



News Update

April 1994

Lecture: Griffin's American Landscape Architecture 9 June 8pm (Thursday) at GSDA No.1 Dwelling, 136 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag. The lecture will be given by Assistant Professor Christopher Vernon from the Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois, who will be briefly visiting Sydney at this time. We are very grateful to Prof. Vernon for so generously offering to give this lecture and to Historic Houses Trust (HHT) for providing the venue. Admission \$3 members, \$5 visitors.

1920s Promotional Film of Castlecrag Tuesday 19 April 8pm

The film produced in the 1920s by Walter Burley Griffin's company, the Greater Sydney Development Association to promote the Castlecrag Estate, will be shown at the Walter Burley Griffin Society's next General Meeting on Tuesday 19th April 8pm at Castlecrag Community Centre at the corner of The Postern and The Rampart, Castlecrag. Willoughby City Library is kindly lending us the film which is on video. It is a wonderful film of Castlecrag in the 1920s, its bushland setting, Griffin houses and panoramic views of Middle Harbour complete with a short ballet sequence performed beneath the angophoras and eucalypts. All welcome!

Cooks' Tour Sunday 17th April 10.30am

Historic Houses Trust of NSW has organised this tour of Griffin's kitchens as part of their 1994 theme of domestic revolution. The tour will include the beautifully intact kitchen at the Winter House, Telopea, and the kitchens of the Creswick House, Cheong House and GSDA No.1 Dwelling at Castlecrag. Cost is \$25 including lunch and bus transport and bookings are essential (phone 692 8366). See enclosed program for details of this and other HHT activities.

"Jervis Bay City Estate"

A coloured lithograph of this subdivision plan signed by W B Griffin Landscape Architect and dated 1917-8.26 has been discovered amongst the archives of the Willoughby Historical Society. The large 2'6" x 3'6" litho showing a birdseye view of Jervis Bay and the city estate was to advertise the Auction Sale of this land on Monday 10th December 1917 by Hardie and Gorman at 133 Pitt Street, Sydney. It is decoratively treated and in excellent condition and on the reverse side is a location map of the planned city, photos and much written detail of the site, its services, history and endorsement by various authorities. (continued overleaf)....

New Book "Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag" See back page for details.

It will be on display at the Willoughby Historical Society's museum *Boronia* at 58 Johnson Street, Chatswood, on Sunday 17th April between 2pm-4pm to celebrate Heritage Week. Also at that time one Victorian house and four Federation houses of National Trust classification will be open for inspection just along the road from the museum. Inspection is by ticket only and these are available in advance from Willoughby City Library or from the Historical Society on the day between 2pm and 4pm. Adults \$5, concession \$3, and family concession available.

Heritage Frontier for Willoughby

We welcome Willoughby City Council's new Heritage Advisor Jennifer Hill and Heritage Planner Elizabeth Gibson and congratulate Willoughby Council on their appointment which is a new initiative and long overdue given that Willoughby City has some superb built and natural heritage including that of the Griffins.

We also congratulate Willoughby Council for putting the draft regulations concerning heritage on display and receiving public comment. These include the Draft Heritage and Conservation Local Environmental Plan (LEP), the Draft Development Control Plan (DCP) for development adjacent to Bushland, and the Draft Heritage and Conservation Development Control Plan. Comments on the first two have closed already and comments for the Draft Heritage and Conservation DCP close at the end of April.

This Society fully supports the aims and objectives of these draft heritage documents and hopes that with a little refinement of a few details that they will be fully embraced by Willoughby City Council and Willoughby City residents.

Marion Mahony Griffin

Anna Rubbo is working on a biography of Marion Mahony Griffin in which she is exploring Marion's contribution to the architectural and cultural past of the US and Australia. She would appreciate any insights, fragments of information, documents, photos, stories etc that Griffin Society members might have. Address: Department of Architecture, University of Sydney, NSW 2006. Phone 692 3474.

GSDA No. 1 Dwelling

The conservation work on the Griffin house at 136 Edinburgh Road Castlecrag has been progressing steadily and Historic Houses Trust of NSW reports that it is "now nearing completion with the new kitchen benches and bathroom fittings being installed, with generous assistance from Winnings Pty Ltd and Renditions Tiles Pty Ltd. The cottage's characteristic flat roof has been fully reclad and waterproofed, and extensive repointing to the massive stone walls is complete. Walter Burley Griffin's original spatter painted finishes are being prepared for reinstatement in the Porch, Living Room and Dining Room, sponsored by The Painted Finish".

Last November HHT submitted a Development Application to Willoughby Council for a second dwelling on the site. This was displayed at the open day organised by HHT at the house on 28th November last and it created some controversy with objections from the Castlecrag Progress Association about the subdivision, dual occupancy, potential for further development of both blocks, and roof design. The owners of the adjacent Griffin house, the GSDA No.2 Dwelling, also objected strongly to the subdivision and the interposing of a separate entity and separate ownership between the first two Griffin houses in Castlecrag, and the potential for further development on both sites.

The Society fully supports HHT's new initiative of temporary acquisition designed to stem the sad demise of so much of the State's heritage. While the Society believes the ideal would be for the house and its garden to be conserved without additions, we appreciate the financial constraints of HHT and its need to recover expenses incurred in the purchase and extensive restoration of the Griffin house.

Thus the Society believes that the siting and small size of the planned dwelling are good and that a separate dwelling is preferable to an addition because it compromises the Griffin House far less. It was pleasing that HHT sought comments from the public on three different plan proposals at an open day at the house on 1st August and also that HHT met and consulted with the Society on the siting of the planned dwelling.

However, it was disappointing that it went from that stage to the DA being lodged with Willoughby Council without any community consultation on the elevations and design details. Thus the Society's response to the DA was that the roof and elevations needed further refinement (so as to meet the excellent criteria set by HHT of being diminutive in form as well as diminutive in scale) and that community title was more appropriate than subdivision of the land under SEPP25. Even though community title is normally applied to large developments, the Society believes it would have been worthwhile exploring because it would have required the two owners to share responsibility and care of the environment of both houses, thus being a very worthwhile heritage initiative reducing the potential for fences and necessitating the establishment of a management association. However, a HHT spokesperson said that real estate agents had advised that community title would reduce the resale price by up to \$60,000.

Following the lodgement of the DA at Council the Society requested to meet with HHT which HHT then organised. It was pleasing that the DA plans were subsequently amended to reduce the car spaces from four to two; to change the colour from terracotta to natural colours that harmonise with the adjacent Griffin dwellings; and to slightly reduce the roof "lantern". The Society would have liked to see further refinements to the design but HHT stated that they would have meant expensive delays which were too costly for HHT to bear.

Following a Council site inspection on 5th February Willoughby Council approved the DA at their meeting on 14th March. In the words of HHT "The new cottage designed by Bruce Rickard to be built beside GSDA Dwelling No.1 has been approved by the Heritage Council of NSW and Willoughby City Council with support from the National Trust and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. Construction will begin in May. It is expected that both houses will be auctioned later this year. Open days will be held in spring."

Positive and negative covenants will be permanently attached to the title of the land to ensure the ongoing conservation of the property and to restrict future development in accordance with the Conservation Plan. This is very commendable and the Society hopes that the covenants will require the owner of the Griffin house to have at least one open day for the public per year.

The success of HHT's bold new heritage initiative of temporary acquisition is extremely important and although we believe the design proposal for the second dwelling at 136 Edinburgh Road falls short of the ideal we nevertheless wish to encourage and support this important new initiative that we hope will be replicated frequently as it is an excellent alternative to the State's heritage going under the developer's hammer.

Threatening Tollway

Once again an expressway proposal through Castlecrag has reared its ugly head to threaten Griffin's vision of urban living in harmony with the natural landscape. Although the expressway corridor does not go through the Griffin subdivision at Castlecrag it nevertheless goes very close to it along the full length of the Castlecrag peninsula and crosses Middle Harbour to Seaforth and the Warringah peninsula with a huge bridge. Such an expressway would have an appalling visual impact as well as associated noise and air pollution. The tollway, if built, would also go through the Willoughby Incinerator site, the only intact incinerator designed by Griffin left in Sydney.

Last year the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads, Mr Baird, indicated support for a public transport link such as light rail "which will encourage thousands of commuters to leave their cars at home". So it came as a shock when his department announced on 4th April that a tollway appeared to be the best option financially. It seems an odd response for a Minister for Transport to make when State Transit and City Rail have announced considerable downturns in patronage mainly as a result of the tollways and the Harbour Tunnel, opened in 1992.

It is about time that politicians considered the electorates' desire for long-term environmental costs to be taken into account and not just the short-term financial costs. It was good to see Mr Peter Collins, Member for Willoughby, saying that he "personally would be strongly opposed to any above-ground solution which cuts a swathe through Castlecrag". Let's hope that reason prevails in all quarters of the government.

Lecture on Design Intentions of Griffin in Castlecrag

Thursday 28th April 6pm for 6.30pm to be given by Prof. James Weirick at *Tusculum*, 3 Manning Street, Potts Point. The lecture is organised by the Architecture Society and admission is \$5 or \$3 for members of the Architecture Society.

National Trust Walk of Griffin Houses at Castlecrag

The National Trust's After Hours Committee has organised this tour for Sunday 5th June. Prof. James Weirick and Adrienne Kabos will be the guides for this walk. Tickets are \$25 or \$50 for a family and are already almost fully sold out. If you would like more information telephone Rob Nosworthy on 411 1239 between 7.30pm and 9pm.

"Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag"

This book, to be released in two months time, superbly documents the history of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin's work and life at Castlecrag, Sydney, including town planning, architecture and community activities. It traces the acquisition of the Castlecrag estates, the establishment of the Greater Sydney Development Association, the ideals that Griffin had for the estates, their townplanning and architecture, and the community life and activities Walter and Marion fostered. Extracts from journal articles, lectures and letters written by Walter and Marion, enrich the text and give great insights. Each of Griffin's houses at Castlecrag is described in detail accompanied by early photos, and plans of each. In all there are over 100 illustrations including many previously unpublished photographs taken in the 1920s and by Max Dupain in the 1960s.

The book has been produced with the assistance of a dollar for dollar grant from the Heritage Council of NSW and generous financial assistance from the Friends of Willoughby Library, along with the Society's funding.

SPECIAL OFFER: The book is a quality publication with soft cover and will cost \$25 but a special pre-publication price of \$18 is offered to members whose payment is received by Friday 20th May. Payment can be made by cheque attached to the form below and posted to the Secretary, or by paying the Treasurer at the next general meeting on Tuesday 19th April (see details on front page). Books will be available for collection at the book launch to be in June at a date yet to be fixed. All members will receive a personal invitation to the book launch. For those members who want the book posted to them an extra \$4 per book is necessary for postage and packaging.

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER

I wish to order a copy/copies of *Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag* at the special pre-publication price.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Enclosed is a cheque for \$ _____ (please tick appropriate box) for:

- 1 copy at \$22 including postage
- 2 copies for \$43 including postage
- 1 copy at \$18 which I will collect at book launch
- 2 copies for \$35 which I will collect at book launch

Please make cheques payable to the Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated and send to the Secretary, 13 Sunnyside Crescent, Castlecrag NSW 2068.