

NEWSLETTER OF THE CASTLECRAG PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

No. 97

Seventy one years of community development. January/February 95
ISSN 0814 - 2054

President's Report

Since the last issue of *The Crag* representation has been made to the Association on the Foreshore Building Line (FBL) as it applies to Castlecrag. This line was approved in the early 1980s and altered slightly in 1989. The objectives of the FBL as defined in Draft Local Environment Plan 65, are:

- preservation and enhancement of the natural features and vegetation of the area where the land meets or is in close proximity to the water; and
- restoration of the land below the FBL to its natural state, with minimum intrusion of manmade structures

and it is felt that these aims are laudable. The Association is not the authority which has any power to vary the FBL. At our next meeting, the FBL will be an item on our Agenda.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hard working Committee for their valiant efforts during this last year. For me, it has been a rewarding and stimulating period as president. Our small peninsular suburb was blessed from its beginning with a great sense of community and to this day that spirit motivates one's happy participation in community groups and activities.

Our next meeting will be held on **28th February at the Community Centre**. Membership, or your renewal, can be made then or by filling in the form on page 6. We urge you to become an active member of your 71 year old Progress Association and we welcome your ideas, input and participation.

The Progress Association would like to establish a custom of having a separate date for its **Annual General Meeting** and to ask a prominent Castlecrag resident to be the guest speaker. **Mrs Joyce Batterham** will be our guest on this occasion. Joyce first came to Castlecrag when she was a sixteen-year-old to visit her brother Edgar Deans, who was the Secretary to the GSDA. She knew the Griffins well and all of the small community of residents who pioneered our bush suburb, and has lived here with her family since she married Bob Batterham. Her long involvement in our suburb's development has been both outstanding and constructive and continues to this day. Last year the Association recognised her efforts by making her a Life Member. Joyce's address will be most interesting and we extend a warm invitation to all members and residents. Afternoon tea will be served.

Elizabeth Lander

The next meeting of the **Castlecrag Progress Association** will be held on **Tuesday 28th February 8pm** at the **Community Centre**, corner The Postern and The Rampart, Castlecrag. All are welcome..

The **Annual General Meeting** of the **Castlecrag Progress Association** will be held on **Sunday 19th March** at the **Community Centre** at **2.30pm**. Afternoon tea will be served. The playground will be open..

Address at Community Service Held at Haven Amphitheatre 6.11.94

This morning I want to talk to you about this theatre. It is a beautiful place, isn't it? Enjoy it. That area under the tree ferns reminds me of a Gothic cathedral - take time to walk there. An early book on Castlecrag says of the theatre: *Many weird and wonderful special effects were used. Angels perched high in the trees, could appear in a flash of dazzling light by using coloured magnesium flares at the appropriate moment; God's voice lived on the cliff to the left of the stage and thundered down effectively when required.*

This reminds me of an urban myth regarding two fishermen who were out in the bay one night, drinking to keep warm of course, when their small boat sprang a leak and they quickly came ashore at the bottom of this gully to climb up and get some help. It's a rough climb and took the two oldtimers quite a while. Finally, exhausted, they reached the top. Unknown to them a play was in progress. At that moment the dazzling magnesium flares flashed and the angels began to sing. One turned to the other in great distress: *We've climbed too far Mate, we're in heaven!*

Trish and I first became involved in the Amphitheatre when the Castlecrag Conservation Society cleared the lantana and builders' rubbish from a gully down the road from our house and wanted to rebuild an outdoor theatre that Marion and Walter Burley Griffin had started about 1930, some 45 years before. It hadn't been used since about 1936 and had become overgrown. The Society approached Trish to revive the theatre and produce a play for the American Bicentenary the following year which was also the 100th anniversary of Burley Griffin's birth - 1976. Griffin was very talented and some say his wife Marion was even more so. Their work in Australia was exceptional so maybe this theatre **would** be worth rebuilding. I'd heard about it but understood that all traces had gone. All that was left was a gully with a dry creek bed and a few stones in rows forming some seats. There was no stage! They used the opposite bank (just under the stone wall supporting The Scarp roadway) with car headlights in The Barricade as lighting. A sloping bank didn't seem like the best solution to me - the audience would be more comfortable looking down on the players. So I asked my six-year-old daughter to help me by wandering around the gully playing her miniature violin to check the acoustics. It sounded best at the rock at the southern end of where the stage is now - that was it!! The stage must go there with seats stepping up in front of it in the classic form of the ancient Greek amphitheatre - on a somewhat smaller scale. Drawings were done -urgently of course - everyone wants their drawings done yesterday!

Approvals were obtained from Council with some difficulty after addressing full Council and fielding questions. We now had approval, a builder, a stonemason and the local volunteers BUT not enough money! What's new??

A play to perform in a few weeks, no theatre and lots of rain! Floods in the country meant the timber for the stage couldn't be delivered and it was too wet to work! The floods eventually subsided and we got our timber. The rain didn't stop completely, but long enough between showers to build the stage and seats with carpenters, stonemasons and volunteers falling all over one another. Some 500 locals helped in the Bicentenary effort, including the construction of the theatre and production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* which ran for 4 weekends with 9 performances. The majority the construction was done in 11 days - less than a week to the opening night - at a cost of \$11,000 approximately and we repaid our loans on time.

Those cushions you are sitting on were used in the first performance 18 years ago. Yes - this new theatre has been part of our community for the last 18 years. The Griffins would be pleased, I think. They were visionaries, well ahead of their time with a concern for the environment which is only now becoming widespread, and were enthusiastic advocates of community involvement.

History is now repeating itself. The community has been very busy here. As you can see we are finishing a reconstruction programme as the stage timbers were in need of replacement and an area for storage and dressing was necessary.

This theatre has significance not only because it is a continuation of a tradition and gives our children and ourselves a sense of belonging in a unique community, but it has taught all of us, particularly our children, what a community can achieve working together. Castlecrag is a very mixed community of many different types of people who can and do all work together for the common good. The theatre, then, is a symbol of the type of community Australia needs to take its place in the world of the future. Individual Aussies with initiative prepared to do something for the community and themselves. The Government can't and won't be able to look after us from cradle to grave.

The Griffins gave us a strong foundation for our community but many people over the years have helped build our home of Castlecrag, and today especially, we give thanks for their efforts and pray that their example will inspire those who follow to continue to build a better Castlecrag.

Robert Sheldon

Castlecrag School Update

Are you a frustrated resident regularly stuck in the 9am queue trying to get out of Castlecrag? The queue now stretches back to the School most days. As well as Glenaeon parents leaving after dropping their children, it also contains a number of Castlecrag parents whose justified concerns about bus travel forces them to drive their children to other schools. Pretty crazy, isn't it??

We have always known that the population exists to warrant a local public school. The many new parents of young children in Castlecrag can testify to this, and it is above all the reason we keep fighting for our school. The other overwhelming reason is of course the way the sale was accomplished (the price of \$825,000 was ridiculous for a parcel the size of 11 quarter-acre blocks, still zoned for medium-density housing), and the actions of Glenaeon since the sale.

We have now received from the Valuer-General, through the Freedom of Information provisions, many sensational new revelations which are potentially very damaging to Glenaeon.

Glenaeon is a school which boasts a strong moral and ideological framework, promising "An education for life". The question is whether they practise what they preach.

We had hoped to be able to share everything we have learned with everybody in Castlecrag by the time this issue of the newsletter was due. We are, however, seeking legal (and other expert) advice on what actions to take, so we don't want to go into print yet.

We can tell you that the Chairman of the Glenaeon School Council, Mr Tom Hartigan, assured the Valuer-General that he had reached agreement with our group. It was on this basis that the sale went ahead. This is not remotely true, as the many witnesses to all meetings know.

There are many other disturbing items. We will keep you informed in the next issue of *The Crag*.

Tracy Gilling (958 4884 after 6.30pm)
Convenor, SOS*Crag



Tree vandalism in Castlecrag

Residents in The Rampart on the Southern Escarpment of Castlecrag were appalled by the destruction of a clear line of trees by vandals, late last year. The trees were cut down on one property and its adjacent reserve, which meant that someone had trespassed onto the land and destroyed private property. **Prue and Keith Logan**, whose property is affected, are very concerned. Prue has been regenerating and growing new native species on their land and in the reserve for over ten years. *"Some of these trees that were ten metres high, I grew from seeds that my father gave me. We have nurtured them in the hope of recreating Burley Griffin's dream of Castlecrag as a landscape of natural beauty. After ten years of nurturing, these trees have now gone forever. Whoever did this has no regard for the beauty of Castlecrag or the Tree Preservation Order in Willoughby."*

Neighbour **Brian Smith** was very distressed: *"Vandalism such as this must be stopped. It is a brutal and selfish act."* The local residents are determined to put an end to this destruction of the bushland. They have now formed a watchful team in the area in order to find the culprit and protect our natural environment.

As president of the **Castlecrag Conservation Society**, **Harold Spies** commented: *We are all concerned about the loss of native vegetation and vandalism of this kind, particularly on properties such as this that adjoin the bushland reserves."*

Willoughby Councillor Sue Randle said: *Castlecrag is a strong community with a deep concern and care for its natural and built environment. People who live in this area and disregard the spirit of Castlecrag are selfish and destructive and are a threat to our local environment and its people."*

The Browning of Australia. Dr Mary White will speak about her recent book, the sequel to **The Greening of Gondwana**. The talk will be illustrated by slides and fossil specimens. **Willoughby Environmental Protection Association AGM, Monday 13 March 8pm, Artarmon Library. Queries 958 8569**

The next meeting of the **Castlecrag Conservation Society** will be the **Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 8th March 8pm at the Community Centre**. The Guest Speaker will be **Adrienne Kabos** who will speak on *Griffin's Vision of Castlecrag*. All welcome. For more information ring **Harold Spies 958 8569**.

The Indigenous Flora of Castlecrag

Part 1: Introduction and Closed Forest Communities

The magnificent deep salmon-coloured angophoras are a familiar sight all over Castlecrag. Their smooth trunks and the contorted limbs of older trees are a major element in the landscape from ridgetop to the water. Often, however, plants can occur in more restricted locations dependent on soil type, moisture, landform and aspect, which produce different and recognisable vegetation associations.

The bones: Bushland of the ridgetop, steep wooded hillsides and gullies of Castlecrag is typical of the Middle Harbour Catchment, and contributes so much to the character of where we live. It also provides habitat for fauna. The peninsula separates two sub-catchments, Sailor's Bay Creek, which runs into Sailor's Bay, and Sugarloaf Creek, which joins smaller Camp Creek behind the South Arm of Sugarloaf Bay. Both landform and type of vegetation are dependent on the underlying geology, for the most part Hawkesbury Sandstone of the Hornsby Plateau, one of three sandstone plateaux surrounding Port Jackson. This erosion-resistant sandstone is responsible for dramatic clifflines, crags, rock outcrops, overhangs and waterfalls. It also produces a thin infertile soil, deficient in nitrogen and phosphorous, which supports a flora world-renowned for its diversity and beauty.

A tough life: The more exposed the situation, the harder plants must struggle to survive. The hard dry leaves of the eucalypts, like the 'needles' of the casuarinas, sharp spikes of some acacias and hakeas, help conserve moisture. Acacias, Allocasuarinas and the various peas have adapted to low nitrogen by fixing nitrogen from the atmosphere, via bacteria in their root nodules. Other plants extract phosphates from the soil by an association with fungi in their root hairs eg the families *Epacridaceae* (*Epacris*, *Woolfsia*, *Styphelia* spp), *Myrtaceae* (eucalypts, angophoras, bottlebrush, teatree, lillypilly), *Rutaceae* (boronia, Crowea, Phebalium, *Eriostemon* spp). The same function is served by specialized 'proteoid' roots in the *Proteaceae* (*Banksia*, *Hakea*, *Grevillea*, *Lambertia*, *Persoonia* spp.).

The hard-leaved species are typical of the dry sclerophyll vegetation on the exposed ridgetops and middle to upper gully sides. The canopy of angophoras and eucalypts is sufficiently open to allow the development of dense understorey, drier and more open on the Northern Escarpment, more floriferous on the sheltered south-facing slopes. This association, referred to as open forest, characterises most of Castlecrag's bushland.

In the gullies richer soils containing humus and clays washed down from more fertile soils in Willoughby support different plant communities. The closed forest communities along the creeks change their composition where the creeks meet Sugarloaf Bay on Middle Harbour and the soils change to tidal sands and mud flats.

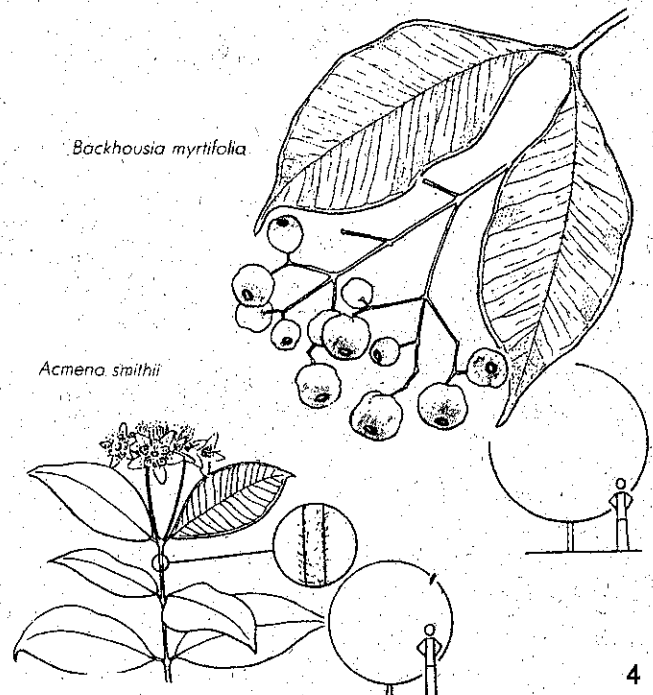
The definitive survey and mapping of Castlecrag's vegetation is yet to be done. This article cannot attempt to cover every species. Part 1 looks at the closed plant communities along the creeks and lower

sides of sheltered gullies. In the next *Crag*, Part 2 will describe the open forest and woodland remnants of the slopes and ridgetops.

Deep in the gullies: In the moist gullies along Camp Creek, Sugarloaf Creek and the Retreat Reserve, tall *Angophora costatas* emerge above a low closed forest. Its composition varies with subtle differences in soils, aspect and microclimate. Shale lenses in the sandstone of the Sugarloaf Creek waterfalls contribute to the magnificent coachwood forest which extends down beside the two larger falls and boulder-strewn cascades. The coachwoods (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) with their dark green serrated leaves and smooth grey lichen-mottled trunks, are a close relation of the Christmas Bush. They are a spectacular sight in the gully in December. There is some coachwood in the Retreat Reserve below The Bulwark. Smaller than coachwood, Lillypilly (*Acmena smithii*) is found in all three gullies. Deep cinnamon-coloured trunks are often multi-stemmed, the edible fruit pink and slightly sour. Smooth-trunked Water Gums (*Tristaniopsis laurina*) are present in the Retreat and in Camp Creek which also has the lillypilly look-alike *Backhousia myrtifolia*, their new growth tender pink. The unusual rainforest species *Cryptocarya microneura* is also found in Camp Creek.

Coachwood, Lillypilly and Water Gum are typical of the simple warm temperate rainforest communities found in deep gullies near the coast in Sydney. We are fortunate to still have these important remnants:

Alongside the creeks and natural drainage lines down the gully sides Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) is covered in fluffy pale cream wattle-like balls in late spring. It was used for wattle-and-daub construction in the days of early settlement. Port Jackson Figs (*Ficus rubiginosa*) cling to rocks, in cracks in the waterfalls, and even high up on exposed cliff sides. The tall shrub *Lomatia myricoides* is found beside the waterfalls and creeks but it keeps its feet dry.. (continues over >>>>>)



The gullies, including the more open Castlehaven Reserve below the Haven amphitheatre, support a variety of ferns. Tree ferns *Cyathea cooperi* (Straw Tree Fern) and *Cyathea australis* (Rough Tree Fern) can be distinguished by the markings on their trunks, which become more slender as they age. Shed fronds leave a pattern of diamond-shaped scars on *C. cooperi* while rough spiny frond remnants indicate *C. australis*, once much more common in Middle Harbour before the predations of plant hunters in earlier years. Other ferns typical of closed forest and nearby sheltered places are the large strappy epiphytes growing on trees and rocks - Elkhorn (*Platycerium bifurcatum*), Birds Nest Fern (*Asplenium australasicum*) and the less spectacular Rock Felt Fern (*Pyrosia rupestris*) with its small fleshy drought-resistant fronds. Delicate *Doodia caudata*, pink-tipped *Doodia aspera* (Rasp Fern) and maiden-hairs *Adiantum aethiopicum* and *A. hispidulum* are also found.

Vines seek out the canopy in sheltered gullies. Here Wonga Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandorana*) grows to a thick-stemmed liane which climbs to the top of closed forest trees where it shows off its mauve-throated cream flower sprays in spring. Of similar habit, but almost too vigorous, is the Water Vine or Native Grape (*Cissis hypoglauca*) which has large blue-green leaflets arranged in fives and edible black berries.

Sheltered margins: Upslope on the margins of closed forest the broad-leaved Cheese trees and Blueberry Ash occur. Cheese trees (*Glochidion ferdidandi*) are named for the small round flattened cream fruit, resembling little cheeses. The blue berries of *Eleocarpus reticulatus* follow its white lily-of-the-valley flowers. Blueberry Ash is slow growing. Many of the larger specimens in Castlecrag have died in recent years, whether due to age or changed weather patterns no-one is sure. Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*), thought of as a small tree, in the right spot can grow to the size of a eucalypt and when mature has a rough brown bark not unlike the Red Bloodwood (*Eucalyptus gummiferum*). Also found on the margins, is a root-suckering shrub with dull grey-green leaves, *Breyntia oblongifolia* looking a little like the exotic weedy *Cassia* but with alternate leaves. Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*) is a small tree which has proliferated in most protected urban bushland sites. Birds spread the sticky seeds from the yellow fruit, produced only by female plants. The clusters of white flowers produce a heavenly perfume, most marked in evenings in early spring.

The sheltered slopes also support ferns - Rainbow Fern or Soft Bracken (*Calochlaena dubia*) is common and, particularly in drier areas, the harsher Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) is present, both providing habitat for the Eastern Whip Bird. Stiff clumps of deeply divided Gristle Fern (*Blechnum cartalagineum*) are pale green and pink-tipped when young. Where there is moisture and some sun, great banks of wiry Coral Fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) scramble at the base of rock outcrops and cliff lines. Often associated with Coral Fern, Dog Rose (*Bauera rubioides*) has delicate flowers varying from white to deep pink. Large clumps of the sedge *Gahnia spp* are common in moist places often on hillsides. Its tall stems bearing tiny pendulous dark brown-black flowers rise above strappy sharp-edged leaves which should

only be touched with care. Good specimens can be seen below the Haven and on top of Tower Reserve.

Tidal influence: Where the creeks meet the sea mangroves appear. These are very sparse below The Retreat and Castlehaven Reserves. In the South Arm of Sugarloaf Bay the Grey Mangrove (*Avicenna marina* var. *australisica*) forms a magnificent healthy closed forest which is expanding as enriched sediment washes down Sugarloaf Creek. In the saltmarsh just behind the mangroves, various herbs are present including the bright-yellow flowers of Waterbuttons (*Cotula coronopifolia*), tiny white starlike Creeping Brookweed (*Samolus repens*) flowers and strange low succulent erect spikes of the Samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*). A fringe of salt-tolerant Swamp Oak (*Casuarina obesa*) lines the lower section of the creek beyond the mangroves where the water is brackish or tidal and extends back upstream to the original high tide mark. The casuarinas near the junction with the mangroves are festooned with the vigorous rainforest climber Common Silkpod (*Parsonia straminea*). Its name is derived from the silky hairs in its long slender seed pods. An excellent view of the closed mangrove forest, against the backdrop of Harold Reid Reserve, can be seen from the plateau behind Sunnyside Crescent.

References

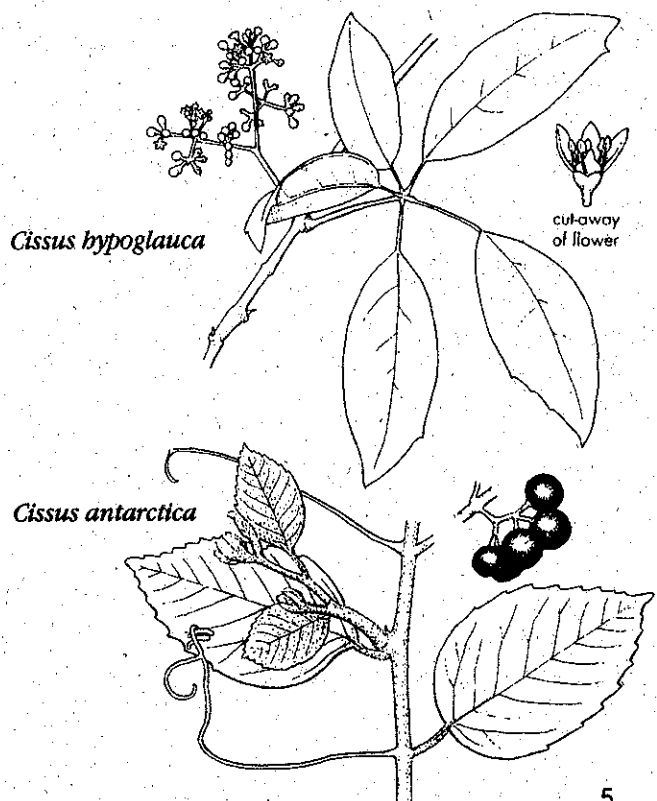
(will be given in full in Part 2)

Baker, M Corringham, R & Dark, J
Native plants of the Sydney region.
Three Sisters Productions P/L, Winmalee, 1986

Sainty, G, Abell, P & Jacobs, S
Burnum Burnum's WILDthings.
Sainty Associates, Sydney 1989

These books both contain excellent photographs.

Gay Spies 958 8569



Bus Shelter Update

I wish to inform those residents who were away during the Christmas break, why our bus shelter at the intersection of Edinburgh Road and Eastern Valley Way was removed. The RTA are in the process of widening the intersection at the 'gateway' to our suburb for the additional traffic chaos that has recently been created.

The current situation is that Council are negotiating with the RTA for the reinstatement of our native trees and gardens that were destroyed to enable the work on the intersection to be carried out. A new bus shelter with **no commercial advertising on it will be installed shortly**. The Progress Association felt the new shelters, with their illuminated advertising, did not complement the character of our suburb. In the bus shelters in other locations in Willoughby, guidelines for advertising that have been adopted by the State Government will be the benchmark, not those of the Advertising Council of Australia.

Helen Levett

Expressway Committee Report

The Committee has received a letter from Charles Hill, Manager, Dept of Planning, thanking us for our participation in the public workshop of the Section 22 Committee relating to the Warringah transport study. The letter states in part: *The report identified the community's strong preference for a public transport option, particularly a rail option and the overall preference for an option within the Mosman Corridor. The Committee generally supports a public transport option, however it has identified a number of outstanding issues requiring further technical investigations.*

Eric Kaye

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The Community Centre, The Rampart

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FRANCIS, D	Wild Horses
RUSHDIE, S	East, West
DIBDIN, M	Dead Lagoon
DOBBS, M	The Touch of Innocents
HIGGINS, J	On Dangerous Ground
ROBERTS, M	Flesh and Blood
DEIGHTON, L	Faith
COOKSON, C	The Tinker's Girl
IRVING, J	A Son of the Circus
BINCHY, M	The Glass Lake
SHAW, P	Cry of the Song Bird
BOGARDE, D	A Period of Adjustment
MURRELL, D	Desperate Measures
MORTIMER, J	Murderers and Friends
GORDIMER, N	None to Accompany Me

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St James Castlecrag is here to serve the community and if anyone (a member of our congregation or not) would like us to pray for a problem in their life, please call the Parish Office at 958 4279 - leave your name and number and someone will get back to you.

Clean Up Day Sunday 5th March

Sugarloaf Creek site - entry via block next to 63 Sunnyside Crescent. Wear strong shoes, hat, gloves. Start 9am. Enquiries site supervisors Gay and Harold Spies 958 8569

I/We wish to become members of/renew our membership of/ the Castlecrag Progress Association, for which I/We enclose subscription and/or donation (membership fees are renewable from 1 February each year):

Family \$10; single \$5; fixed income/student/concession \$3

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Please send to the Treasurer, Diana Jones, Box 6/77 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag

The Crag is edited on behalf of the Castlecrag Progress Association by Helen Levett (958 3510) and Kerry McKillop (958 4516).

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Children's quiz

This is the second part of the quiz which appeared in the last issue of **The Crag**. The answers to these questions are the names of streets or reserves in the part of Castlecrag which Walter Burley Griffin designed. As you will discover, they are parts of a castle and some of them may be quite close to your home. In Castlecrag, walkways connect the reserves and allow easy and quick ways for you to cut across our long and sometimes steep roads.

1. A back door or side entrance to a castle.
2. An outer defence or gate house
3. A corner turret at the top of the castle.
4. A place of security in the castle.
5. An opening in the parapet for gun emplacement.
6. A windowed area giving a view from the castle.
7. The stronghold of the castle.
8. A barrier obstructing a passage.
9. A port of refuge in the castle.
10. An area in the castle which has no defences.

The answers to the quiz will be printed in the next **Crag**.

L.J.HOOKER CASTLECRAG

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