



The Cammeraygal People: The Cammeraygal people of the Guringai nation lived in the Willoughby area until the 1820s and are recorded as being in the northern parts of the Sydney region for approximately 5,800 years. By 1830 there were no Aboriginal people following a traditional lifestyle in the area.

Geography: Castlecrag is a suburb of historical significance that is bounded to the north, east and south by Middle Harbour and to the west by Eastern Valley Way. Castlecrag is flanked by Crag Cove and Sailors Bay, 8 kilometres north of the Sydney central business district in the Willoughby local government area. The roads of Castlecrag were planned to suit the topography of the area; following the natural contours of the land rather than a grid.

Demographics: Castlecrag is an affluent harbourside area of Sydney; with more than half of its households enjoy incomes within the top quartile of Sydney (Willoughby City Community Profile 2011). The population of 2,965 in 2011 of which 2,610 are Australian citizens listing 66.6% as born in Australia. It has a population of UK born residents at 5.9 %, New Zealand 2.0%, USA 1.7% and China 1.6% and 1,031 dwellings.

Name: Early maps of the district note a formation of high rock called Edinburgh Castle Rocks. In 1920 the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) bought 90 acres on the south side of the escarpment. Walter Burley Griffin, founding member of the GSDA, named the estate he designed Castlecrag. Eventually this name was applied to the whole peninsula. *Castle Crag* Post Office opened on 1 September 1937 and was renamed *Castlecrag* in 1941.

The roads of Castlecrag were planned to suit the topography of the area; following the natural contours of the land. The streets in the southern older, portion of the suburb were named after parts of castles: The barbette, The Barbican, The Barricade, The Bartizan, The Bastion, The Battlement, The Bulwark, The Citadel, The High Tor, The Outpost, The Palisade, The Parapet, The Postern, The Rampart, The Redoubt, The Scarp, The Tor Walk and Sortie Port. There are also Tower, Casement, and Turret Reserves, and the main street through the centre is Edinburgh Road.

Governor Phillip: Governor Phillip led an expedition through Middle Harbour in 1788 in search of arable land and water, but the rugged terrain of the Castlecrag area meant that it was ignored until 1856 when the area was offered for public auction. Although there were twenty-five Crown leases in the area in 1860, there was little development before the 1920s. The opening of the Suspension Bridge in 1892 and the tramway in 1898 helped, but access was still poor and none of the estates had been subdivided. What development there was consisted mostly of holiday houses, Chinese market gardens, boatsheds and a wharf.

The 1880s: This period saw a great land boom in Sydney. The road that eventually became Edinburgh Road was built in the early 1880s. From 1882 to 1906 it was called Mowbray Road East. The Yachtville Estate was the first subdivision of the area in 1904. J. Knight Smith, an alderman and prominent businessman, built the first public swimming pool in 1905. As late as 1916 the Mayor of Willoughby said *"all the surrounding shores are clad in native trees and the only homes...are primitive weekend dwellings in most inaccessible spots"*

Walter Burley Griffin: In 1919 Walter Burley Griffin, an American architect and landscape architect, formed the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) and resigned all his Canberra responsibilities. Backed by Melbourne businessmen, politicians and personal associate, the following year he secured an option over a large area of the Castlecrag and Castle Cove peninsulas and most of Middle Cove ('Covecrag'). In this endeavour he had problems with banks, builders and councils because of his unconventional design *"no fences, no boundaries, no red roofs - I want Castlecrag built so that each individual can feel the whole of the landscape is his"*. The GSDA only managed to build a few houses before the Depression set in, but their planned development of bush reserves and streets that followed the contours of the land created a unique community. In 1937 Griffin died and his partner Eric Nicholls carried on his work until the early forties.



Architecture: Griffin designed houses that blended with their local environment, its locally sourced, naturally hewn stone and neutral coloured materials. Each employed a *reverse* layout with living rooms at the rear addressing the nature reserves and interconnecting bushland tracks behind each. Services were also laid from the rear of each site and no house had boundary fences and all enjoyed unbroken water vistas by not having pitched roofs to obstruct the panoramas.

The Haven Theatre: This outdoor theatre is unique to Castlecrag. It was designed by Griffin on a site picked by his wife Marion and used often for cultural activities in the Griffin years. It was refurbished in 1991-92.

The First Public Wharf: In the Municipality of Middle Harbour the first public wharf was opened in 1916 at Torquay Point and a motor launch service to The Spit operated two days a week for many years. It was demolished in the 1950s.

Walter Burley Griffin Memorial Fountain: A memorial fountain to Griffin was erected in Edinburgh Road in 1965. It was designed by Bim Hilder, a local artist, and commissioned by the Castlecrag Community Centre Committee. This memorial supplemented the trees planted in Edinburgh Rd by the Castlecrag Progress Association in 1937 when they heard of Griffin's death in India. Meanwhile the northern escarpment was being developed on more conventional lines.

The 1950s and 60s: This period saw a boom in building in the area. The covenant that had controlled the development during Griffin's period was no longer in force, but the atmosphere that had been created by his development remained.

Cabarisha Hospital: This small, five-bed hospital was established by Dr Edward Rivett in 1928 on Edinburgh Road in a house designed by Griffin. The hospital has been enlarged many times and is now called Castlecrag Private Hospital.

Parks and Reserves: Parks and reserves in Castlecrag include Butt Park and Sailors Bay Park.

Schools: Ivanhoe, a private school in Sunnyside Crescent, operated from 1929-1933. Castlecrag Infants School, a public school in Edinburgh Road operated from 1950 to 1989. Glenaeon School acquired the site in 1994 and it now houses their infants' school.

2FC: The first large scale radio broadcasting in Australia started in Castlecrag. Farmer & Co. set up two towers, each approximately 70 metres high, on the north-eastern corner of Eastern Valley Way and Edinburgh Road. Transmission commenced on 5 December 1923. The transmitter was dismantled in 1929 and transferred to Homebush.

The Shopping Centre: The shopping centre was first established by Griffin in 1924 with four shops and residences. A lot of development has taken place since then, but part of the centre incorporates the original buildings and is called *Griffin Centre*. Castlecrag library is unique amongst the local libraries as it is a community library, funded by Willoughby City council but staffed entirely by volunteers.

Resident Organisations: Resident organisations have always been active in Castlecrag. The Walter Burley Griffin Society, the Castlecrag Conservation Society and the Castlecrag Progress Association, among others, are currently active in the area.

Castlecrag Community Centre: The Community Centre opened in 1947 and was designed by Eric Nicholls. The Centre is administered by a committee of residents and now houses a small hall, a pre-school, and a library. The land was donated by the GSDA, and the original building was erected by the residents with pound for pound subsidy by Willoughby Council to whom the building was transferred in 1965. Castlecrag Community Library is run by volunteers.

*Further reading: The Suburb of Castlecrag by Esther Leslie at 994.311WIL
See also the brochure Castlecrag Walk*

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Willoughby City Library Services