



News Update

March 1993

GSDA No.1 Dwelling Open Days

The Draft Conservation Plan prepared by the Historic Houses Trust for 136 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, will be on exhibition at the house on **Saturday 3rd** and **Sunday 4th April** from **10am to 4.30pm**. Details of the stabilization of the house and several development options for the site will be exhibited. There will be a comment book and we encourage all our members to participate in this process. During the following fortnight the Draft Conservation Plan will be exhibited at Willoughby City Library and the public invited to comment. The Society commends the Historic Houses Trust for encouraging public participation.

Heritage Week Castlecrag Tour

A guided tour past many of the Griffin houses in Castlecrag will be led by Walter Burley Griffin authority Prof. James Weirick on **Sunday 4th April**. The tour will begin promptly at **2pm** at the corner of **Edinburgh Road and Edith Street, Castlecrag** and end at GSDA No.1 Dwelling where Devonshire teas will be available. Everybody is welcome.

Memorial Planting for Edgar Deans

To commemorate the life of Edgar Deans and his remarkable devotion to the community, the Walter Burley Griffin Society and the Castlecrag Progress Association have jointly organised a memorial planting on **Saturday 5th June** on the island at the corner of **The Sortie Port and The Battlement, Castlecrag**.

About 60 native plants indigenous to Castlecrag, including grevilleas, epacris, banksias and acacias have been propagated by Willoughby City Council for the occasion. The Castlecrag community and Society members are invited to participate in the planting. All you need to bring is a pair of gloves. Refreshments will be supplied. The Mayor of Willoughby, Ald. Bartels, will officiate and unveil a small bronze plaque appropriately adorned with a banksia sculpted by the late Bim Hilder.

Edgar Deans was Secretary of Griffin's company, the Greater Sydney Development Association, for 17 years from 1927 to 1944, and it was his skilful management that steered the company through the Depression, after Griffin's death in 1937, and the Second World War.

As a resident of Castlecrag he served as Secretary of the Castlecrag Progress Association for thirteen years and President for four years. Then he served as Secretary of the Willoughby Federated Progress Associations for eight years, two of these as Mayor.

The Walter Burley Griffin Society was greatly honoured when in 1989 Mr Deans became the Society's Patron and remained Patron until his death in October 1991 at the age of 89. We invite all Society members and friends to commemorate this truly remarkable man who was so devoted to serving the community. As the time of the ceremony and planting has not yet been decided, please ring either Adrienne Kabos (958 2060) or Kerry McKillop (958 4516) for details.

The Heritage Dragon?

The Society is extremely grateful to Peter Phillips for addressing its General Meeting on 2nd March on the Heritage Council and the financial benefits available to owners of heritage-listed properties. Mr Phillips is a partner in Orwell and Peter Phillips Architects who have special heritage expertise. He represents the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) and the Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI) on the Heritage Council, is former chairman of the RAIA Historic Buildings Committee and is also chairman of the Heritage Council's Fire Advisory Panel. A summary of his most interesting talk follows.

Conservation by regulation is a phenomenon of the 20th Century. Although there were a few exponents of heritage conservation such as Ruskin and Morris in the 19th Century, it was not really until after World War II that the first legislation for conservation came into being. Prior to C20th there was little perceived need for regulation because building materials and techniques had remained almost unchanged for centuries and thus buildings generally had a traditional and homogeneous appearance. However, that changed this century when many new techniques and materials became available – concrete, plastics, aluminium, large sheet glass.

In NSW the Heritage Council was set up in response to the wholesale destruction developers had wrought especially on Sydney's city centre in the 1960s. The Heritage Act of 1977 gave the Heritage Council considerable powers but it is not as powerful a dragon as many people believe it is or ought to be. In the first place, the Council's role is mainly to provide advice to the Minister rather than to make its own determinations. Conservation Orders do not ensure conservation or maintenance, do not acknowledge conservation areas or precincts, cannot ensure appropriate sympathetic development on sites adjoining heritage items, and have been unable to prevent wilful neglect. The only proper guardian of heritage remains the collective community, through organisations such as the Walter Burley Griffin Society.

The Heritage System Review was undertaken last year to review the Heritage Act and its powers. Comments from the public and concerned organisations were called for (our Society made a submission) and the resultant Position Paper will be published in the next few weeks and comments once again sought. A final report is intended to follow in time for the August session of Parliament.

Mr Phillips said that the Heritage Council's strategy included the devolution of responsibility to local councils, but that in his opinion local pressures should not determine the fate of items which were of more than local significance. The Heritage Council is working towards being involved only with matters of state and regional significance, and with formulation of heritage policy.

By the same token, the heritage dragon does not mean disaster for private owners. Heritage-listed properties are eligible for many benefits including:

- . free advice from experts of the Heritage Council's specialist committees and the Heritage Branch of the Department of Planning;
- . land tax relief when applied for from the Valuer General's department for properties with Permanent Conservation Orders (PCO);
- . rate relief for PCO properties in some councils (not all councils have rate relief);
- . possibility of Income Tax relief in the future for properties of national significance;
- . potential increase in value of historic properties, such as has been demonstrated in the Mosman heritage areas;
- . access to heritage funding through
 - 1) the Heritage Assistance Program of NSW
 - 2) the National Estate Program.

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The NSW Heritage Fund was created some years ago and received a substantial boost from the sale of the air rights over the First Government House site. The interest from the fund together with National Estate funds provides the money for the Heritage Assistance program each year. Mr Phillips suggested that heritage could further benefit if perhaps \$2 or \$3 million of the Heritage Fund were invested in heritage property, for the purpose of preserving it until market conditions were right for private investors, as had been done recently by the Historic Houses Trust with the Walter Burley Griffin house. He said that financial benefits to owners of heritage properties provided some compensation for the public benefit of conservation, and that incentives were often more effective than regulation.

Applications to the Heritage Assistance Program of NSW close in March each year and after consideration by assessors and the Heritage Assistance Advisory Committee, the Minister for Planning announces the grants in August. The Small Grants System provides funding of up to \$5,000 all through the year. Most grants are on a \$1 for \$1 basis; other assistance comes in the form of low-interest loans.

The Heritage Council is appointed by the Minister every three years with the last meeting of the current Council on 1st April 1993. There are 12 members on the Council, including the Chairman, the Government Architect, the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and nominees from the National Trust, Royal Australian Historical Society, local government, the property industry, Labour Council, RAA and RAPI (jointly) and Department of Planning. Other members represent conservation and property rights of citizens. Committees of the Heritage Council include the Technical Advisory Group on Materials Conservation, Fire Advisory Panel, Education and Publications Committee, Heritage Assistance Committee, Archaeology Advisory Panel, Railway Heritage Committee, and many more.

Mr Phillips stated that he believes that legislation alone does not sufficiently protect our heritage and he encouraged public participation particularly as watchdogs of heritage, so that community awareness and pressure can supplement legislation. Conservation Orders cannot at present acknowledge conservation areas or precincts but local council Local Environment Plans can and do; they can also control development in the vicinity of a heritage item which may have a substantial impact on its heritage. The curtilage around heritage items is not just to the legal boundary but may extend beyond including the whole area of visual influence so that the building can be appreciated in its setting. However, control of development must be appropriate to the significance of the item; what is right for St Paul's Cathedral may not be justified for Tusculum, for example.

To Let: *The Long Griffin*

This house, the T.H.R. Wilson Residence, was described in the last News Update. Since February it has been withdrawn from sale and the main house is now available to rent. Enquiries should be to Joan Johnstone at the Castlecrag office of real estate agents Laing & Simmons.

From the University of Melbourne
Museum of Art 1993 Exhibitions ▶

14 JULY — 24 SEPTEMBER NEWMAN COLLEGE 75TH ANNIVERSARY THE NEWMAN COLLEGE ART COLLECTION AND THE DESIGNS OF COLLEGE ARCHITECT WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN

Curators: Jane Carolan, Christopher Marshall, Frances Lindsay and Merryn Gates



Justin O'Brien — Triptych: Annunciation, Nativity, Visitation c1962
3 panels 107.0 x 47.0; 107.0 x 68.5; 107.0 x 47.0 — Newman College Collection

An exhibition to mark the 75th Anniversary celebrations of this beautiful residential college. Newman College is one of the few buildings by Walter Burley Griffin to survive in Melbourne. Over the years the College has compiled a significant collection of religious art by contemporary Australian artists. Featured will be a triptych by Justin O'Brien which usually hangs in the College dining room.

Duncan House "Restoration"

In 1990 structural engineers McBean and Crisp examined and did a report on The Duncan House roof funded by a \$15,000 grant from the Heritage Council of NSW. Following the submission of the report to the Heritage Council's Technical Advisory Committee on Materials Conservation (TACMAC), responsibility for working out the details of the roof restoration was given to the Heritage Branch of the Department of Planning which administers the Heritage Act and services the Heritage Council.

Initially, removal of the roof was considered but then discounted because removal would have been too damaging to the Knitlock walls. Then "cocooning" of the concrete roof/ceiling slab was considered and given "approval in principle" before being handed to Willoughby City Council for consideration in January this year.

The structural engineer's detailed drawings that were on view at Willoughby City Council's offices were for a steel structure to be built inside the house. The structure includes steel columns that go through the original *Rimu* timber flooring and support steel beams 150 x 75mm (6ins x 3ins) which pierce the internal Knitlock walls in nine places and the sandstone in several places below the original ceiling. These beams support structural steel sheeting and together with the internal steel framework were, in the Heritage Council's description, "to support the deteriorating reinforced concrete roof slab".

Conservation architect Peter Meyers in his report on the plans submitted to Willoughby City Council pointed out that there was a 20mm gap between the structural steel sheeting and the original ceiling/roof. Following this at Willoughby City Council's meeting of 8th March, Mr McBean, the structural engineer, said that the steel structure was "purely a safety net" for the original ceiling/roof.

Additionally the original roof is to be covered with Kliplock roofing with a single fall that on the east side of the house (the high side of the fall) would be well above the sandstone walls and approximately the same height as the top of the Knitlock castellations. This solution was in response to the central drain of the original roof being blocked. Peter Meyers in his report suggested the use of a float pump on the roof which is commonly used on flat roofs. In the Society's letter commenting on the Development Application to Willoughby Council, we suggested a new drain could be located almost immediately beside the blocked one. Unfortunately neither these nor other options seem to have been considered by the Heritage Council. The Society's letter to Willoughby City Council asked that they request the Heritage Council to explore a less damaging option.

Further, the bathroom floor and three-quarters of the kitchen floor will be replaced with concrete slabs and the bathroom design will be changed to have a shower recess instead of a bath. The exemptions to the Permanent Conservation Order (PCO) were not gazetted until a month or so after the PCO was gazetted and the exemptions include the bathroom.

The estimated cost of work is \$70,000 of which \$60,000 has been given as a grant from the Heritage Council to the owners. The grant was given last year when the Interim Conservation Order was still in a lapsed state and before the Permanent Conservation Order was gazetted in January.

At Willoughby City Council's meeting of 8th March, Ald. Randle spoke on our behalf with the support of Ald. Squire and Ald. Weingarth. The aldermen voted to defer a decision on the Development Application (DA) until after a site inspection and a report by architect Anne Warr, whom we anticipated would speak about other options. The site inspection date was set for Saturday 20th March, almost two weeks later, but unfortunately Ms Warr received the material from Willoughby Council only 3 days before the inspection. At the site inspection, at which all, except for the aldermen and Ms Warr, were excluded from the site, Ms Warr reported only on the proposal without discussing other possible options. We had hoped that the options already mentioned and others such as suggested by architect Trevor Waters (a "net" of timber beams held by leather straps and the arresting of the concrete cancer by a mild electric charge as in a concrete wharf in Victoria) would be discussed. However Ms Warr reiterated the Heritage Branch's opinion of the proposal being the best possible at this point in time. The aldermen voted to approve the DA.

The Society believes that the approved plans, if carried out, will be very damaging to the fabric of the Duncan House, so much so that the house will lose its heritage significance.

Edgar Deans Tribute

The words beside the bronze *Banksia serrata* sculpted by the late Bim Hilder say:

Edgar Deans 1903 – 1991
Greater Sydney Development Association Ltd
Secretary 1927 – 1944
Willoughby Council – Alderman 1948 – 1955 Mayor 1953 – 1955
Pioneer of Community Spirit

The bronze plaque with these words was unveiled and seventy indigenous plants were planted on the island at the intersection of The Battlement and The Sortie Port, Castlecrag as a tribute to the late Edgar Deans. The occasion was organised by the Castlecrag Progress Association and the Walter Burley Griffin Society with the assistance of Willoughby City Council (who provided the native plants, large sandstone rocks and mulch for landscaping), and the Historic Houses Trust (which so kindly provided their GSDA No.1 Dwelling for refreshments afterwards).

About 150 family, friends, colleagues and Castlecrag residents attended the Memorial Planting ceremony which was addressed by the Mayor Ald. Greg Bartels, Joyce Batterham the younger sister of the late Edgar Deans, and Adrienne Kabos on behalf of the Society. Below is an extract from Adrienne's address:

Edgar Deans at the young age of 24 was so impressed by Griffin's ideals that he made the bold decision of moving to Sydney from Melbourne to become the Chartered Accountant and Secretary for Griffin's company, the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA). One of Griffin's main principles that Mr Deans was always keen to point out was that the "houses should be subordinate to the landscape". Mr Deans like the Griffins had a keen appreciation for the native beauty of this Middle Harbour peninsula. GSDA acquired the Castlecrag Estate in 1920 and in Edgar Deans' words "for many years previous the upper areas of the estate had been the happy hunting ground of all who wanted soil, firewood, clothesprops, and the like. As a result, and as old photographs show, the landscape was almost entirely denuded of vegetation". But this was soon rectified by Griffin who was a landscape architect as well as an architect and who was one of the pioneers of native landscaping. In a 1935 edition of Australian Wildlife Griffin wrote that "nearly 2,000 native trees and shrubs had been planted" in the estate.

In 1948 Mr Deans became an Alderman of Willoughby Municipal Council and when he became Mayor in 1954 a Street Beautification Program was initiated in which 13,000 trees and shrubs were planted throughout the municipality. So Mr Deans continued to pursue the Griffins' ideals of natural beauty and community caring throughout his life.

Gardening Bee

Thank you to the many helpers who came to the gardening bee on Sunday 18th July at Historic Houses Trust GSDA NO. 1 Dwelling. The Trust will be starting conservation work on the house very shortly and the main work done at the gardening bee was the clearing of much of the greenery growing against the house, a little pruning and weeding large areas of Wandering Jew and Fishbone Fern. A lot was achieved and we thank Anne Korner, Janet Van Graan, Zeb Mita, Colleen Fry, Kerry and Bob McKillop, Helen Levett, Karl and Kirsten McKillop, John and Adrienne Kabos, Anna Kabos, Laurence, Andrea and Christopher Natale, Mariette Maclurcan, Gay and Harold Spies. Also a large thank you to Sheri Burke and James Broadbent from Historic Houses Trust who provided a wonderful morning tea for all the helpers.

If you are interested in participating in the next working bee at the house please put your name and phone number at the bottom of your membership subscription form and we will contact you when the next one is being organised.

Heritage Council's New Chair

Congratulations to Howard Tanner, one of Sydney's leading conservation architects who in April became the new Chairman of the Heritage Council of NSW. It is very encouraging that Mr Tanner aims to make the Council a more pro-active heritage watchdog and that the Heritage Council should have a co-ordinated approach with other heritage groups.