial Sculpture

The sculpture entitled 'Marion's Nature' is now ready for installation. Designed and built by Sandra Pitkin, the work was commissioned by the Walter Burley Griffin Society. Funds raised from the Society's membership, friends and indeed your Progress Association were used to pay for the piece.

WCC's Local Centre's Strategy 2036, adopted in 2019, includes a small (green) park in the Postern carpark adjacent to the Griffin Centre shops. In 2020, Council supported the Griffin Society's proposal for this to be the site for installation of the sculpture.

However, significant changes have occurred since that decision was made. With the PO now in the corner of the Griffin Centre, the carpark has become busier than ever. Once demolition of the Quadrangle begins, it is anticipated that a work zone will be implemented, moving the bus stop easterly and eliminating daytime parking in front of the building works.

When, in 2024, a WCC notice was displayed announcing the imminent construction of the small park and subsequent loss of the carpark spaces, many in the community voiced their concern about the potential loss of parking. The Mayor listened, and halted the proposed works.

With consultation and clever thinking, an alternate location was proposed. An extension of the garden bed outside the Griffin Centre to the east was found to be an appropriate location. Although a pedestrian access way will be used to accommodate the extension, it was agreed that this would be an acceptable location.

The Progress Association is hoping to negotiate with WCC to use the stone from the commemorative garden in front of the Quadrangle to create the Griffin Centre garden extension. This is being supported by Greycliff, the Quadrangle redevelopment company. That memorial



garden bed was built from the stone from the Greater Sydney Development Company sales office and was previously situated on the Quadrangle site at its most easterly end.

We have been advised that commencement of the garden bed construction and then installation will be in April or May this year. However, it is still the long-term plan of WCC to convert part of this carpark into a small park, as per the Local Centre's Strategy.

Mad Mary, our Apothecary, has a new home

After nearly forty-one years being located in the Quadrangle, Castlecrag Pharmacy relocated to the main shopping strip on Edinburgh Road just prior to Christmas. As the final permanent tenant to move on from the soon-to-be redeveloped site, there were mixed emotions experienced by owner and proprietor Mary Bogner. "It's a better location, certainly" explained Mary in recent conversation with *The Crag*, "but it was heart wrenching to leave the Quadrangle and the many happy memories, and some sad, it brings."



Like many in Castlecrag, Mary laments the slow decline of the Quadrangle, recalling the time of her move there in April 1984. "It was such a vibrant environment in those days. There was something usually happening and when the shops were all tenanted it was really bustling. I miss that time very much," she laments with a clear tone of sadness. The need to change premises was a further hurdle to be overcome during recent years, as the challenges of operating an independent suburban pharmacy increase. Noting that the industry has changed significantly, Mary is unequivocal in her assessment of what has evolved. "The primary focus is no longer on looking after the customer, but rather on keeping costs down. It's very difficult for local community-based pharmacies to compete and their survival depends on those communities which they serve. We support people with service, advice, counselling – you don't have direct interaction between the pharmacist and patient at the large chains, or indeed at the supermarket. Who looks after the customers there? The potential dangers are clear."

A pharmacy career was certainly not envisaged for the young Mary when she arrived with her family as refugees from Hungary in 1956. Her father was a

mining engineer and her mother the executive assistant to the head of a major textile manufacturer, a position that gave access to various privileges not available to most people. However, a refusal to join the Communist Party made employment difficult to find for Mary's Dad, despite his working with the resistance during World War Two, and he decided better opportunities were to be found in Australia. Crossing the border at night to avoid detection, they eventually arrived in Sydney with no English and no government support. Those early days in a new land were not easy. Mary relates that her Mum had to walk across the Harbour Bridge from their North Sydney residence to the city for a job interview because she could not afford the tram fare.

Prevented from attending a Jewish school due to her mother not being Jewish, much to the insulted dismay of her father, Mary and her sister were welcomed at St Mary's school in Ridge Street, from where high school was completed at Loreto Kirribilli. Uncertain of what to do with her life, Mary followed her Mum's advice to study pharmacy, based on the fact that she had pharmacist friends who made good livings and their work hours would enable Mary flexibility when children came along. "It didn't quite work out that way," Mary observes. "I'm still working 50 plus hours per week in my seventies!"

Whatever initial influences her Mum's promptings may have had on Mary's career, her ongoing motivation is clear. "My simple aim is to help people and make them feel better. If they leave the shop with a smile, I've done my job." She finds her early Castlecrag experience amusing now, given that at the time she purchased the business, people complained that the previous pharmacy was not friendly. Within a year, some were saying that she was too friendly and the 'Mad Mary' nickname was born. "I wear that proudly," Mary beams. "People see me as a bit eccentric, but that's ok. I am who I am and I can't be any different."

Mary's observations of societal changes since 1984, as reflected in the Castlecrag community, are worth considering. "Today, both parents are invariably working. I still have younger customers but everyone



is now rushing around. Our sense of neighbourhood has diminished because we are always busy and this impacts on people's physical and mental health."

The redevelopment of the Quadrangle will bring more change, although the pharmacy will continue. "I'll likely be here until I drop dead," Mary predicts with a mixture of resignation and satisfaction. "I need to keep working, as I'm not wealthy, despite some perceptions. I don't really know what I'd do with myself anyway. Aside from a year of maternity leave when daughter Alana was born, I've worked fifty years in pharmacy. It's my life." Some of that history is now on display in the shop windows, with vintage items such as a microscope, pill rollers, scales, crucibles, bottles and jars taking pride of place. Pharmacy books dating back to the 1930s salvaged from the Northbridge Pharmacy, which Mary owned prior to Castlecrag, make fascinating reading. Who'd have thought that heroin was a prescribed substance?

Clearly, after four decades of serving our suburb, Mary and the Castlecrag Pharmacy are integral parts of our district. That's a view that she shares, revealing that "the community is my family and my support system, as I hope I am to them. The business kept me going when my husband died. I've loved getting to know all my customers, making them feel welcome and at home when they come to the shop. Everyone has been lovely to me and my love for them will never change."

What businesses such as Mary's provide is a key part of what keeps local areas together. The value-added services, the care, the personalised expert advice, the genuine interest in people – if these are not appreciated sufficiently, the days of the local pharmacy are limited. Forty-one years of devotion to Castlecrag unquestionably makes Mary a local hero.

Willoughby celebrates Northbridge Baths' 100th year



Willoughby City Council has marked the 100th anniversary of the opening of Northbridge Baths, celebrating a century of enjoyment for the local community and one of Sydney's most iconic leisure spots.

The celebration concluded this year's Emerge Festival and delivered a memorable occasion for local residents and swimmers along with a celebration and activities for visitors and attendees.

The occasion began with an acknowledgement of the timeless Aboriginal history of the Baths, marked by a Welcome to Country by Auntie Jean Moran. Attendees were then taken back in time as a 1920s swing band played tunes from the bath's early era.

Mayor Tanya Taylor officially opened the event with reflections on the Baths' rich history and enduring significance to the community.

"Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Northbridge Baths was a special opportunity for Willoughby residents to bask in the spring weather while also learning about the unique history of our precious swimming spot", said Mayor Taylor.

"It was great to come together as a community to celebrate such a significant milestone and recognise how important Northbridge Baths is for Willoughby."

Words and pictures: Willoughby City Council

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A noble search of family history uncovered a remarkable story

One hundred years ago, Gabriel Wells, a New York bookseller, committed a crime against history. He broke up one of the few remaining copies of the world's greatest book, the *Gutenberg Bible*, and sold it off in individual pages.

This is the story of long-time Castlecrag resident Michael Visontay's hunt for those fragments and his family's debt to an act of literary vandalism.

In 1921, Wells' audacity scandalised the rare-book world. The *Gutenberg* was the first substantial book in Europe to have been printed on a printing press. It represented the democratisation of knowledge and was the Holy Grail of rare books.



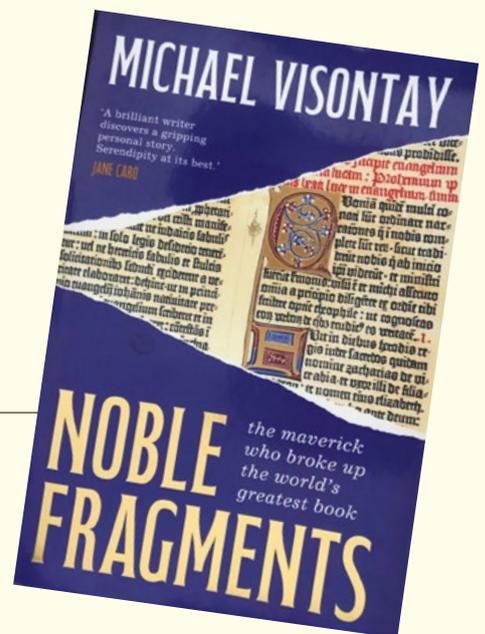
Michael Visontay

Was the break-up a sacrilege or a canny deal? New Yorkers were divided. For every frown of disapproval, there was a lick of the lips. It was the Roaring Twenties, the Gatsby era of fabulous wealth. In that golden age of rare book collecting, auctions attracted huge crowds, where tycoons were in a feeding frenzy to acquire items that would demonstrate their refinement. Wells marketed the pages as 'Noble Fragments', they sold like hot cakes, and he died a rich man.

Half a century later, journalist and author Michael stumbled upon a mysterious legal document that linked Wells to his own family. He became obsessed by the Gutenberg's invisible imprint on his life, and set out to track down the pages of the broken bible in a sometimes epic five year journey.

Part detective story and part memoir of a family's history, which is a remarkable story in itself, *Noble Fragments* is an expedition into the arcane world of book collectors and their eccentric passions, and a journey of discovery about how Wells's gamble set off a chain of events that changed a family's destiny. The discoveries, both on a broader scale and within the Visontay family, present a compelling narrative that is both enlightening and inspiring.

Noble Fragments is published by Scribe Publications and can be purchased at



www.scribepublications.com.au and via Booktopia - ISBN (13):9781761380822.

It's also available for download at Amazon Kindle and eBooks.

Michael Visontay has worked as a journalist and senior editor at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*, and taught journalism at university. He is the author of several nonfiction books, including *Welcome to Wanderland*, *Who Gave You Permission?* (with Manny Waks) and *Undies to Equities: the remarkable life of Henri Aram*. He will tour the USA in March to speak about his experiences writing *Noble Fragments*, with addresses planned at the New York Public Library, the Athenaeum Library in Boston and University of Pennsylvania.

Michael will also be talking at the Goethe Institut on Ocean Street Woollahra, at 6:00pm on Thursday, April 24. The link to that event is:

<https://events.humanitix.com/goethe-lounge-michael-visontay-presents-noble-fragments>



Castlecrag Community Library

Opening Hours

Tuesday,	3pm - 4.30pm
Thursday:	3pm - 4.30pm
Saturday:	10am - 12 noon

Location: Community Centre, bottom of The Postern next to KU

How to tackle that neighbour who won't scoop dog poo

by Danny Katz, who sends his best wishes to Castlecragians.

A woman who walks her dog past our house always lets him poo on the nature strip and never picks up the mess. What's the best way to get revenge?

K.W., Blacktown, NSW

Danny: Interesting that you want revenge rather than a solution; it just seems a bit petty and spiteful and mean-spirited. So I'm thrilled you've come to me: this is right up my alley.

My initial thought is that you scoop up the poo with a spade, chase the woman down the street, then say, "Excuse me, you dropped something! Here, catch!" and fling it at her. There's a famous saying that goes, "Revenge is a dish best served cold," but revenge can also be served warmish, around the internal temperature of a dog's rectum.



The problem with this plan is there may be anger and swearing and fling-back, so my second thought is a bit less violent. Soak your nature strip in a combination of cayenne pepper, ammonia, vinegar and chillies, and when the dog stops for a poop, it'll feel sickened by the smell and move onto your neighbour's nature strip. There's another famous saying that goes,

"Revenge is sweet," but revenge can also be sour and caustic and burn through mucous membrane.

This story appeared in the May 4, 2024 edition of the Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend magazine. With thanks for permission to reprint.

Adopting the canine perspective of the matter, we have a poem from Lucy, a local dog.



Lucy says:

Sniff

She said, almost off hand, 'walk'
I'm ready, pant pant
We're only a couple of yards from the door
Now it's talk, to the first person who comes along
Let's go, 'I have to'

Sniff

Come on! OK, I'm doing it anyway. Phew
Now she wants to go
Can't you see 'I just did'
'Pick it up' I bark

Sniff

How embarrassing - everyone else will know that's mine
If she'd paid attention she would have picked it up
Grabbed it, bagged it and binned it
In her own of course

Sniff

What's that?
A discarded bag
It's from 'Brutus' and it's his morning's work
His owner bagged and chucked it

Sniff

I'm having a word to Brutus
'Tell your human pet to'
'Pick it up'
It's a health hazard

Sniff

Thank goodness my mates are responsible
Managing their human pet
I give love, affection and humour
All I ask of the opposable thumb is
'Pick it Up'

Lucy the Kelpie

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Vale

Rodna Catherine FitzSimons (1928-2024)

late of 33 The Rampart

Castlecrag sadly lost another of its suburban family with the passing of Rodna FitzSimons on 3 August last, at Trentham Nursing Home in Willoughby. The following is an edited version of the eulogy prepared and delivered by Ian FitzSimons at Rodna's funeral on 12 August.

Rodna was born in Bowral on 8 October 1928. Her early years were overshadowed by the difficulties of the depression, the family losing its home and being forced to live in a corrugated iron hut behind her grandmother's home in Hoxton Park. An eventual return to Bowral was a welcome relief, however World War 2 intervened. Despite those challenging days, many happy memories were created from regular Saturday afternoons at the cinema, fun with friends and the development of a rich love of music. Playing the piano was a lifetime passion for Rodna.

Rodna was a prominent and popular student at Bowral High School, where she was School Captain. Tennis and music featured prominently in her activities. A Diploma of Education was earned at Armidale Teacher's College, where lifelong friendships were formed. After a stint teaching at an isolated station in the Bathurst district, Rodna taught at Campbelltown Infants' School, followed by appointments at various schools around Sydney, all while receiving musical tuitions at the Conservatorium of Music where a tutor was noted Australian composer Frank Hutchens.

In 1951, while living in a boarding house in Dulwich Hill, Rodna met Alec FitzSimons, whom, at the time, she suspected of being "a bit too flash for my liking." Nevertheless, he convinced her otherwise and they were married in 1953, a union that lasted 53 years. A block of land in Castlecrag (33 The Rampart) was purchased for 400 pounds, on which they built their home, which was completed in 1957. Children subsequently arrived; Ian in 1960, Jo (1962) and Kylie (1963).

As the children grew older, Rodna developed the urge to return to the teaching profession, completing a refresher course through the Department of Education and then commencing relief teaching. This broadened her horizons but also enabled her to save funds that would allow her to travel, both with Alec and her friend Molly. Two highlights were odysseys through the then Soviet Union and China.

Living in close proximity to Cortile Reserve and the Castlecrag Sports Club enabled Rodna and Alec to actively pursue their love of tennis, Rodna playing 3-4 days per week. She also took on the responsibilities as organist at Artarmon Uniting Church then Castlecrag Uniting Church. Teaching and playing piano at Castlecrag Infants' School endeared Rodna to many local families and she loved that role until the unfortunate closure of the School, which prompted Rodna to hand in her Teachers' Federation card in protest.

The arrival of a first grandchild in 1982 added a new dimension to Rodna's life, Kylie providing 3 and Jo one, all boys. Being a grandmother was a delight for Rodna – she was immensely proud of them and rejoiced in their achievements. These boys presented seven great-grandchildren, another source of joy for Rodna.

Alec's retirement in 1984 opened up a new phase of life for Rodna. When not travelling, tennis was nearly a daily event, with grandchildren visits a frequent highlight. Despite taking her first overseas trip at age 42, Rodna made up for lost time in later years, undertaking many extensive journeys to all parts of the world. She extended her musical activities to choir accompaniments, performing at numerous community events over many years. In her later years, Rodna served as an Elder at Castlecrag Uniting Church.

Sadly, the family lost Jo very suddenly in April 2009 and Alec passed away in 2012 after a short illness. Despite battling the effects of osteoporosis, Rodna insisted on staying in the house that she and Alec had built, where they had raised their family. The need to move into care could not be avoided, with Rodna moving to Trentham on her 90th birthday.

Rodna's loss leaves many people bereaved, whether they be her family, nephews and nieces and their families or the many friends she made through music, church, tennis and the Castlecrag community. She will be truly missed.

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Vale Dee Street (Horsley) (1935-2025)

We sadly note the passing of CPA Life Member, former Willoughby Councillor, long-time Castlecrag resident and community activist, Dee Street on 6 February. It is hoped to include a full tribute to her in the next edition.

In the meantime, we publish the text of a speech Dee delivered to the CPA General Meeting on 20 March 2019, when debate about the future of The Quadrangle was in full swing. It provides a historical summary of the previous fight over the planned development, a battle which Dee led heroically on behalf of all of us Cragites! She will be greatly missed.

"My name is Dee Street and I am honoured to be a Life Member of the CPA and the Castlecrag Conservation Society. I have been involved in many local issues and activities for over 50 years.

I am delighted to be invited here this evening to give you a brief history of the development and building of the Quadrangle, as I was thrust into the forefront from the beginning to the end of that long and drawn-out saga.

Sadly, I no longer live in the Crag; they were the best years of my life. With the benefits of hindsight, I may prevent some of the pitfalls you face today. As history has a habit of repeating itself, your requirements for suitable space and the style of buildings are similar to 40 years ago.

In 1977, the "bush telegraph" was hot with news that a large parcel of land on the corner of Eastern Valley Way and Edinburgh Rd had been sold and apartments or a hotel (and even a McDonalds!) were to be built!

By the time the Progress Association was informed, plans for a shopping complex had already been approved under delegated authority. As a Willoughby Council Alderman, I was the last to know, as there was no mention of a development for Castlecrag in Council papers.

When the "movers and shakers" in the Crag heard that a large complex was on the way, at our "front door", all hell broke loose! There were demands for Castlecrag to secede from Willoughby Municipality, not for the first time and maybe, not for the last. The press had a field day – the Alderman had let the residents down!

After obtaining some of the facts from the Mayor's secretary, we put together all the information, called another public meeting and informed the locals that a development had been approved and was underway.

There was no consultation whatsoever with the residents or input to the plans. Understandably, they were angry. With their support, we decided to take the matter to the courts and we won!

How did we do it and why?

- 1. The plans had been approved under delegated authority;*
- 2. The zoning in Castlecrag, for neighbourhood shopping, was completely ignored;*
- 3. The architect and developer were making a financial investment with no interest regarding the amenities required, nor the community village lifestyle, let alone the Walter Burley Griffin concept or the natural bushland environment;*
- 4. With help from local lawyers and generous donations from residents, we had enough money to pay the legal fees -- so off we went to court!*

After the hearing, I was appointed to liaise with the architect and developers on behalf of the residents, to ensure the plans were altered and the height of the building was reduced to our satisfaction.

Over the previous Christmas break, I had been in the USA with my family and stayed a few days in Carmel, California. I was very impressed with the beautiful landscape of the shopping village there and brought photos and brochures home. When the time was right, I showed them to the architect. I explained to him, most forcefully, that if he could design a building as attractive and practical as Carmel's, with reduced height and proper setbacks from the road, a courtyard and outside dining, we would be happy.

What we achieved, with the Quadrangle, was the end result of a successful collaboration and a good outcome at the time.

Finally, the Quadrangle was opened in 1979 with much fanfare! The Willoughby Brass Band banged on. Balloons and people floated about. The Mayor arrived in great style – his name had been placed on the plaque and was unveiled with great flourish. The Mayor made a speech and thanked the Council!

The protesters took over and drowned him out, still demanding we secede from Willoughby Council.

The Mayor got the kudos, but WE, the ratepayers, won that battle!"

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Houses of Castlecrag

11 THE TOR WALK

11 The Tor Walk is a beautifully modest house that I am sure everyone would keep and love to live in. The design is straightforward and elegant; when you walk along the street you might miss it if you are not looking carefully.

This wonderful house was designed in 1969 by architect Peter Muller (1927-2023). He started his architectural practice in the year 1952. His first commission in Australia was the Audette House at 265 – 267 Edinburgh Road. The design of this house was heavily influenced by the work of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the most highly regarded architects in the world with his original organic approach to architecture where the designs of his houses relate to the site.

Muller had designed four houses in Castlecrag. Unfortunately, the Gunning House at 367 Edinburgh Road has been demolished and 9 The Scarp has been heavily renovated and is now on the market.

The McArthur house (the original owners of the house) at 11 The Tor Walk is a modest two-storey house on a very steep site. From the street, only a double garage and a beautiful tropical garden are visible. The house has been slightly altered over the years but its design in essence remains.

The construction is a mixture of recycled sandstock bricks, sourced from a convent, slate tile roofing, timber cladding, timber battening and South Australian Mintaro slate for the northern terraces. A strip of the same stone is used internally to integrate the terrace with the indoor areas designed cleverly to use warmth generated by the angle of the winter sun to warm the house naturally.

The original roof was clad in timber shingles, however eventual deterioration caused them to be replaced with slate

tiles, for similarity in size when compared to the shingles.

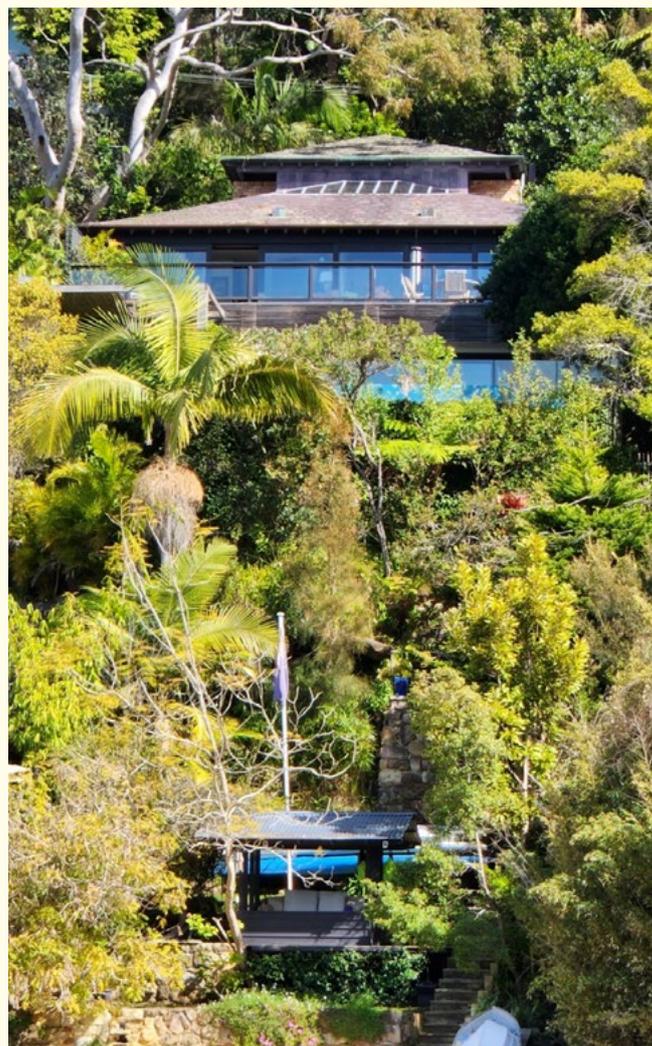
Arriving at the house, you walk down through the heavily planted garden to the front door. Once inside, the use of horizontal timber battening is used throughout the house as a low-key element. Over the central staircase is a huge skylight which floods the lobby, upstairs areas and the lower level with natural light.

All the bedrooms are on the top floor and on the lower floor is the kitchen, dining and living areas, which all open onto the northern terrace through large timber sliding doors to a wet-edge swimming pool.

From here, you meander down a stepped pathway to a wonderful folly, a perfect spot to sit and enjoy the quiet tranquil setting and the views to Middle Harbour. The site allows access to the water and a small sandy beach.

The owners of the house are very lucky because they are living in a piece of paradise!

Castlecrag has a wealth of domestic architecture dating back from Mahony and Griffin's time of the early 1920s to today. It is growing all the time. Some of the well-known architects who have



11 The Tor Castlecrag

works located in this suburb are Peter Muller, Harry Seidler, Neville Gruzman, Eric Nicholls, Allen Jack and Cottier, Philip Cox, Alex Popov, Bruce Rickard, Hugh Buhrich, Virginia Kerridge, Neeson Murcutt to name a few.

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Letter to the Editor

The letter (below) was received on 24 November, 2024, in response to the article *Vandalism at Tower Reserve (The Crag No. 218, September 2024, page 6)*.

In the interests of achieving an appropriate parity between protecting our valuable bushland areas and enabling residents and visitors to enjoy these surroundings, a response from Willoughby Council's Bushland Team was sought. Here it is:

Council's Bushland Team has long recognised the importance of nature play and the need to respond to what has been described as the 'Nature Deficit Disorder' in contemporary society. This has led to the provision of a range of play facilities in and near many bushland areas, with larger areas at Stoker Park, Warners Park and Artarmon Reserve.

Council has also initiated many environmental education programs, including bushwalks for all ages, as well as direct involvement with all our schools to link curricula with nature experiences.

Dear Editor,

My name is Max and I'm 12 years old. I just wanted to write to you because I saw that an article was written about me and my friends in the community newsletter. We were the kids building cubby houses and forts in Tower Reserve, and I think the lady who wrote the article got a few things wrong, so I want to explain.

First of all, Tower Reserve is really messy! There are lots of sticks and leaves and rocks just lying around, so it's perfect for building hideouts. We never mean to mess up anything, we just love playing outside. Since the tarp got taken away (sorry about that, we found it lying around and thought it would make good camouflage and cover for rain), we've only been using sticks and stuff we find on the ground. We always try to build in places where not many people go, so we're not bothering anyone, and it's hard for us to know where the plants are or what's weeds and what's native stuff. It's all just mixed up, and we don't always know what to touch or not.

Every time we build a fort or cubby, it seems like someone goes and destroys it. My little brother really cries when this happens because he works so

The need for spontaneous adventure play must be balanced with the requirements of protecting our remaining natural assets, particularly in an urban context. This can ensure long term benefits for both the community and our natural environment.

While not seeking to discourage anyone's enjoyment of Castlecrag's wonderful reserves, walks and trails, it is important to remember that some of these areas may be under regeneration, replanting, repair and maintenance at any particular time. This means that they will be vulnerable and sensitive to damage and, therefore, should not be disturbed. The best advice for young people seeking to have their own bush adventures is to first check with local adults before erecting any tents, structures or rearranging local flora. In all circumstances, be conscious of not leaving any rubbish behind at any time. Let's give our unique bush spaces the best chance of always being at their best.

hard on them. We play there because we love nature too, and it's fun! We don't want to make a mess or hurt the reserve. Maybe if you don't like how we're doing it, you could come up and talk to us instead of watching us? It would be so cool if you said hello and maybe showed us where you've planted stuff or gave us some tips on how to build better cubbies, like how you used to when you were a kid. That way we could learn from you instead of just being told we're doing something wrong. It would be great if you could point out the animals that are there as we've never seen them!

We understand that you want to look after the reserve, but please understand that we just want to enjoy it too, like everyone else. We respect that you care about the place, and we'll try to be more careful if you show us how we can do it right.

Thanks for reading my letter!

From Max

(and my little brother who loves cubby houses too!)

CASTLECRAG BUSHCARE Meeting Dates

First Monday of the Month

- Tower Reserve 8.30 -11.30 am
Contact: Jocelyn – 0402 158 518
or Lisa – 0404 806 406

Second Wednesday of the Month

- Turret Bushcare 9-12 noon
Contact: Monique – 9777 7875

Second Saturday of the Month

- Sunnyside Brushturkeys 9-12 noon
Contact: Scott – 0431 462 588

Second Sunday of the Month

- Gargoyle Bushcare 9-12noon
Contact: Roger – 0407 035 171
- Keep Reserve 9-12noon
Contact: Matthew – 0408 203 511

Third Sunday of the Month

- Casement Reserve 8.30-11.30am
Contact: Vicki – 0402 325 531
- Torquay Estate 9-12noon
Contact: Jo – 0419 234 235
- Lookout Reserve 9-12 noon
Contact: Adrienne – 0409 997 076

Fourth Sunday of the Month

- Retreat Reserve 9-12 noon
Contact: Jill – 0428 880 002



Epacris longifolia

Community Gardens: Market Garden Park

A wet winter this year may have had something to do with our super harvests, most notably our best ever haul of pumpkins. We also had an abundance of Jerusalem artichokes, yacon and loads of turmeric. Great eggplant, daikon, red radishes, radicchio, mizuna and mustard. Busy summer gardeners at Market Garden Park Community Garden enjoyed some fine rewards for our dedication. Early in the season, we were picking fresh climbing beans daily: purple, yellow and green varieties. Now we're seed saving from the first crop, with a second climbing the bamboo poles.

The undisputed star of the season though has been cucumber. It's been a wonderful surprise to find them sprawling beyond the trellis up into the nearby fig tree. We have our best ever ongoing delivery of fresh, juicy, prolific cucumbers for munching raw, adding to salads plus teaming up with yoghurt for tzatziki and raita.

Then came tomatoes, which can be finicky to grow. Not saying we've perfected tomato growing yet but this year we've made some significant strides, most notably by bagging them to protect from fruit fly.

Aubergines love the sunshine too and ours are lending themselves to parmigiana, baba ghanoush, stews, curries, roasting and more.

We're giving lessons in hand pollination of zucchinis, squashes and pumpkins which are making some appearances. Likewise, there have been appearances from corn, garlic and okra.

The passionfruit vine is fruit laden. It's being well fed and watered in the hope of soon being able to share among the gardeners some packets of sweet tangy deliciousness.

There are always jobs aplenty, from digging to compost tending and watering. Ferocious winds and heavy rains in January wreaked temporary havoc.

Our new gardeners morning on 8 Feb was a great success, providing an intro to organic gardening with seed saving and soil preparation demonstrations.



Eggplants on the vine



Passionfruit coming along



Intro to Gardening day



Cucumber harvest for Xmas



Tomatoes

Connecting with others is part of the fun as we chat in the garden and gather around the table afterwards to share and enjoy a bite to eat, often home-made treats. We love seeing our active group of garden members grow, with the latest welcome additions of father-daughter duo Jemma and Steven on Saturday mornings, and Ron on Wednesday mornings.

Community Gardens:



Corn harvest in December 24

Warners Park in Summer

On Wednesdays and Sundays, an enthusiastic group of people get together to garden, enjoy good company and share the delicious morning teas prepared by our members, some of whom are gourmet cooks. On Sundays there are sometimes a lot of people involved – including families with children and teenagers helping us out as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award program.

Over the summer months, we have had abundant crops of passionfruit, tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, pumpkin, beans, zucchini and a number of Asian vegetables, including shiso and kang kung.

Gardening Tip: Coriander is grown from seed very easily in winter, but bolts when the temperature reaches the high 20s, so don't waste your time planting it in summer. It also doesn't like being transplanted, so sow seeds direct.



Warner's Park gardeners

You can apply to become one of the Garden volunteers, share the organic produce from the garden and learn from each other in good company.

Come join us. Call Hilary at 0414 502 771.
<https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Environment/Sustainable-Living/Food-and-garden/Community-gardens>

Hilary McDonald
 Words and pictures



Janet France and hollyhocks

Market Garden Park Community Gardeners meet on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 9:00 am. We welcome people at all levels of garden experience and mobility. For more info about us, or to make contact, visit <https://mgpcommunitygarden.com>

Mary Anne Veliscek
 Pics: Bernee Lee and Mary Anne Veliscek



Gum Buds
 by: Guy Leung

Recycling – the right way

Most of us are well aware of the environmental benefits of recycling, diligently filling our yellow lidded wheelie bin for regular collection. However, there are some fundamental do's and don'ts of which we should be aware so that our recycling efforts derive maximum positive outcomes.

Rinse and dry your recyclables

Giving your recyclables a quick rinse and letting them dry makes a big difference. Leftover food and liquids can contaminate the whole batch, meaning it might end up in landfill. So, a quick rinse helps make sure your items actually get recycled.

Stop wishcycling

We all have those items we wish could be recycled, but chucking them in the recycling bin can do more harm than good. Look up Willoughby Council's rules, and if you're unsure, it's usually best to keep it out of the bin!



Leave lids on

For plastic bottles, it's better to leave the lids on. This keeps them together so the whole item can be processed properly, instead of lids getting lost and ending up as litter.

Flatten cardboard boxes

Before tossing cardboard boxes in the recycling, break them down and flatten them. This can be an annoying extra task at times, but it saves space and makes it easier for recycling facilities to process them.

Check for compostable plastics

Some plastics, especially food containers, are labelled as compostable. These shouldn't go in the recycling bin, since they break down differently. Check for local composting options, or if you're composting at home, make sure they're suited for home composting.

Donate or upcycle

If you're done with an item but it's still in good shape, consider donating it or finding ways to repurpose it. Keeping items in use longer is the best form of recycling.

Source: <https://recyclingnearyou.com.au>



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