



News Update

OCTOBER 1994

LECTURE, OPEN DAY AND WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN SOCIETY AGM: SUNDAY 16TH OCTOBER

An Open Day of GSDA No.1 Dwelling at 136 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag has been organised by Historic Houses Trust for Sunday 16th October. To coincide, the Society has organised its AGM and Guest Speaker Anna Rubbo for the same afternoon, at the Castlecrag Community Centre, corner The Rampart and the Postern, Castlecrag, only three minutes from GSDA No.1 Dwelling. Visitors to the No.1 Dwelling will be able to view the conservation and restoration work carried out by Historic Houses Trust including the wonderful stippled walls, the entrance porch that has been re-opened, the renovated bathroom and the controversially modern kitchen cupboards set beneath the restored original kitchen cupboards. The building of the separate dwelling beside No.1 Dwelling will commence shortly, the clearing for the building having already been done. The Open Day will be from 10am to 4pm.

That same afternoon the Society will hold its AGM at 2pm followed by afternoon tea at 3pm. At 3.30pm Guest Speaker Anna Rubbo from the University of Sydney's Department of Architecture will give a speech titled ***Marion's Mural: Antipodean pastoralism in the windy city.***

BOOK LAUNCH CROWD

Nearly two hundred guests crowded into (and out of) GSDA No.1 Dwelling to attend the launch of ***Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag***, the book recently published by the Society and written by Meredith Walker, Adrienne Kabos and James Weirick. >>>

The Treasurer and Minister for the Arts, Mr Peter Collins, did the Society the honour of launching the book and it was very encouraging and inspiring to hear his praise and enthusiasm for Griffin's work. Amongst the guests were a number of Councillors including the Mayor of Willoughby, Cllr John Squire, representatives from the Department of Planning, the Historic Houses Trust Board, the National Trust, Willoughby City Library, Powerhouse Museum and the architectural fraternity. There were also many of the people who had contributed to the book with their memories and/or photographs.

The team of hard working WBG Society committee members and their helpers are to be thanked for their superb organisation and catering for the evening. In particular we would like to thank Max Bourke who so capably officiated as MC, Kerry McKillop, Colleen Fry, Ben Gerstel, Lisa Purser and Adrienne Kabos and helpers Helen Levett, Elizabeth Lander, Karl McKillop, Lisa Sherington and Anna Kabos.

The Society is also very grateful to Historic Houses Trust for providing GSDA No.1 Dwelling for the delightful and very appropriate venue and for contributing financially towards the catering. The house and the garden looked wonderful - the garden lit by flares and the house with much of its original stippled walls restored and decorated with a couple of items of Griffin furniture from Newman College, and other pieces of the period all thanks to HHT curators Sheridan Burke and James Broadbent and their assistants.

The book's RRP is \$25 and it is available from selected bookshops including the National Trust and RAIA's bookshops, the National Library bookshop in Canberra and The Arts Bookshop, Readings and the Art Salon in Melbourne.

SALE OF THE GUY HOUSE

The Guy House at 23 The Bastion, Castlecrag, was sold at auction on 10th September. This house was designed by Griffin for Robert and Beth Guy and their two sons in 1925. In *Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag* the floor plan of the house is described as "*a series of interlocking squares, symmetrical about a diagonal axis, with the major square defined by columns, with French doors between*".

The imposing majesty of these columns and the house's siting near the edge of a cliff, particularly dramatic when viewed from the public pathway from The Citadel, were probably what inspired Marion Griffin to call the house the *Temple of Aphrodite*.

Prior to the sale Willoughby City Council initiated an Interim Conservation Policy for the house and we commend the Council for taking this initiative.

IN MEMORY OF FRANK DUNCAN

We are indebted to Frank Duncan and his beautiful Griffin house for the conception and formation of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, so it is with great regret that we inform you of Mr Duncan's death in June, aged 91.

Frank Duncan emigrated from England as a young man with his wife Anice, planning to have a short stay in Australia before settling in New Zealand. However, soon after arriving in Sydney they heard of Griffin's Castlecrag through a friend, and were so impressed on visiting it that they rented one of the Griffin houses in The Parapet, and then shared GSDA No.2 Dwelling with Edgar and Cappy Deans and their baby daughter. During this time they bought Lot 190 in The Barbette and commissioned Griffin to design a house for them, a split-level sandstone house which proved too expensive and so this lot was exchanged for Lot 194 a few blocks along in The Barbette which was more level.

The house designed for this block has been described as "*the simplest and most exquisite expression of Griffin's stone and concrete houses*". It was completed in 1934 after he had left for India and was the last Griffin design to be built at Castlecrag. The house is square in plan with sandstone corner piers and knitlock (the ingenious concrete building block patented by Griffin) spanning between with banks of French windows opening into the garden.

Frank Duncan lived in the house for over fifty years. It was when he revealed that he would be selling the house and moving to Chatswood that the community was inspired to preserve the house as a house museum. Mr Duncan welcomed the idea and so approaches to various government bodies were made. At that time they were encouraging and said that if a locally-based group was established to care for and maintain the house museum then the government could provide a large part of the purchase price.

Thus the Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. was formed but unfortunately the government did not honour its earlier commitment and the house was sold privately at auction in April 1989. Despite this early blow the Society has gone on to have many successes including the Historic Houses Trust's temporary acquisition of GSDA No.1 Dwelling in February 1993 and most recently the publication of *Building for Nature: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag*.

Thus the Society owes its inception to the inspiration given by Frank Duncan's delightful house and the enthusiasm and encouragement of Mr Duncan himself. The Society is also grateful for the fascinating memories Mr Duncan recalled for the authors of the book, and for the photographs and 1936 newspaper clippings he and his son provided for the book.

Frank Duncan is described by another prominent Castlecrag resident, Ken Thomas, as "*the leader of the Castlecrag community fifty years ago a long-term President of the Progress Association in the 1940s. He and his wife Anice worked alongside other local activists in establishing our Castlecrag Kindergarten and ... were prominent members of the Bushwalkers Association, alongside Paddy Pallin, and were leaders in establishing the Blue Gum Forest as a reserve in the Grose Valley*".

Frank Duncan is sorely missed and the Society expresses its deepest sympathy to his son, Barry.

EXHIBITION OF FEDERAL CAPITAL COMPETITION ENTRIES

An exhibition of all the entries for the Federal Capital competition, including the Griffins' winning entry, is being organised by the National Library and curated by Emeritus Professor John Reys. The exhibition will be held in the middle of next year and will coincide with an Australian National University's conference being organised by Pat Troy, Head of the Urban Research Unit, ANU.

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT'S NEW TAX INCENTIVE FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Earlier this year the Commonwealth Government introduced a tax incentive to encourage heritage conservation work. Owners of buildings or structures listed on the national or state heritage register can apply. If the application is approved a 20% tax rebate will be granted. The incentive will support a national maximum of \$9.5 million worth of conservation work in a year and, with conditions applying, is available for heritage conservation work of \$5,000 or more. For further information contact:

Department of Communications & the Arts

GPO Box 1920

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel. (06) 275 4438

Toll free (008) 819 461

Fax (06) 275 4499