



STATE HERITAGE REGISTER REPORT

Introductory Note: The first and, at that stage, most important heritage listing of the Fishwick house was in 2000 when it was placed on the Register of the National Estate, administered by the Australian Heritage Commission. In the late 1990s, Australia's federal and state governments moved to rationalise their heritage responsibilities both to remove overlaps and to ensure that protection was sheeted home to the best-placed level of administration. This process was completed in 2007 when the Register of the National Estate ceased being part of a statutory federal act. However, given its importance as a research resource and valuable archive of the nation's heritage objects, it was then "frozen", but remains publically accessible.

The house was first listed at the New South Wales state level in 2006. After some bureaucratic shuffling of heritage responsibilities, it is now protected by the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, administered by the Department of Planning & Environment. The state has over 27,000 items on its heritage database. However some 1650 of these, including the Fishwick house, have a much higher level of heritage protection by being listed on the NSW Heritage Register.

The documentation which rationalises and defines the formal listing of the Fishwick house on the NSW Register is exhaustive, so only the most relevant sections have been included here. The full report, including sections on the house's description, history, historic themes and other listing information can be accessed at:
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5055461>

* * * * *

Extracts from NSW Heritage Register Report

The Fishwick House

State Heritage Listing No. 01751

Listing date 15 December 2006

Gazette no. 183 Pg. 11042 15-12-2006

Database no. 5055461. File no. HO4/00338

Statement of Significance

The Fishwick house is of State significance as a remarkably intact, representative example of the domestic architecture of Walter Burley Griffin which retains the integrity of its original architectural layout, design and decorative detailing. It is also a rarity as it is one of 13 remaining Griffin-designed houses in the Griffins' (Walter Burley Griffin & Marion Mahony Griffin) Castlecrag Estate and one of two of these houses that was built to the scale and level of design detail consistent with its original design.

The design, construction and detailing of the Fishwick house demonstrate Griffin's commitment to combining creativity and artistry with innovative uses of technology and materials. The house and its landscape setting, located in the Griffins' Castlecrag Estate, are valuable research resources for the study of Griffin's work and the philosophy underpinning Walter's design innovations. The house has social significance at a local level as a gathering place for the local community. It was at the Fishwick house that the Community Circle met, a community group formed by Marion Mahony Griffin, the architect wife of Walter Burley Griffin. It was also the venue for a long standing community cooperative formed to fundraise for community facilities such as the local kindergarten and community centre.

Assessment of significance

SHR Criteria a) [Historical significance]

The Fishwick house is historically significant at a State level as it is a fine and intact example of the innovative and distinctive work of Walter Burley Griffin, an architect who made a significant contribution to the development of Australian architectural design. The Fishwick house is also historically significant as being part of Griffin's Castlecrag urban development which was a distinctive regional development to be planned and designed to harmonise with and enhance existing natural landscape qualities and targeted for sale at a particular market. The Fishwick house is important as one of only two houses built to the scale level of design detail consistent with Griffin's original design.

SHR Criteria b) [Associative significance]

The Fishwick house is of State significance through its association with the work of architect Walter Burley Griffin.

SHR Criteria c) [Aesthetic significance]

The Fishwick house is aesthetically significant at a State level as its form, massing and architectural and decorative detail demonstrate the distinctive style developed by Griffin and is an excellent example of innovative architecture developed during the inter-war period. The Fishwick house is a fine example of the artistry and architectural achievements of Griffin. The attention to siting and insistence that the building harmonise with and enhance the natural landscape make it a clear example of the design philosophy developed by Griffin.

Designed as it was without limitations of budget it demonstrates Griffin's commitment to combining creativity and technological and materials innovation. This is demonstrated in: the 6 panel articulated glass sliding garage doors, the large picture window in the lounge room raised into specially constructed recess with counterweights inside two flanking concrete pillars, the use of cork flooring in bathrooms, the use of sand cement and bitumen sub-floor infill in the ground floor to achieve damp control, temperature insulation and termite proofing and the use of hollow block concrete slab construction in the upper floors. These are only a few of the innovative creative and technological features of the home.

SHR Criteria d) [Social significance]

The Fishwick house has social significance at a local level as a place which for many years became a centre point or gathering place for the local community. During the 1940s and 1950s the house was used for gatherings of the "Community Circle" a community group formed by Marion Mahony Griffin years earlier. It was also where a local community cooperative met to organise fundraising to build the local kindergarten and community centre.

SHR Criteria e) [Research potential] The Fishwick house is of State significance as an important demonstration of Griffin's architectural style and innovative design features, technical features and materials. The house in its garden setting is also a striking example of the philosophy underpinning Griffin's architectural style, a style that valued and worked in sympathy with the natural landscape.

SHR Criteria f) [Rarity] The Fishwick house is of State significance for its rarity as one of 13 surviving designed by Walter Burley Griffin in Castlecrag. Its rarity is further enhanced by the fact that it is one of only two of Griffin's houses in Castlecrag built to the large scale level and high quality of design detail consistent with his concept of the estate as a "high-class residential area". It is the estate's only house of two storeys and is by far its largest and grandest.

SHR Criteria g) [Representativeness] The Fishwick house is representative of the work of Walter Burley Griffin.

Integrity/Intactness The Fishwick house is remarkably intact and retains much of its original fabric. The house and setting retain their original design integrity.

Assessment criteria Items are assessed against the State heritage Assessment Criteria to determine the level of significance.