

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

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July/August 1992

67 YEARS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

President's Report

Howard Rubie 958 1729

The most important issue confronting the Progress Association at this time is the **Castlecrag Infants School**. The community effort to gain its re-opening has been well documented in past *Crag* newsletters and again in this issue. The Progress Association has a definite policy for the reopening of the Infants School next year to provide the basic public education that is the right of our children and all Australians. Over the years the Association has dealt with many issues, from expressways to the preservation of bushland and heritage. But no issue has so directly involved the future and well-being of our children as this.

The heavy hand of economic rationalism may be used in an attempt to squash fair argument about the social, personal and first educational experiences of our children. The vital formative years of the five to seven year old children of Castlecrag and neighbouring areas are the stakes in this dispute.

It is worth remembering that in the late 1940s and early 1950s the same economic arguments were used to stop the building of an infants school here in Castlecrag. Naremburn School was opened, so were Willoughby, Northbridge and Chatswood, all accessible by tram or bus. With great determination the Progress Association battled the bureaucrats and politicians of the time to have the school opened. Since then it has flourished with between 70 and 90 pupils, and has developed a reputation

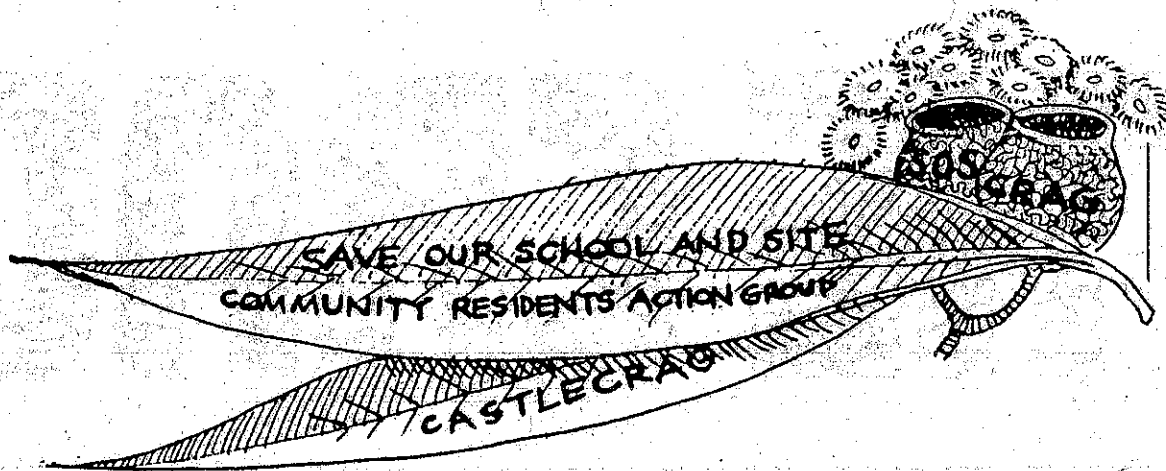
as a centre of excellence in education through the work of dedicated teachers and the financial assistance of the community. Over the years the community has supported the school through the Progress Association, the Conservation Society and a very active and generous P&C Association. Our children were given a good start in life at a Castlecrag Public School. Surely, this the most important thing a community can give its children.

In 1988, because of a now well-documented and proven ill-advised political expediency, an attempt was made to **close the Castlecrag Public School forever**. So far the school gate has not shut. For well over one thousand days the concerned parents and residents through SOS*CRAG, have cared for and kept the school in good order and let life come into the buildings, an effort that has not been sustainable by any other community affected by the closure of their school. Any Monday morning a teacher could arrive at the school and start the teaching process. It has been a community effort that defies the heavy hand of economic rationalism.

It is a community effort that believes in our children, the future and the importance of quality community life in our suburb. The **public meeting at Castlecrag School on Sunday 16th August** at 3pm is the next important step towards the re-opening of the school. Please try to attend.

The next meeting of the Castlecrag Progress Association will be held at the Community Centre, corner The Postern and The Rampart, Tuesday 25 August at 8pm. All welcome!

The Castlecrag Conservation Society will hold its next meeting on Wednesday 16 September at the Infants School, Edinburgh Road, at 8pm. For details ring Harold Spies, President, 958 8569.



Events of Castlecrag Infants School's Four Year Marathon: a Chronology

1988

- June First rumours of 'hit list' of schools for closure.
 October School closure is announced.
 November Public meeting at school. Speakers Bob Carr and John Aquilina express support. Department of Education's demographics refuted. (Peter Collins invited but does not attend.) P&C is involved in North Shore by-election highlighting school closure issue.

1989

- 27 February P&C presents submission to the Department arguing against closure: *Twenty Good Management Points. Reasons for Retaining School.*
SOS*CRAG is formed as a subcommittee of the P&C.
 April **School's 40th birthday party** Reunion/photo exhibition showing history of Castlecrag. Local groups involved are: Castlecrag Conservation Society, Willoughby Environmental Protection Association, Castlecrag Progress Association, Cottages, Walter Burley Griffin Society. Tree planting. Over 2,000 visitors.
 June Submission to Ombudsman to investigate wrongful conduct by Department of education regarding proposed closure of Castlecrag Infants School. Willoughby Council funds a census which indicated a **37% increase** in 0-4 year olds across East Willoughby over the period the Department of Education claimed the population was ageing and numbers of school age children declining.
 4 May **Rally at Parliament House** protesting against school closure and education cuts.
 1 July Freedom of Information Act (NSW) becomes law. Castlecrag P&C makes **first application** requesting documents from the Department of Education relating to school closures.
 July **Environmental Education Centre Proposal** submitted.
 3 September **Greening Day.** Launch of Environmental Education Centre Proposal. Helen Caldicott, Richard Jones, Judy Messer, Rebecca Gilling, and Lindy Batterham speakers.
 19 November Castlecrag Carnival. Games, food, community theatre piece *Keep Your Hands off my Assets* featuring 4 metre high puppets of Walter and Marion Griffin and over 45 residents.
 November **Willoughby Council refuses to rezone school site to enable medium density housing, and supports retention of school.**
 6 December Rally outside Parliament House featuring Walter and Marion puppets.
 15 December Last day of school. Union Green Bans and **24-hour community roster picket** begins. **Telephone Tree** has been organised accessing over 120 people in ten minutes.
 12 December Court appeal under the Freedom of Information Act lodged by Bruce Wilson on behalf of SOS*CRAG relating to the excessive costs charged. Subsequently won the case - costs reduced.

1990

- Jan/Feb over 200 submissions to Department of Planning opposing rezoning of site. Government overrides Council planning decision.
 26 March Rezoning gazetted under Regional Environment Plan No.7 (multi-unit housing - up to 64 townhouses permitted).
 >>>> over >>>>

- 24 May **Education Reform Act:** a deal is struck between the Government and Richard Jones MLA (Democrat). A promise was made by the Government **not to sell the site but to retain it for community use.**
- 3 June World Environment Day is celebrated at the school. Led by then Mayor Noel Reidy and 5 Aldermen, several hundred hands are linked around the school. MPs present include Ted Mack, Clover Moore, Robyn Read and Richard Jones. Tree planting ceremony.
- 6 July Consultation begins with **Peter Collins re future use of school site.**
- 17 August Joint submission to Mrs Chadwick, Minister for School Education, **re community use(s) for site along with reopening of infants school. Endorsed by Peter Collins, Willoughby Council, and all local groups.**
- 12 September Meeting to discuss submission with Mrs Chadwick, Mayor, local representatives, SOS*CRAG and officials from Department of Education.
- 14 October Public Education Association Conference *Local Schools. Why We Need Them. How to Keep Them.* Lindy Batterham, Bruce Wilson and Stephen Weingarth speakers.
- 19 October Castlecrag School Working Party meets. Dr Glenice Hancock, Assistant Director General of Education, Peter Collins, SOSCRAG reps and Mayor discuss use of the site.
- 27 October Parents from Canberra do weekend roster at Castlecrag Infants School to express support.
- 12 November Castlecrag School Working Party disagreement over basic use of site. Department presents its intended use - **Special Education Centre. Community representatives agree to this use in conjunction with infants school. Dept of Education refuses this option.** Discussions cease.
- 1991
August Community continues to maintain school and grounds, and lobby for reopening. Classes are held including singing, yoga, life drawing, and local groups meet there.
Meeting with Peter Collins regarding reopening.
- 1992
29 April No approaches during 1991 or 1992 from Department of Education to negotiate Special Education Centre.
In response to questions in Parliament, Minister for Education reconfirms her intention to use the site for Special Education.
Minister for Education offers to sell school site to Willoughby City Council.
- May
June SOSCRAG proposes 5 year trial reopening. 23 children enrolled to commence kindergarten in 1993. 1991 Census figures show steady population of 0-4 year olds in the area.
- August Now Willoughby City Council has called for a **Public Meeting on Sunday 16th August at 3pm on site. At this meeting residents will discuss the future use of the site prior to responding to the Department of Education's offer of sale. Come for a picnic barbecue lunch at the school from 12.30pm onwards. Kids activities, entertainment and games will be provided. Child care will be available during the meeting.**



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Dear Residents,

From media coverage, you will be aware of the death of **Max Dupain**, Australia's most famous photographer. On behalf of our community, I wish to extend sincere sympathy to Mrs Dupain and Family. Max will be sadly missed by the many residents in our community who knew him. Last year Max donated many of his Castlecrag photographs to the Walter Burley Griffin Society, and we feel very privileged to have this collection which will always serve as a grand memorial to his work and his love for Castlecrag.

Castlecrag now has a **Local Traffic Management Plan Committee** which is working on your behalf to put together a plan to present to Council's Traffic Committee (membership includes representatives from RTA, Police, NRMA, Council Officers, community members and Aldermen). I would like to thank the residents who attended the last Progress Association meeting to discuss traffic issues or wrote to the Committee. Your comments and ideas will be taken into account. Residents will have the opportunity to have further input when the Plan reaches public exhibition stage, and will be kept up to date via *The Crag* newsletter.

Foxes and feral cats are becoming a problem in Castlecrag with many reported sightings in Linden Way, The Scarp, Edinburgh Road and Sunnyside Crescent. I would appreciate residents keeping me informed about this problem as Council is collecting data in order to find ways of controlling these feral animals.

Congratulations to the hardworking **Haven Theatre 530A Committee**, which has recently received a grant from the Ministry of Arts to assist in making this community venue a more viable site for future performances.

Some dates for your diary:

Public meeting on the future of Castlecrag Infants School 16th August

Willoughby Fun Fair, Willoughby Park, Saturday 19th September (Robert Street will be closed to traffic for Rollerblades and BMX bike displays and rides - make sure you bring safety helmets etc).

Seminar *You and Your Environment* at Dougherty Centre, Chatswood, 10th September 1pm. Ring **Barrie Styles**, Aged Services Community Worker (phone 413 1677) for further information. Topics will range from Health, Personal Development, Loss and how to be more environmentally aware.

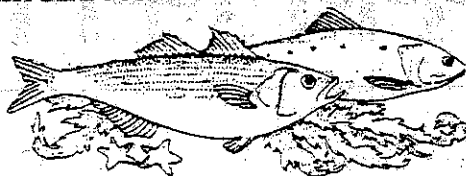
SBS Youth Orchestra performances Sunday 27th September (alternate date in case of wet weather 11th October) at **Haven Amphitheatre**. Please walk or catch the bus provided from Castlecrag shops.

A vacancy currently exists for a community member on the **Dougherty Community Centre Advisory Committee**. The Committee meets every second month on a Tuesday evening (5.30 - 7.30pm), and is made up of Community Members, Council Aldermen, and Council Staff. Contact Mr David Badger (Manager) at the Centre or phone 419 2555 for further details and to receive a nomination form. Closing date for nominations is Friday 2nd October 1992.

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The Bernard Hesling Mural

Eric and Rita Kaye

Thanks to the generosity of Fred and Kate Kelly the present proprietors of the Castlecrag Cellars, the Bernard Hesling mural which for nearly forty years graced the back wall of this historic building, has been offered to our community. This is indeed good news, and although Castlecrag does not have a suitable space to exhibit such a large mural at present, the Management Committee of the Community Centre is making arrangements for its storage until a suitable venue becomes available. Contemplation of the mural and the Griffin Centre which now houses the Castlecrag Cellars, triggers many happy memories in the minds of the handful of residents who came to live here in the 1940s and are still around. For others, the following brief history may be of interest.

Prior to World War 2, the back part of the present cellars was a separate room with access, only by the existing stairs, from Edinburgh Road. It was used as a meeting room and fulfilled an important role in our young community, which had no other such venue. The Progress Association held its inaugural meeting here and all subsequent meetings until the present Community Hall was built. During the war years the room was used as an Air Raid Wardens Post and the Red Cross held First Aid classes there.

For many years prior to the war, and until the late 1940s, the larger part of the present cellars was used by Bill Taylor as a bakery; fortunately the baker's oven has been retained and is still on view in the cellars. Bread was baked in this wood fired oven, the fuel for which came mainly from Castlecrag casuarinas. Bill claimed that this timber was the best fuel for baking bread. All of this was before Tree Preservation Orders and concern about such issues as protection of the environment.

The bread was delivered by his son Billy in a horse-drawn cart. Billy used to leave the horse and cart at the top of The Pinnacle and delivered bread to the few houses at the lower end of Edinburgh Road using a basket. This colourful activity came to an abrupt end when Billy enlisted in the Air Force.

Coming now to Bernard Hesling, the painter of the mural. We are indebted to Lorna and Harvey, and Ella Young, for the following information:

Bernard was born in Yorkshire and emigrated to this country with his wife Florence (nee Pickles) during 1928. He had been trained as a house painter and decorator and had developed skills in creating special effects with paint such as fake woodgrain, marbling, etc. He had experience in

stage backdrops and was drawn to the theatre. Florence was creative in the area of dress design. They built their home in The Redoubt and used their sense of design and dramatisation in such things as hand-stencilled curtains.

Although lacking any formal training as an artist, Bernard created a reputation for fired enamel plaques, platters and table tops, using figures in a humorous way. His work expanded to the painting of large murals for such places as the Overseas Terminal, the New Zealand Tourist Bureau, and the Belmore Hotel, and of course Castlecrag. Lorna and Harvey painted some of the detail for him in each of these. The mural that has been in the Castlecrag Cellars for many years was commissioned by Crag Groceries and involved local themes such as the house called *The Pinnacle* which in early years was located at the top of The Pinnacle hill.

He was a keen observer and wit and published several books and one play - *A Cup of Tea, a Bex and a Good Lie Down* which was produced by the old Independent Theatre. Bernard never claimed to be an author because, as he himself said, "all my books are about me!". He also had a weekly radio and TV spot on the ABC for a period of time.

In 1944 he emerged as a *primitive* or *painter naive* because he drew the then Prime Minister with six fingers instead of five, and could draw a building looking at it and at the same time looking up at it from under the eaves!

Bernard delighted in drawing attention to his rather odd appearance by wearing conspicuous clothes such as a loud checked trousers, red waistcoats and berets. He also kept his Yorkshire accent to the end. He died in Adelaide aged in his eighties.

He bequeathed his body to Adelaide University, because, as he said, he had a complex about his limited education and "always wanted to go to uni".

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The Walter Burley Griffin Ascendancy

Castlecrag, through the **Walter Burley Griffin Society**, was visited by noted architectural historian **Professor Paul Kruty**, and his wife **Professor Jane Block**, on 18 July. The Walter Burley Griffin Society hosted the tour of our *Griffin heritage*, which covered our streets and walkways, an inspection of the *Fishwyck House* in The Citadel, *The Haven Amphitheatre*, *Griffin's culverts under The Bulwark* and the Society's collection of **Max Dupain photographs**.

Professor Kruty, of the School of Architecture of the University of Illinois, has been visiting Australia under an exchange program with the University of Melbourne. At Illinois, he has been working on a 20 year study to document the complete works of the **Walter Burley Griffin practice in Chicago**. Walter graduated from Illinois in 1899 as a "straight A" student.

The findings of this study provided the basis for a lecture delivered by Professor Kruty at the School of Architecture, University of NSW on 17 July. In addition to a fascinating slide presentation of Griffin's work in the United States, Professor Kruty provided the audience with new insights regarding Griffin's contribution to modern architecture on the international stage. Far from following in the footsteps Frank Lloyd Wright and the *Prairie School* of architecture as has been commonly believed, the Illinois study has shown that Griffin (although a decade younger than Wright) was the source of many innovations which have been attributed to Wright. These include the integration of building design with landscape architecture (from 1902), L-shaped "open-plan" houses (1906) and the adoption of pre-Columbian style architectural forms (from 1910). Outstanding Griffin buildings highlighted by Kruty were the *solid rock house* (1910), which marked the emergence of the style he used in Castlecrag, and the *Stinson Public Library*, one of his most radical buildings with extensive use of rough textured stone and a primordial entrance way, clearly influenced by Mayan architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright followed a similar path in adopting pre-Columbian architectural forms to adorn his buildings, but about four years after Griffin.

The theme of the lecture was that Walter Burley Griffin demonstrated that an architect could begin within the parameters of an existing modern style and evolve a style truly one's own. Documents from Griffin's Chicago practice suggest that he felt there was something missing in the *Prairie School* and he turned to Japanese and Mayan architecture for new forms and insight.

During this visit, Professor Kruty was able to inspect Walter and Marion Griffin's 1911 drawings for Canberra. He believes they are outstanding works of modern architecture and demonstrate, through the amazing detail of the buildings, the key change in Griffin's imagery from *Prairie expressionism* to *primordial meaning*. Following the lecture, there was considerable discussion on the contribution of Marion Mahony Griffin to the partnership. While Kruty felt there was little of architectural significance in Marion's personal work, the participants highlighted her key role in one of the world's outstanding architectural partnerships through her ability to express the full complexities of the architect's ideas in her drawings.

Although the Illinois study has focused on Griffin's US practice, he notes that the building style which Griffin adopted after 1910 was much more suited to the Australian landscape than the American *Prairie*. The Castlecrag visit was therefore the highlight of Professor Kruty's Australian experience. He felt that the community of Castlecrag and its outstanding collection of Griffin houses represents the epitome of the work of one of the world's most significant architects. If Paul Kruty is right, this heritage is of greater international significance than previously thought.

Paul Kruty and Jane Block are enthusiastic new members of the Walter Burley Griffin Society. Thanks are extended to **Owen Morgan and Kathy Lockhart** for their generosity in opening their home to our visitors and helping to make 18 July a significant day in the history of Castlecrag.

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SBS Concerts Coming Up!!!

The two long-awaited SBS Youth Orchestra concerts at the Haven Amphitheatre will be held on Sunday, 27 September, weather permitting (wet weather alternative date is Sunday 11 October). The seventy-member orchestra has just returned from a highly successful tour of the South Pacific.

Planning is now well underway and the first concert, commencing at noon, will be a Family Prom designed to appeal to the whole family, including young children. The second, starting at 3.30pm, will be for adults and good listeners. Four young musicians from Castlecrag are auditioning to take part.

Concert tickets will go on sale at Gossips Cafe in the Castlecrag Quadrangle during the second week of August and should sell fast. Don't wait to buy your ticket on the day as numbers will be strictly limited and you may be disappointed. Also, please remind any of your friends coming from other suburbs that NO PARKING regulations near the Amphitheatre will be enforced. Encourage them to get into the spirit of things and walk or take a free shuttle bus. There will be two operating most of the day.

A large number of volunteers will be needed to organise these concerts. Help is needed with ushering, traffic, catering, publicity etc both on the day and beforehand. If you can offer any assistance please contact Lisa Purser on 958 1503.

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CONRAN, S	The Makeover Murders
ROWE, J	Treasures
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HILLERMAN, T	Kissing the Gunner's
RENDELL, R	Daughter
	Child of the Phoenix
ERSKINE, B	A Dubious Legacy
WESLEY, M	The First Wives Club
GOLDSMITH, O	Rapstone Chronicles
MORTIMER, J	The Original Sin
GABRIEL, M	Ustinov at Large
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Community Noticeboard

SUNDAY 16th AUG ~ PUBLIC MEETING

TUES. 25th AUG ~ PROGRESS ASSOC. MEETING.

THURS. 10th SEPT. ~ "YOU & YOUR ENVIRONMENT" SEMINAR.

WED 16th SEPT. ~ CONSERVATION SOCIETY MEETING.

SAT. 19th SEPT. ~ WILLOUGHBY FUN FAIR.

SUN. 27th SEPT. ~ S.B.S. YOUTH ORCHESTRA AT THE HAVEN.

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The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association (Box 6/77, Castlecrag) by Judy Stone - Herbert 958 7961 and Kerry McKillop 958 4516. Contributions to the newsletter are most welcome. Deliveries: Donna Sife 958 1841.