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## NEWSLETTER April/May 1992

### HERITAGE WEEK ACTIVITIES

To celebrate Heritage Week this year on **Sunday 3 May** the Society has organised a **guided walk** through some of the roads and pathways of Castlecrag past many of the Griffin houses, with an inspection of one of the houses, and finishing at the open air Haven Amphitheatre where afternoon tea will be available. Wear comfortable walking shoes and assemble at the corner of Edinburgh Road and Edith Street Castlecrag for a **prompt 2.15pm departure**.

Also on the weekend of 2nd and 3rd May for Heritage Week, the **Art Deco Society** has organised a **superb tour of Canberra**. The itinerary and details of this tour are enclosed. Some seats on the coach are still available. If you would like to go be sure to contact the President of the Art Deco Society, Mary Nilsson by 16th April at the latest. Telephone (02) 419 4259. The **cost of the tour** is \$129 per person twin share for ADS members and \$139 for non members. \$40 extra for single room supplement. Tour cost includes coach Sydney to Canberra return, hotel accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Please note to bring your own thermos and sandwiches for Saturday lunch. As hotels and coaches have to be booked and paid for in advance, all payments must be received by Friday 24th April. Make cheques payable to Art Deco Society of NSW, PO Box 752, Willoughby NSW 2068. Talks on Art Deco and Walter Burley Griffin will be given on board the coach to Canberra. For people wanting to drive themselves the cost is \$80 per head for twin share for the weekend.

### NANCY E LAWRIE – OBITUARY

Sadly, Mrs Nancy Lawrie (nee Price) died last month after a long illness. As an architecture student Mrs Lawrie worked in Walter and Marion Griffin's office and wrote her thesis titled *Walter Burley Griffin* in 1933. When the Society approached Mrs Lawrie late last year she very kindly gave permission to quote from and reproduce photographs from her thesis for our book *Vision for the Future: Walter Burley Griffin and Castlecrag* which will be published later this year.

Our condolences are given to her family.

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# PYRMONT INCINERATOR:

Many thanks to **Trevor Waters**, architect and WBG Society committee member, who gave a superb talk and slide show on the Pyrmont Incinerator at our general meeting last month. Outlined below is a brief history of the Incinerator and an update on the present situation in regard to its future.

Walter Burley Griffin designed numerous incinerators in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. Twelve of the Griffin-designed RIECo (Reverberatory Incinerator Engineering Company) incinerators were built. Each had its own totally unique and imposing design but unfortunately only two and a bit still stand. These are the Willoughby Incinerator, part of the Glebe Incinerator and the Pyrmont Incinerator near the corner of Victoria Rd and Bowman St, Pyrmont.

Pyrmont Incinerator, with its monumentally massed forms and complex ornamentation, has been called his finest Australian work and Marion Mahony Griffin described it as "Griffin's tribute to the 20th Century".

Yet Pyrmont Incinerator has been appallingly neglected. Its sad history is as follows: completed in 1935; operation ceased in 1972; classified by the National Trust in 1976; in 1977 Sydney City Council substantially unroofed it and demolished the chimney stack at a cost of \$250,000 (at this time the whole building could have been restored for the same cost); in October 1987 Sydney City Council sold the site for \$1.35 million to Balmain Breweries P/L (later Leon Fink bought the company); in 1989 the weighbridge building adjoining the Incinerator (covered by a Permanent Conservation Order) was demolished; in 1990 Meriton Apartments P/L bought the site for about \$6 million; also in 1990 the Heritage Council recommended reconstruction of all parts of the Incinerator visible from Bank St/Victoria Rd including the 40 metre high chimney stack; following that in the same year Sydney City Council approved the building's demolition conditional on a satisfactory development approval; in April 1991 Meriton submitted a scheme that included demolishing the Incinerator and building two 16 storey towers with a memorial garden wall of some of the tiles; in May 1991 the Australian Heritage Commission listed the Incinerator on the Interim Register of the National Estate; in December 1991 Meriton submitted another scheme of a single horseshoe-shaped apartment block with the end wall of the Incinerator reconstructed at the western end; following intervention by the Society, the developer and Council agreed to extend the reconstruction to one-sixth of the Incinerator and an alternative proposal was developed that the developer pay the cost of the reconstruction or that an interpretive facility could be established off site; Meriton offered \$300,000 to Council for the interpretive facility; just before Christmas 1991, Council approved the part of the project away from the Incinerator to give more time to consider the interpretive facility; in March 1992 Sydney City Council resolved that one-sixth reconstruction wasn't necessary and a mere photographic display could be sufficient memorial to the Incinerator; at present Sydney City Council is awaiting the developer's finalised development application for the balance of the project.

The Incinerator is of such special architectural worth that Sydney City Council should take exceptional steps to ensure its preservation. New technology makes it possible to stabilize the concrete to prevent further deterioration so that the Incinerator could be a historic ruin in the grounds of the development. Alternatively the building could be reconstructed and the decorative tiles (most of which are still in good condition) reapplied. This last option would allow the building to be recycled for any number of other uses such as a community hall, swimming pool and gymnasium, restaurant etc.

The Society sincerely hopes that the present Sydney City Council will substantially redress the shameful neglect of their predecessors that led to the deterioration of the Incinerator. The final Development Application still hasn't been submitted so there is the opportunity for the appalling situation to be redressed.

**Castlecrag Library:** Castlecrag Library reported in February that all books relating to Castlecrag and Walter Burley Griffin had gone missing from the library. The books have still not been returned and the Society joins with the library and the Castlecrag Progress Association in appealing to anyone knowing their whereabouts to return them to the library box at the entrance to the Community Centre, on the corner of The Postern and The Rampart, Castlecrag.

**Art Deco in Randwick 1930 – 1940:** The Art Deco Society has informed us of this exhibition at Sandgate, Randwick's Heritage Centre, 128 Belmore Road, Randwick. Open Thursdays to Saturdays 10am to 4pm, Sundays 2pm to 4pm. Admission is free. Exhibition closes on 2nd May.