

News Update 41

July 2005

GRIFFIN/CLAMP BUS TOUR, SYDNEY
Saturday 16 July 2005 10am – 5.30pm
Bookings essential (see enclosed flyer)

This promises to be a fascinating one-day coach tour to inspect surviving projects of the Griffin/Clamp partnership in Sydney. Please see the enclosed flyer for more information and booking details. Please book early to avoid disappointment.

NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE AWARD

The Society has won a National Trust Heritage Award (and stylish-looking glass trophy) for the *The Griffin Legacy: Castlecrag Heritage* brochure published last year by the Society with the assistance of a NSW Heritage Office grant. We won the Education, Community Groups, section.

At the presentation of the awards during the Heritage Festival in April, the National Trust President the Hon Barry O'Keefe AM QC said "It is particularly gratifying that ... we have received a record number of entries ... of unprecedented standard. I am delighted to say that, this year, judging the awards has been a more difficult task than ever before." Many thanks to the team that wrote and produced this brochure, namely James Weirick, Carrick Chambers, John Kabos, Andrew Kirk and Adrienne Kabos.

The brochure has been distributed by Willoughby City Council to the residents of the Griffin Conservation Area in Castlecrag, and is available at all the Castlecrag real estate agents.

MARION MAHONY GRIFFIN AWARD

Congratulations to architect and Walter Burley Griffin Society member Beverley Garlick for winning this year's Marion Mahony Griffin Award.

This is awarded annually by the Royal Australian

Institute of Architects to acknowledge the significant and varied role women play in the profession of architecture. It differs from other RAI Awards in that it recognizes a distinctive body of work carried out over a period of at least five years.

MARION MAHONY GRIFFIN SYMPOSIUM IN UNITED STATES

This one day symposium will be held at the Block Gallery, North Western University on 5 November. Directed by Professor David Van Zanten, speakers will include Associate Professor Anna Rubbo, Christopher Vernon, Professor James Weirick, Professor Paul Kruty and Alice Leach.

WILLOUGHBY INCINERATOR UPDATE

Updating our last Newsletter, Willoughby City Council addressed the conservation issues relating to the Griffin-Nicholls incinerator in Willoughby at its meeting on 14 March 2005. Council resolved:

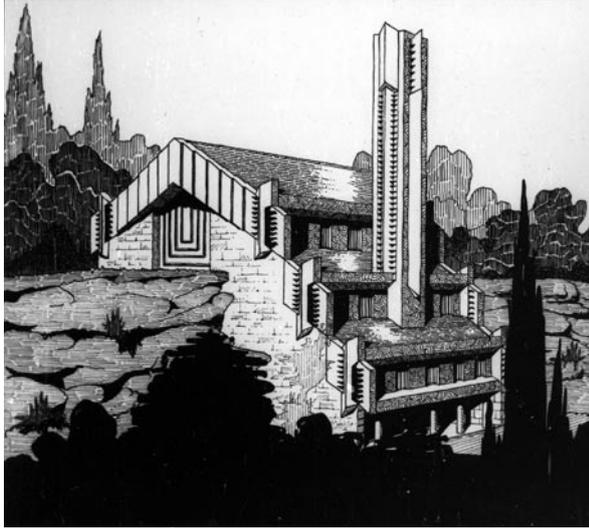
1. As a matter of urgency, Council call tenders and engage a suitably qualified firm of heritage architects to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Willoughby Incinerator.
2. Council undertake to fund the currently identified structural repair works associated with the chimney.
3. Council serve notice of breach of the current lease to the mortgagee in possession. The specific breaches of the lease would include, but not limited to, Clause 2C (namely "renovate and restore to its original external architecture in accordance with the development consent No. 79/111 & with the plans numbers TP sheets 1 to 4 dated 16 April 1979").

The mortgagee in possession shall have three months, from receipt of CMP documentation, to undertake to remedy these breaches in accordance with the CMP. The mortgagee in possession shall

then have 12 months to complete the works, which remedy these breaches in accordance with the CMP. Failure to undertake, or complete the remedy of these breaches within the above time frames will result in immediate termination of the lease.

Council received two expressions of interest from heritage architects to prepare the CMP and the firm Godden Mackay Logan has been selected to carry out this work.

Bob McKillop



Photograph of drawing of Willoughby Incinerator courtesy Max Dupain.

GRIFFIN NEWS FROM CANBERRA

(Di Jay, CEO of the Planning Institute of Australia and President of the Canberra Chapter of the Society, has kindly contributed the following Canberra news items.)

Griffin Legacy Forum

The Canberra Chapter hosted a forum on 2 March at the National Museum of Australia on the Griffin Legacy document produced by the National Capital Authority. There had been a great deal of local press coverage and debate accompanying its release. Members of the public and those with an interest in the Griffins were keen to better understand its content, to add to knowledge and understanding of their work, and to explain the implications for Canberra in the future. The speakers were:

- Stuart McKenzie – National Capital Authority: *Why has the NCA produced the Griffin Legacy?*
- Neil Savery – ACT Planning Authority: *How does the Griffin Legacy fit with the Canberra Spatial Plan?*
- Tony Powell – Planning Consultant & formerly National Capital Development Authority: *Is the Griffin Legacy the appropriate way forward for Canberra?*
- Stephen Byron – Canberra Airport & Property Developer: *Commercial and property implications of the Griffin Legacy – what does industry make of the propositions it contains?*
- Di Firth – Landscape Architect & University of Canberra: *Is it sustainable, a blight or an improvement in the Canberra landscape?*

The economics and capacity of Canberra, as a living city, to take the city closer to the Griffin model, were central to the debate. And there was some lamenting of the missed opportunities created by past decisions - such as locating an industrial area in Fyshwick which was to have been a residential area with wonderful views over the never-created East Basin Lake.

The propositions, consistent with the Griffin vision, are at least now on the agenda. But even Griffin would have appreciated the need for a sound business case for the development of Constitution Avenue, State Circle and city west. The propositions create a potential platform for the future, with greater understanding of Griffin principles to guide planning decisions in Canberra.

Weirick tour of Canberra

We were delighted that Professor James Weirick, President of the Society, agreed to host a Canberra tour for the Chapter on 22 May 2005. It was a great success and was fully booked almost immediately!

The trip began with Mt Ainslie where James provided a great deal of information about the Griffin plan for Canberra. We then traveled to Mt Pleasant where James provided new insights even for those long-time Canberra residents on the tour.

Next stop was General Bridges' grave designed and built to Walter Burley Griffin's specifications. We then drove along Anzac Parade and Constitution Avenue where James provided more history and descriptions of the Griffin vision.

Griffin planting designs for City Hill were outlined before we visited the Canberra Hotel, noting the façade, low wings and bungalow effect as influenced by Griffin and the Prairie School of Architecture. A short stop at Camp Hill between the two Parliament House buildings was followed by Telopea Park, again, part of the Griffin plan.

The tour ended at the Redwood grove of Californian Sequoias near Fairbairn Airport, part of the proposed plantings on the edge of the huge upper lake shown in Griffin's design, but never built.



Professor James Weirick in the Redwood forest, near Fairbairn Airport, Canberra

Forthcoming Canberra events

A site tour of the proposed Canberra arboretum, which we hope will be led by representatives of the winning team of landscape architects, will be held in September 2005.

GRIFFIN NEWS FROM MELBOURNE

(Peter Navaretti, architectural historian and co-author of *The Griffins in Australia and India: The complete works and projects of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin* (1998) has kindly contributed the following Melbourne news items.)

Griffin's Capitol Theatre in Melbourne

In 2002, The Capitol Theatre was judged as one of Melbourne's Greatest Treasures, by a group of academics and public personalities, who were selected by the Melbourne Herald-Sun. The 'treasure' with the highest number of votes was the Shrine of Remembrance, equal second were The Capitol Theatre, the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the Melbourne Park Sporting Venues.

In late 2004, the ceiling of the original Capitol Theatre entrance foyer was restored and repainted in the heritage colours of the foyer ceiling, which today is the ceiling of the entrance to Capitol Arcade. This restoration work was initiated and paid for by the Capitol House Body Corporate.

On Tuesday 26th October 2004, the theatre was packed to capacity, and the audience was not disappointed. They saw the one and only Melbourne screening of the restored version of Longford's *The Sentimental Bloke* based on the verses by C.J Dennis. The silent movie was invigorated by the magnificent musical score specially written by Jen Anderson and performed live by The Larrikins, her four-person instrumental ensemble. The film has been restored by the National Film and Sound Archive. We hope there will be many more screenings such as this.

From 23 March until 17 April 2005, the theatre was host to the Melbourne Comedy Festival.

Essendon Incinerator re-opens as Visual Arts Complex

The Essendon Municipal Incinerator had its third official opening on Sunday 15 February 2004. It first opened in August 1930, just one month later than the almost-identical Kuring-gai Municipal Incinerator. Its second opening was in the 1980s, as a drama theatre for Wests Theatre Company, who by their success have now outgrown the Incinerator building, except for rehearsals.

The Essendon Incinerator and adjoining Council Stores Building have been sympathetically refurbished into a community-based visual arts complex, with art studio workspace for hire and a gallery space for the exhibition and/or sale of local artists' work. The refurbishment work was supervised by architect, Gregory Burgess.

The Essendon Incinerator Complex, now under control of the Moonee Valley City Council, continues to provide a vital, albeit different, service to the Moonee Valley community.

Heritage grant received by RMIT University for the Capitol Theatre

On 27th October 2004, the Annual Heritage grants from Heritage Victoria were announced to an enthusiastic audience of VIPs and grant recipients at The Capitol Theatre. One of the major grants of \$190,000 was given to RMIT University for the restoration of the Capitol Theatre's plaster ceiling.

The major work involves the removal of 1980s seating and the construction of scaffolding over the entire auditorium. Griffin's plaster ceiling will then be repaired, where necessary, and painted in the original heritage colour. While the ceiling is being temporarily supported by the scaffolding, the 80 years of dust can be vacuumed from above the plaster prisms. The electrical wiring to the 4000 coloured globes can be made safe, and it is hoped that safe access to the wall lighting behind the plaster prisms can be constructed. It is also hoped that low energy globes will be available before the plaster restoration is completed in February 2006.

Donations for the restoration of the original Griffin-designed stage curtain and the restoration of the upper foyers areas are still be received from tourists and citizens of Melbourne, by way of guided tours of the theatre, on the third Friday of each month, February till October 2005, from 10am to 3pm.

80th Birthday Celebrations for The Capitol Theatre, Melbourne

On Sunday 7th November 2004, the volunteer guides at the theatre, especially Bev Fleming, Pauline Campbell, David Storer and Peter Navaretti (WBG Society member), organised a special 80th birthday function at the theatre, in conjunction with the Theatre Organ Society.

During the morning, the guides provided continuous tours, telling visitors of the history of the theatre and serving refreshments. At 1pm, Dr John Atwell gave an organ concert of film theme favourites, while Robert Dugdale, tenor, provided some excellent vocal renditions. During an interval, the coloured ceiling lights showed the magical luminous effects on Griffin's crystalline ceiling at its best. After interval, the restored Australian silent movie *The Kid Stakes* of 1927, was shown to the organ accompaniment of the brilliant silent movie organist, David Johnston.

After the movie, guided tours of the theatre re-commenced and the day concluded with cutting the Capitol Birthday Cake, a toast with champagne and the singing of Happy birthday to The Capitol Theatre. (Articles provided by Peter Y. Navaretti)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brief descriptions of two of the Society's newest committee members, their achievements and the expertise they bring to the Society are given below.

Di Jay

Di has been Chief Executive Officer of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) for 2 years. PIA is the national professional association for urban and regional planners, social planners, urban designers and environmental planners.

Di has a background in public policy, corporate governance, public affairs and government relations, spanning some 20 years. Di is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and currently represents PIA on the boards of the Building Design Professionals, the Australian Construction Industry Forum and the fledgling Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council.

Geoff Sherington

Geoffrey Sherington is a Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. He was previously Dean of the Faculty 1997-2003. He is an historian with interests in the history of education and the history of immigration. He is the author of more than a dozen books and many articles on these subjects. A resident of Castlecrag since 1987 he is also a Fellow of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

VALE PAUL MELCHERT (1951 – 2005)

Architect, lecturer, photographer

Architect Paul Melchert was a member of the Walter Burley Griffin Society for many years, and joined the committee in 2000, tirelessly contributing his expertise to many issues until his illness forced him to retire only last year.

Paul's choice of architecture as a career was in some part inspired by his mother's family home, the Winter House designed by Walter Burley Griffin, which even as a boy Paul recognised as a 'lovely place'. Paul graduated in architecture from the University of Sydney in 1976. One of his earliest professional highlights was the three years as a team member on the High Court of Australia in Canberra working in the Sydney offices of Edwards Madigan and Torzillo.

He worked for a number of different architectural practices on projects that included a multi-lingual school and an aboriginal-run health clinic near Alice Springs, and the Terrigal post office and mail centre. Paul also established his own practice, highlights of which include the house designed for film director and producer Alex Proyas and his wife at Northwood, and the pavillion in harbourside Bicentennial Park in Glebe for Leichhardt Council.

He also got great pleasure from teaching at the University of Sydney where he taught design for some 12 years, and in 2003 lectured in construction for

third year students.

Photography was another love of Paul's, and as a young architect he took his Nikon SLR to many rock concerts, and using only available light captured numerous rock stars and groups including The Rolling Stones, Queen, the Who and David Bowie. As Paul said "When I started out the crowd at the front would happily let you through to the foot of the stage. By the end, that privilege required a press pass."

Paul's vast archive of an estimated 5000 transparencies also included magnificent photos of Australian landscapes. His mother Nella and sister Kerry helped catalogue the collection, and Paul's wife Ann and a group of friends organised an exhibition of 60 large prints of his photographs last February at the Dank Street Galleries in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease Association. Paul who was then in the terminal stages of the disease attended in a wheelchair in his customary remarkable and resilient good humour.

Paul had a wonderful generosity of spirit, was dedicated to the broad community, had a keen aesthetic eye and an astute ability at problem solving.

His contribution to attaining the restoration and reconstruction of the Glebe Incinerator is truly remarkable. It was Paul's efforts that ensured the Society became the consent authority for approval of the plans for the restoration and reconstruction of the incinerator, its sheds and precinct. Having achieved this, Paul then worked tirelessly to ensure an optimum quality outcome by scrutinising every detail over the critical two year design development stage. The restoration and reconstruction is now nearing completion, and the Society will be forever grateful for Paul's wonderful work in achieving this.

Paul was a much-loved member of our team, and is greatly missed.



Glebe Incinerator, June 2005 undergoing restoration and reconstruction work that Paul Melchert was instrumental in achieving.