

News Update

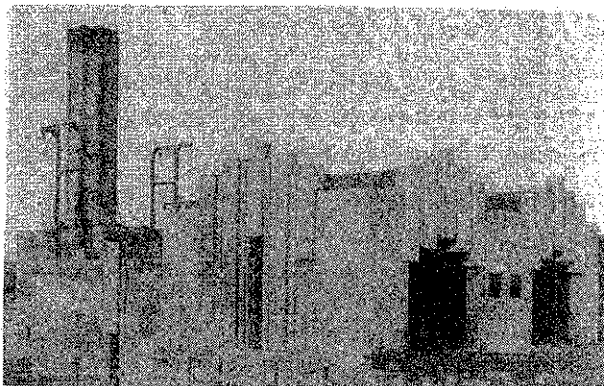
April 2002

Glebe Incinerator development proposal

As reported in the last newsletter, Walter Burley Griffin's Glebe Incinerator and colonnaded sheds and the adjoining John Fletcher container site on Blackwattle Bay, Glebe, Sydney were the site for a major residential design competition.

Since last November, Australand Holding Limited and the winning architectural firm Synman, Justin & Bialek have further developed the design proposal and submitted it as a Development Application to Leichhardt Council last month.

What remains of the Glebe Incinerator is a very significant element, but only a fragment of the original. The Society believes that it is most important that any new work should indicate the full scope and scale of the whole original building and enhance its architectural integrity.



Glebe Incinerator photographed in 1932. Reproduced from "The Griffins in Australia and India: The complete works and projects of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin" edited by Jeff Turnbull and Peter Y. Navaretti.

The development proposal will go on public exhibition this month at Glebe Library at 186 Glebe

Point Road. Comments to Leichhardt Council about the proposal will close at the end of April.

Self-guided Drive/Pedal 'n' Walking Tour of Eric Nicholls work, Sunday 21 April 2.00pm

Meet at corner of McClelland St and Warrane Rd, Willoughby at the Willoughby Park Centre also known as Chowne Hall which was designed by Eric Nicholls. Here you will be given a brochure produced by Willoughby City Council so that you can explore for yourself the legacy of the architect Eric Nicholls (1902 - 65) in the suburbs of Middle Cove, Castlecrag and Willoughby.

Nicholls was Walter Burley Griffin's partner and carried on the office after Walter's death in 1937. Nicholls designed many residences in Willoughby City, and also Sydney's first skyscraper Caltex House (now radically altered) in Kent Street. He was also Honourary Town Planner / Architect to Willoughby Council. Inquiries: tel. 02 9777 1000 culture@willoughby.nsw.gov.au
Admission Free

Exhibition: *A vision splendid: how the Griffins imagined Australia's capital*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 12 April to 1 September 2002.

April to September is going to be a very special time for lovers of the Griffins' works. The National Archives of Australia is displaying all of the Griffins' entry in the federal capital competition in their exhibition, "*A vision splendid: how the Griffins imagined Australia's capital*".

The twelve beautiful drawings, produced in nine frantic weeks in the Chicago winter of 1911, are rarely on display, because they are so fragile and are damaged by exposure to light. So a special time indeed!

The drawings are the central focus, but the exhibition also puts the drawings in some cultural and historical context, so that the Griffins' ideas and style are not displayed in a vacuum. Images of Chicago slums, buildings from the famous Columbian Exposition and of Letchworth Garden City are included in the display because these are images that were part of the Griffins' "thinking world" when Walter was designing and Marion was delineating their city. It's where they were "coming from".

Also on display is the material that the Griffins used for the design - the contents of the competition box, maps, the Coulter cyclorama and the plaster model of the site. So it is possible to look from these elements to what the Griffins made of them - the design itself. It is remarkable, for example, to look from the rather green cyclorama and the even greener plaster model to the sunbleached "Australian" colours of Marion's drawings. Did their friend Miles Franklin give her some clues? (We have a photograph of Brindabella Valley in the exhibition).

The exhibition also includes a brief version of Walter's bitter struggles with the Australian government officials. That story is part of the Archives collection, told in numerous beige files, whose harmless appearance belies the struggles they record.

All through the exhibition are the voices of Marion and Walter, using quotations taken mostly from *The Magic of America*. Through this, it is hoped that the visitor will not only be given a view of some wonderful architectural works, but some feeling for the personalities of the remarkable people who produced them.

Dr Jay Arthur, Curator, National Archives of Australia.

Editor's note: The exhibition is at the National Archives of Australia, Canberra in Queen Victoria Terrace, which is the road that runs behind Old Parliament House. The opening hours are 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week, and admission is free.

New book: *Canberra following Griffin*

Canberra following Griffin: A Design History of Australia's National Capital is a fascinating, in-depth account of what happened to Walter Burley Griffin's vision for Canberra, and the later developments that created the Canberra we know today. A design masterpiece in itself, the book contains over 200 architectural plans, drawings and maps, many of which have rarely been seen before. The original drawings that Griffin submitted for the Federal Capital Design Competition will be on display in our Canberra building from April until May in an exhibition called *A Vision Splendid: How the Griffins Imagined Australia's Capital*.

Canberra following Griffin is essential reading for professional town planners, architects, historians

and all those interested in the design of our national capital. To purchase a copy of this limited edition book priced at \$90, telephone (02) 6212 3609 or email naasales@naa.gov.au.

(reprinted with permission from *Memento*, No.19 the newsletter of the National Archives of Australia).

Tribute to the late Professor Paul Reid and launch of his book, 6.00pm 27 May 2002

The National Archives of Australia and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects - NSW Chapter invite Walter Burley Griffin Society members to the launch of *Canberra Following Griffin: A Design History of Australia's National Capital* by Paul Reid. This new publication will be launched by Professor James Weirick and will be followed by a brief tribute to Paul Reid, well-known Australian architect and academic, noted Griffin scholar and former Chief Architect at the National Capital Development Commission.

The tribute and book launch are to be held in the RAI Auditorium at Tusculum, 3 Manning Street, Potts Point, Sydney.

RSVP Matthew Devine, Public Affairs Coordinator Royal Australian Institute of Architects - NSW Chapter tel: 02 9356 2955, 02 9368 2206 direct email: matthewd@raia.com.au

Land and Environment Court upholds Griffin no-fence vision

To conserve the Griffin vision and heritage values in the Griffin Conservation Area at Castlecrag, Sydney the Development Control Plan for Heritage and Conservation (DCP 19) appropriately states "no fencing on boundaries adjoining reserves and walkways".

Thus when a 1.8m high paling fence was built without development consent from Willoughby City Council on the boundary with the walkway at 21 The Rampart in the Griffin Conservation Area, the Council issued a demolition order to the owners. The owners of 21 The Rampart took the Council to the Land and Environment Court to appeal against the order and to apply for a building certificate to be granted for their fence.

Willoughby City Council is to be congratulated on defending DCP 19 in the Land and Environment Court.

In court for the Council, evidence was given by Professor James Weirick, professor of landscape architecture and leading authority on Walter Burley Griffin, by Stephen Czeref, consultant town planner, Martin O'Donoghue, architect and neighbour of the applicant, and Adrienne Kabos, Castlecrag resident and president of the Walter Burley Griffin Society which wrote one of the number of letters notifying Council of the illegal fence.

Commissioner Nott in his decision handed down last month quotes heavily from Professor Weirick's

A VISION SPLENDID
HOW THE GRIFFINS IMAGINED AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL

See Walter Burley Griffin's original design and
Marion Mahony Griffin's exquisite artwork that
won the 1912 design competition for Australia's
new capital, on show in the city they depicted.
An architectural time capsule from the Territory birth.

12 APRIL – 1 SEPTEMBER 2002

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written statement and evidence: "The walkway, which extends around the 'parapet' of a dramatic sandstone cliff, forms part of the extensive network of paths and reserves designed in 1921 by the renowned architect and landscape architect Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937) as a unique attribute of the Castlecrag Estate. The 'parapet' walkway generally affords views over the valley of Sailors Bay Creek to Northbridge and beyond ...

In a much quoted statement, Griffin declared: *'I want Castlecrag to be built so that each individual can feel that the whole landscape is his. No fences, no boundaries, no red roofs to spoil the Australian landscape; these are some of the features that will distinguish Castlecrag ...'*

Most of the reserves and walkways at Castlecrag retain their beautiful landscape uninterrupted by fences.. However prior to the introduction of DCP 19 in 1996 a number of unsympathetic fences including high solid ones had been built along some of the walkways giving them an alley-like character.

Commissioner Nott in his judgment states that he accepts the evidence of the Council's consultant planner Mr Czeref that "the applicant's fence embodies a solid style that is inconsistent with the philosophical basis of the Griffin conservation area. If the solid fence had been the subject of a development application that had been properly considered by the council, it would not have been appropriate to have granted approval for it."

The Commissioner ruled that the Council's demolition notice was invalid because it did not give sufficient reason for making the order, but that if the notice had been valid he would have confirmed the Council's demolition order on the merits of the case. He declined to direct the Council to issue a building certificate, leaving it open for Council to issue a valid demolition order.

Roman Cypress plantation, Canberra, severely damaged by fire

In 1911 the Commonwealth initiated actions towards the introduction of afforestation and conservation programs at the site for the National Capital. These were in response to adverse reports on the condition of the site following some 90 years of European settlement.

Horticulturist Charles Weston provided initial advice from Sydney on this work in 1911 and 1912. In May 1913 he moved to Canberra to take up a permanent full-time position as Officer-in-Charge, Afforestation Branch. Between then and 1920 he established a nursery and arboretum and pursued some 15 different afforestation projects on the areas surrounding the National Capital site. He also introduced measures to reduce the destruction by the settlers of native vegetation through ring-barking and lopping.

From 1915 onwards Walter Griffin started to influence parts of Weston's afforestation program. In particular he pursued six projects in association with

Weston relating them particularly to his plan for Canberra. These were:

- Three Green Hills (Glenloch area)
- Cork Oaks (Glenloch area)
- Redwoods (Pialligo area)
- Coloured Hill - Mt Mugga Eucalypts
- Coloured Hill - Red Hill Bottle-brushes
- Coloured Hill - Mt Pleasant Eucalypts and wattles

Until late in 2001 these six plantings had survived the past 80 years although in most cases reduced in extent by drought, development pressures etc. Only two of the Three Green Hills plantations have survived. The Cork Oaks and the Redwoods are on the Register of the National Estate.

On Christmas Day 2001 the "Roman Cypress Hill" (one of the two surviving Green Hills) was virtually totally destroyed by a major fire which had swept through the adjacent commercial pine plantations. In my view there is no chance of recovery and natural seeding regeneration, while possible, is unlikely.

On the same day a fire swept through the bottle-brushes on Red Hill. At this stage this plantation appears to be recovering by natural processes (epicormic shoots).

Just prior to Christmas a smaller and much less serious fire occurred in a small part of the Redwoods. It would appear that damage will be minimal.

Dr John Gray

The Society's new committee

At the thirteenth Annual General Meeting of the Society held on Sunday 25 November 2001 at the Castlecrag Community Centre, Sydney the following committee members were elected:

President: Adrienne Kabos
Vice President: Professor James Weirick
Treasurer: Andrew Kirk
Secretary: Kerry McKillop

Committee:

Emeritus Professor Carrick Chambers,
Stephen Davies, John Kabos, Paul Melchert,
Martin O'Donoghue, Howard Rubie,
Akky Van Ogtrop, Anne Watson.

The Society welcomes heritage consultant Stephen Davies, and architects Paul Melchert and Martin O'Donoghue to the committee.

Sincere thanks go to retiring committee members Associate Professor Anna Rubbo who is taking sabbatical leave this year in the USA to complete her book on Marion Mahony Griffin, and also to John McInerney whose expertise and dedication has been of invaluable assistance to the Society and Griffin heritage generally. In January this year John took on the mantle of National President of the Royal Australian Planning Institute, shortly to be known as the Planning Institute of Australia. The Society thanks him most sincerely for his wonderful assistance over the last six years.

Following the formal part of the AGM *New Edens*, an ABC Gardening Australia program on the landscape architecture of Edna Walling and Walter Burley Griffin including the garden of the Eric Pratten House, was screened. After the screening Mr Peter Watts, author of a biography of Edna Walling, and the Director of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW (HHT) which did the conservation work at GSDA No.1 Dwelling, Castlecrag commented on the film. He described how Edna Walling's inspiration for her garden designs came from her love of the English countryside, while the Griffins showed a greater understanding of the Australian landscape.

In July last year HHT purchased the drawing on silk of GSDA No.1 and No.2 Dwellings, and Mr Watts kindly brought it to the meeting to the delight of all those present.

News Update editors Adrienne Kabos (02 9958 2060) and Kerry McKillop (02 9958 4516).

Contributions are welcomed.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____
Phone: _____
Date: _____
Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheque payable to
Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. and post it to
The Treasurer at 15 The Citadel, Castlecrag, NSW 2068.



MEMBERSHIP

The Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. was established in 1988 and aims to create a greater awareness and appreciation of the Griffins' town planning and architecture and thereby encourage the conservation of their internationally significant work. The Society produces a newsletter and regularly organises meetings with guest speakers. If you would like to join the Society in Australia fill out the form opposite.

Individual	\$ 25pa
Student	\$ 5pa
Individual overseas	\$ 35pa
Community organisations	\$ 25pa
Business organisations	\$ 50pa