



NEWS UPDATE July 1995

General Meeting Wednesday 26th July 6pm at Powerhouse Museum The International Griffin Exhibition to be held next year:

Senior Curator at the Powerhouse Museum, **Anne Watson**, will talk on the Marion Mahony/Walter Burley Griffin Exhibition that she is curating in collaboration with the Universities of Melbourne and Illinois, USA. In Australia, the exhibition is largely funded by Sydney City Council's Pyrmont Incinerator Fund and will travel to Melbourne and Chicago after opening at the Powerhouse. Anne will be guest speaker at the Society's General Meeting on Wednesday 26th July at 6pm at the Target Theatre, Powerhouse Museum. Entrance in Macarthur Street, Ultimo.

Griffin Festival celebrating 75 years: Sunday 27 August

In 1920 Walter Burley Griffin founded the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) to establish an urban development in harmony with the natural beauty of Middle Harbour, which he described as *the only large area of unspoiled landscape left on Port Jackson*. As a result, Castlecrag was established with its contoured roads, foreshore reserves, network of walkways and Griffin houses.

To celebrate the **75th anniversary of GSDA**, the Society is organising a day of festivities at Castlecrag on **Sunday 27th August**. Five Griffin houses will be open for inspection and guided tours will be held of reserves and walkways. There will be an **Exhibition of Max Dupain photographs** of the Griffin houses taken in 1965 and early historic photographs taken in the 1920s, including some of the Johnson House built in 1922 for Sir William Elliot Johnson, Federal Member for Lang and long-serving Speaker of the House of Representatives; the Fishwick House with its freestanding fireplace and fascinating chimney "window", and the Grant House where the Griffins lived until Walter departed for India in 1935.

The houses will be open for inspection from 10.30am to 3pm which is the first time in nearly twenty years that a number of Griffin houses have been open for inspection at any one time. A number of vintage cars will cruise the streets and at 3pm the Willoughby Brass Band and the giant puppets of Walter and Marion Griffin will lead a procession down to the open-air Haven Amphitheatre. Here the brass band will play until 3.45pm when **Prof. James Weirick** will give a lecture on the colourful shareholders of GSDA including politicians such as King O'Malley, Chinese investors and people from the arts. Tickets (\$12 to view 3 houses) will be on sale on the day from 9.30am at the Festival marquee, corner of The Postern and Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag (see enclosed program summary). Please put this date in your diary and note that it has been brought forward 1 week since the last Newsletter so as not to clash with Fathers' Day. This will be the last notice you will receive about the Festival (your committee is already working hard to organise the day) so remember your comfortable walking shoes.

The Mower House Auction

This Griffin house at 12 The Rampart Castlecrag will be auctioned on site on July 15. The original house was built of knitlock in 1926. Marion Griffin lived here on her return from India after Walter's death in 1935. It was the first knitlock house with a flat roof and it was accessed by a wooden "bridge". The resultant roof terrace was the scene for many gatherings including several events of the 1938 Anthroposophical Festival. In the mid-1960s a wide-eaved skillion roof was added and since then there have been several substantial additions. The Real Estate Agent is The Professionals (tel. 958 0124).

GSDA No.1 Dwelling

Welcome to Miss Isobel Jack, the new owner of GSDA No.1 Dwelling. Miss Jack bought this Griffin house at 136 Edinburgh Road Castlecrag, at auction in February from Historic Houses Trust (HHT). It was exactly two years to the day after Historic Houses Trust bought the house as a temporary acquisition for the purpose of restoration. The separate dwelling built by HHT beside GSDA No.1 Dwelling and between the neighbouring Griffin house, GSDA No.2 Dwelling, was turned in at the auction but sold some weeks later.

Miss Jack has been a Castlecrag resident for many years and was headmistress at Castlecrag Infants School from 1954 to 1956. We wish her all the best in her Griffin house.

An Ideal City? - The 1912 Competition to design Canberra **National Library 16 June till 8 October 1995**

This most interesting exhibition gives fascinating insights into how Canberra might have been had the Griffins' entry not been successful. For the first time since 1912, the 46 short-listed entries have been brought together, but are overshadowed by the exquisite panels prepared by the Griffins as part of their entry in the Federal Capital Competition, 1911-12. The exhibition will move to the Barracks Museum, Sydney, from 22 October to 17 December.

"Walter Burley Griffin: Landscape Architect"

This new book written by **Peter Harrison** (1918-1990) and edited by **Robert Freestone**, was launched at the National Library last month. In the 1950s Peter Harrison was instrumental in reviving Griffin's original plan for Canberra and went on to become the first Chief Town Planner of Canberra's National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), a post he held for eight years until 1967. As Chief Town Planner he advocated the implementation of many aspects of Griffin's plans for Canberra including the creation of the lake. Prior to his Canberra appointment Peter Harrison and his wife Joyce lived for several years in the Felstead House, designed by Griffin at Castlecrag.

The book is a revised version of a thesis for which Peter Harrison was awarded a Master of Architecture degree by the University of New South Wales in 1970. In the same year Angus and Robertson informed Harrison that they were keen to publish his manuscript. as an elaborate and profusely illustrated production. However, the enormity of the task of sifting through some 2000 potential illustrations he had collected and organising copyright clearance for them, overwhelmed Harrison and a year later he decided to call the whole thing off. As stated by Robert Freestone in the introduction to the book: *"Harrison's work remains an indispensable account and the decision by the National Library of Australia to make it available to a wider audience should be warmly welcomed. A comprehensive rather than definitive treatment, Harrison's emphasis on Griffin's 'land planning', his lucid expose of the American's seven troubled years as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction, his account of the Castlecrag project and his insightful, bitter-sweet summation are all significant contributions in their own right."*

Though the book has fewer illustrations than that envisaged by Harrison, it does include over forty photographs and, including some from the E M Nicholls Collection never previously reproduced. The book, published by the National Library of Australia, is priced at \$24.95.