

News Update

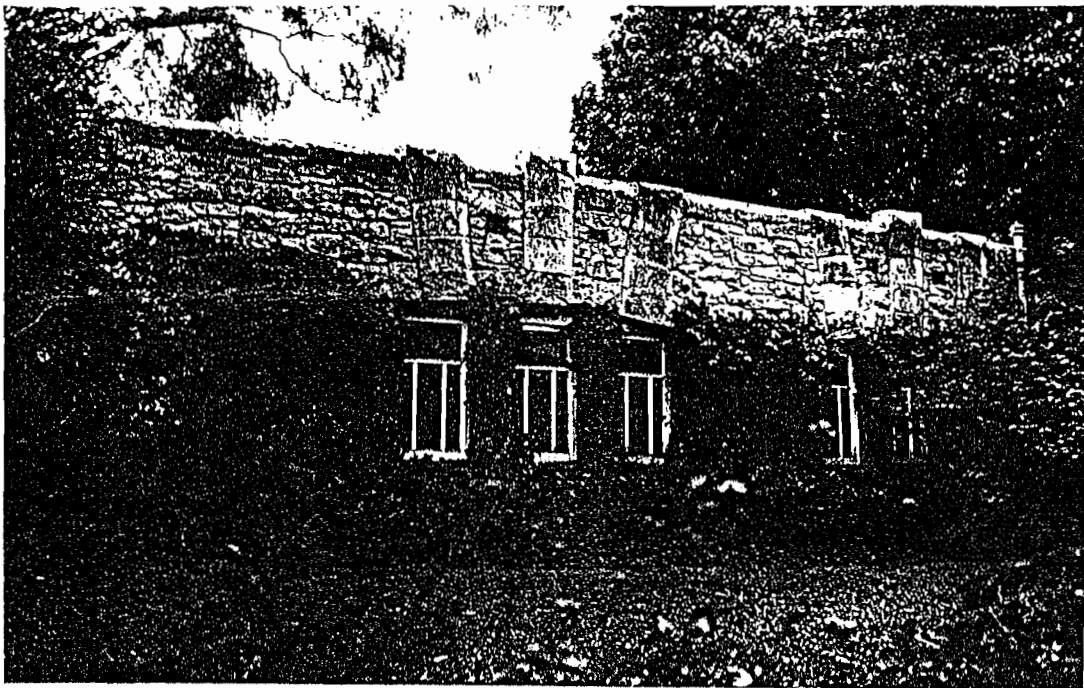
February 1993

Griffin Heritage for Sale

Two houses designed by Griffin and a house designed by and lived in by the late Bim Hilder, sculptor, have recently gone up for sale.

GSDA No. 1 Dwelling was built in 1921/22 as a demonstration house by Griffin's company, the Greater Sydney Development Association, to show the character that he planned for the "garden suburb" of Castlecrag. In its early years many of the Griffins' interesting artistic friends rented the house. Since 1947 it has been in single ownership.

The house is in an almost totally unaltered state both internally and externally, including all the joinery and three original timber pendant light fittings designed by Griffin. The garden has original landscape elements including two large ponds and several native trees and Bougainvillea.



Southern elevation of GSDA No.1 Dwelling showing the crystalline voussoirs above the windows and their intriguing relationship with the solidity of the sandstone walls.

The house, at 136 Edinburgh Road, will be auctioned on February 13th by agents Richardson & Wrench. It is open for inspection Saturdays and Wednesdays 1.30-2.30pm.

The house is such a fine example of intact Griffin architecture that the National Trust has applied to the Heritage Council for a Conservation Order and this Society has approached the Historic Houses Trust which is the only government body able to acquire heritage property. However, because of lack of funds, acquisition is unlikely. Yet **public acquisition is clearly the only sure way of adequately protecting this house and garden of international significance.** The Society has requested a meeting with the Minister for the Arts and Castlecrag's local member, Mr Peter Collins, to discuss the heritage significance and possible acquisition.

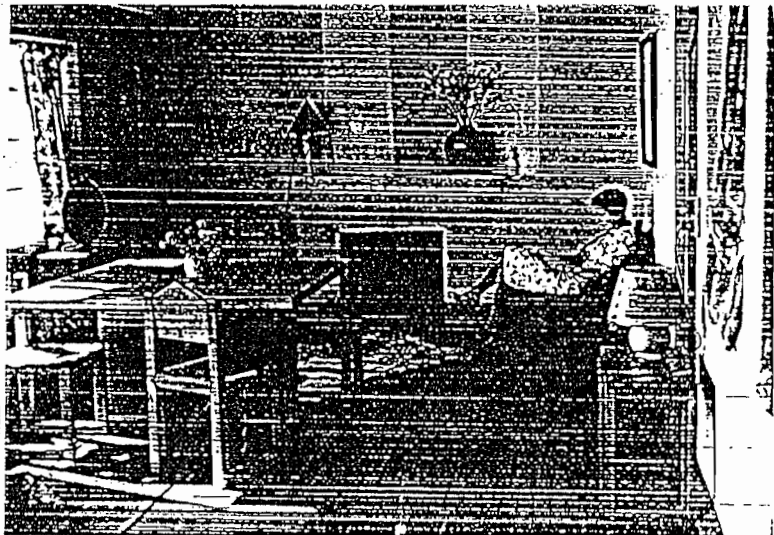
The ideal arrangement would be if the Society bought it but unfortunately it is not in a position to do so at the moment. We remind all members that donations to the Society are very gratefully received and would be particularly welcome at this time. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. (Please see donation form on the back page).

T H R Wilson Residence was built in 1929/30 for Roy Wilson, the sales manager for GSDA. Since the 1940s it has been in the one family's ownership and many playreadings have been hosted in their livingroom. The house was known as "The Long Griffin" by its configuration and the way it sits on its block. The famous octagonal living room had concealed uplighting and a reflector at the centre of the concaved ceiling. This octagonal room and porch were reflective of the Oak Park Studio in which Walter and Marion worked with Frank Lloyd Wright. The house is built of sandstone and has distinctive and dramatic concrete window piers that are stepped rectangular prisms. The prismatic prow at the southern end of the house is an external expression of the fireplace and is a characteristically bold element of Griffin's design. At the northern or street end the garage and loggia have been converted to another two rooms and at the back of the garden a small and totally separate dual occupancy has been built. The T.H.R. Wilson Residence is at 2 The Barbette, Castlecrag and the estate agents are Laing and Simmons.

Residence of the late Bim Hilder was designed and built by the sculptor Bim Hilder (MBE) in 1931. Bim was also an accomplished carpenter and did much of the carpentry for Walter Burley Griffin in his houses built from 1929 onwards.

Bim built his house of sandstone quarried from the site for his wife, artist Roma Hopkinson and himself. It has a split level which was very innovative for the time and has some details of Griffin influence. The north and south walls of windows provide an abundance of natural light which was designed to display Roma's paintings and those of J.J. Hilder, Bim's father.

The house is at 177 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag and will be auctioned on 10th February by estate agents Century 21.



Living room of Bim and Roma Hilder's house showing vaulted ceiling, interesting fireplace detail and furniture designed and made by Bim

Superlative Photographic Experience

Mati Maldre, Professor of Photography from Chicago University delighted the many at his wonderful talk and slide show last November. Mati was in Australia with the assistance of two USA grants, for 8 weeks photographing all of Griffin's work in Melbourne, Adelaide, Leeton, Griffith, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane with his view camera, tripod, and cloth hood. Mati himself lives in a Griffin house in West Griffin Place, in the Beverly area, Chicago, in a street where there are 12 Griffin houses most of which were built for a developer Russel Blount to demonstrate the principles of Prairie School architecture for people of modest means. The houses are spatially economical and intriguing in plan and have hip roofs with large eaves and timber detailing over lath and plaster. They are the largest single group of Griffin houses and as Mati's photographs illustrated, contrast with the massive stone and concrete houses that Griffin started experimenting with in 1911 onwards.

Griffin built 58 houses in the USA and Mati treated us to over 200 selected slides of most of those houses and some of Marion Griffin's, revealing their creative ingenuity and individuality. Interiors as well as exteriors all revealed Griffin's masterly use of mass, spatial proportions and decorative details. Mati pointed out that Griffin was one of the first to use vaulted ceilings, that his "free flowing rooms were revolutionary in architecture at the time", and that the 58 USA houses all have their own unique fireplace design and also unique decorative window detail. Mati described walking into a Griffin house as a "religious experience" and his photographs certainly illustrated that superbly.

Mati has collaborated with Professor Paul Kruty, Assistant Professor of Architectural History at the University of Illinois, to produce a book on Griffin's USA work and we hope this will be published in the near future.

Notice of Meeting Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated

General Meeting

Tuesday 2nd March 1993, 8pm

Community Centre
corner of The Postern and The Rampart, Castlecrag

Agenda:

Minutes of previous general meeting
Matters arising
President's Report
Treasurer's Report
General Business

Following general business **guest speaker Peter Phillips** will address us on the **benefits of Permanent Conservation Orders** including the grants and low interest loans available for preservation and conservation and the rates and land tax rebates available. Mr Phillips is a partner of Orwell and Peter Phillips, architects with special expertise in conservation and he is a Member of the Heritage Council of NSW.

■ DONATIONS [Tax Deductible]

- \$.....
- \$50
- \$100
- \$200
- \$.....

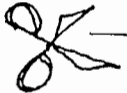
Please make cheques payable to : Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated
 Send to: The Secretary, 12 The Parapel, CASTLECRAG, NSW, 2068, AUSTRALIA

NAME

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE.....DATE.....

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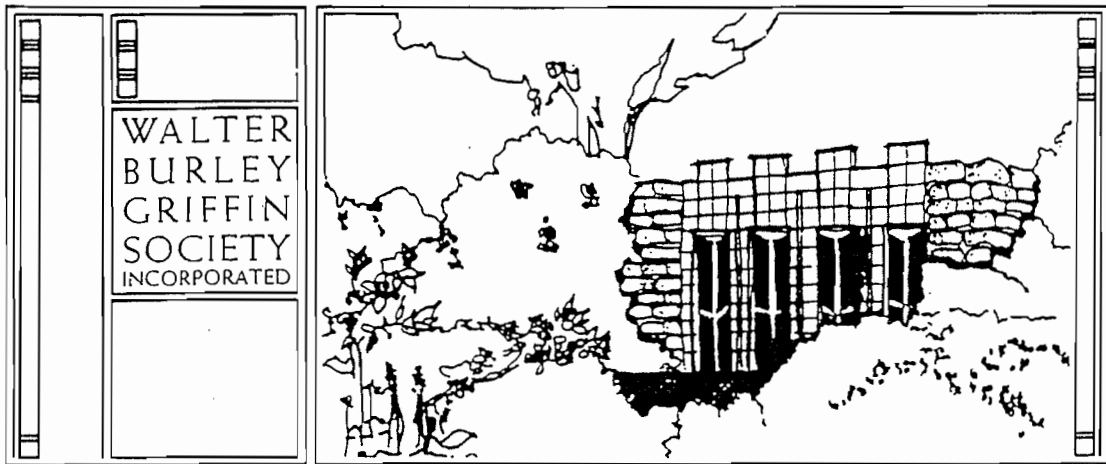


A Haven at the Haven?

On Christmas Eve 600 people flocked to the Haven Amphitheatre for Carols by Candlelight which has become a tradition there each Christmas. It was a warm balmy night and the community choir, a string quartet, and 600 strong voices were a magical experience set amongst the *angophoras*, paper lanterns and candles. Congratulations to the Haven Amphitheatre 530A Committee on their wonderful organisation.

On Saturday, 30th January the Amphitheatre hosted another very special event, Kate Andrews and Sam Lander's wedding. Best wishes to the newlyweds and congratulations to them on their excellent choice of venue.

The Haven is threatened by a proposed development on the three blocks of land adjoining the Amphitheatre which could possibly cause the loss of the beautiful bushland backdrop of the stage. Unfortunately the first block of land adjoining the Amphitheatre was not bought by Willoughby Council when it had the opportunity about seven years ago and so now it is possible that only a narrow couple of metres would separate the back of the stage from a development proposal. However, negotiations organised by Willoughby Council and planned for the near future will hopefully resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction.



ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SECRETARY:



ILLUSTRATED TALK ON GRIFFIN'S USA ARCHITECTURE

Tuesday 17th November 1992 8.00pm
Castlecrag Community Centre
Corner of The Postern and The Rampart, Castlecrag

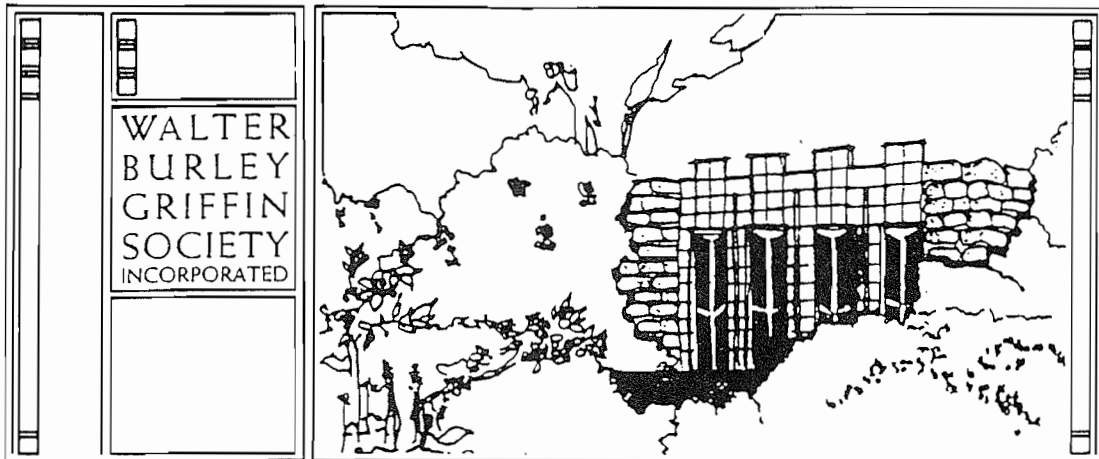
Mati Maldre, photographer and Professor of Art at Chicago State University, has kindly agreed to show us a large selection of his slides and black and white prints of the 61 Griffin structures still existing in the USA.

Professor Maldre is visiting Australia for 10 weeks with the help of two USA grants to photograph all of Griffin's work in Australia.

Don't miss this visual treat!

All are welcome!





STOP PRESS HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST BUYS GRIFFIN HOUSE

Last Saturday, 13th February 1993, saw the culmination of four and a half years of hard work by the **Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc.** with the purchase of **136 Edinburgh Road Castlecrag** by the **Historic Houses Trust of NSW.**

The house was the first built by Griffin's company, the **Greater Sydney Development Association Ltd**, at **Castlecrag** and is known as **GSDA No.1 Dwelling**. Because the house was lived in for such a long time by one owner, the late **Mrs Erna Klabe**, it is in virtually original condition.

The purchase by **Historic Houses Trust** represents an innovative initiative in active heritage preservation. This bold experiment has been embraced wholeheartedly by **Historic Houses Trust** and the **Minister for the Arts, Mr Peter Collins, our local member.**

The intention of the **Trust** is to prepare a conservation plan for the house, carry out conservation and then resell the house subject to appropriate controls and covenants. Those covenants are expected to include the house being open for inspection on a limited basis each year.

The **Trust** intends to have open days during the house's conservation so that the public can appreciate what is involved by observing the work in progress.

After several weeks of constant effort by the **Society** to convince the **Minister** and the **Historic Houses Trust** we were delighted to learn late last Friday of the success of our representations. However, we were concerned as to whether the **Historic Houses Trust** could allocate sufficient funds for the purchase. Late on Friday we approached **John McInerney, City Planner of Sydney City Council**, who has delegated authority in relation to the fund to be used for commemorating Griffin's work and which was generated as a result of the demolition of **Griffin's Pyrmont Incinerator**. Representatives of the **Society** have been involved in a committee set up to determine how the fund is to be spent. In spite of the proposed allocation of the fund having been finalised in January, **John McInerney** had no hesitation in making \$50,000 available to the **Historic Houses Trust** to assist with the purchase. Without that extra funding **GSDA No.1 Dwelling** could not have been purchased.

This is an exciting project which will involve the **Castlecrag community** in this new approach to solving the problem of heritage preservation. In the words of **Peter Watts, Director of the Historic Houses Trust**: "We want, through this property, to prove an important house can be intelligently and economically conserved, continue its domestic use but retain its significance for the future".

Peter Collins and **Historic Houses Trust** are to be congratulated on this important imaginative initiative.