

## ACT Heritage Council Nomination: Red Hill Historic planting

### Part 3: Letters of support for this Nomination

WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN SOCIETY Inc.

Paul Ratcliffe  
Red Hill Regenerators

#### THE GRIFFIN/WESTON RED FLOWERING PLANTS ON RED HILL

The Walter Burley Griffin Society supports strongly the nomination by Red Hill Regenerators of the Griffin/Weston Red Flowering Plants to the ACT Heritage Register.

The story is quite well told in the existing signage on Red Hill. Walter, at one with Marion Mahony Griffin on matters of Australian flora and landscape, directed Charles Weston to plant red-flowering bottlebrushes on the north-east slope of Red Hill. They survive and are especially worthy of protection, conservation, management and storytelling.

Griffin had many plans for the landscaping of Canberra. He introduced the term 'landscape architect' to Australia. The spirit of nature flowed through his work and he had a longstanding interest in colour in the landscape (Weirick, *Landscape Australia*, 3/1988); his wife Marion was a keen student and artistic delineator of Australian trees and plants. She wrote of how he designed 'methods of planting according to colour which gave his plantings a rare and seasonal splendour.'

Christopher Vernon confirmed Griffin's application of this method in the landscaping of Newman College at the same time he was designing for Canberra's denuded hills.

Dr John Gray, in his biography of Weston, has described Griffin's concept for a massed colour scheme on the hills surrounding the federal capital site. Weston kept detailed notes of the proposed scheme and moved quickly to put it into effect on Red Hill in 1917.

The survival on the plants over 100 years is remarkable, despite the depredations of Charlie Russell's cattle and periodic bushfires, such as in 2001.

The accord between Griffin and Weston on this project is worth noting. This heritage nomination serves a number of heritage criteria in Canberra's history, nature conservation, urban and landscape planning and the fundamental roles played by these two founders of the National Capital.

The listing would throw additional light on Griffin's Plan for the National Capital and his contributions as Director of Design and Construction 1913-1920. Importantly, it should serve also to distinguish Griffin's authentic legacy from the National Capital Authority's so-called *Griffin Legacy* of 2004-2007, which was incorporated into the National Capital Plan but has been shown to be misleading in a great many respects.

Brett Odgers  
Convenor, ACT Chapter, Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc.  
2 March 2017

Australian Garden History Society  
ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch  
PO Box 5008  
LYNEHAM ACT 2602

ACT Heritage Council  
Environment, Planning and Sustainable  
Development Directorate  
Challis Street  
Dickson  
8<sup>th</sup> February 2016



David Flannery  
Chair  
ACT Heritage Council

Dear Mr Flannery

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Garden History Society, ACT Monaro Riverina Branch.

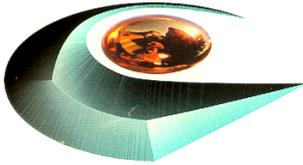
Our Branch wholeheartedly supports the application submitted by the Red Hill Regenerators in their request for ACT Heritage Council listing of the red plantings within the Red Hill Nature Reserve. I believe that there is clear evidence that Charles Weston planted red flowering plants in response to Walter and Marion Mahony Griffin's vision for Red Hill and these bushes continue to thrive.

The Australian Garden History Society aims to promote awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes. Red Hill is an intrinsic part of Canberra's National Open Space System and as such a cultural landscape of historical importance. The association of the Griffin's vision and Weston's plantings is an integral link to Canberra's horticultural heritage.

The Australian Garden History Society believes that protection for these historic plantings should be strengthened and that an ACT Heritage Listing is appropriate.



Sue Byrne  
Chair  
ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch  
Australian Garden History Society  
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**Canberra & District  
Historical Society Inc**  
FOUNDED 10 December 1953  
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heritage@act.gov.au

Dear Heritage Council

**Re: Application for Heritage Registration of the Red Hill Historic Planting  
site by the Red Hill Regeneration Group**

I am writing in support of this application because the Canberra & District Historical Society is impressed by the work of the Red Hill Regeneration Group in keeping the vision of the Griffins in the planning of Canberra.

In this case the vision of Marion Mahoney Griffin for Red Hill is particularly relevant. The site is important because it illustrates the role of botanical concepts in early twentieth century town planning and its particular relevance for Canberra. The Historical Society considers it important to preserve what elements of the Griffin botanical vision survive in the National Capital.

Yours sincerely

Julia Ryan  
President  
Canberra & District Historical Society.

28 February 2017.



Australian Institute of  
Landscape Architects

To Red Hill Regeneration Group  
Paul Ratcliffe  
info@redhillregenerators.org.au

[↩](#)  
[↩](#)

Dear Mr Ratcliffe

[↩](#)

Thank you for involving the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) ACT Chapter in your advocacy for conserving our ACT heritage.

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The AILA ACT Executive Committee discussed your intention to nominate to the ACT Heritage Register some plants on Red Hill Nature Reserve as objects of historic significance. We suggest that as these plants are living it will be hard to maintain the objects' significance when they are dead and gone, so registration of them as objects is problematic.

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An alternative is to nominate the Red Hill Nature Reserve as a place, with its broader range of cultural and landscape heritage values including its historically significant plants, but not solely for them. The reserve's plan of management could be revised to take account of the vegetation conservation intent without too onerous constraints on authorities today and in future.

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The cultural history that you have compiled is valuable and I am sure it would be of interest to many. Consequently please consider how AILA can assist your group with making this information more widely known.

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Finally, I take this opportunity to thank all in your group for the valuable landcare work you do for current and future generations.

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Yours sincerely

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[↩](#)

Catherine Keirnan  
AILA ACT President  
14 February 2017

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## A NOTE OF SUPPORT FOR THE HERITAGE LISTING OF HISTORIC PLANTINGS ON RED HILL

In January 2017 my Swinger Hill neighbour, Brett Odgers of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, told me that the Red Hill Regenerators were applying to the ACT Heritage Council to have the Griffin plantings on Red Hill nominated for ACT Heritage Listing.

My family and I were residents of Red Hill from 1969 to 1996 and we drove up Red Hill to watch the Canberra fireworks and to take visitors to see the view. In 1986 I received a letter from (Dr) Michael Mulvaney criticising my error in my newish gardening column in The Canberra Times where I praised berry plants. After a walk with him on Red Hill near the entry road to the golf course, I wrote a column making full apology for my ignorance. It was at this time that Red Hill Regenerators, a voluntary Park Care group, started restoring and maintaining the environment on Red Hill.

With my late husband, the tree man Dr Robert Boden OAM, I learnt about the historic plantings on Red Hill by Charles Weston in response to Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffins' vision to 'paint' Canberra's hillsides using plants that flowered with specific colours. From 1917-1920, Weston planted red flowering Callistemons, Grevilleas and possibly Swainsona species on Red Hill summit.

Records show there were three species of callistemon planted, *C. lanceolatus*, *C. citrinus* and *C. rigidum* (syn *C. rigidus*). An excellent sign has been placed on Red Hill explaining the heritage significance of these plantings.

From time to time from 1996, Robert and I visited the plantings of callistemons, ever surprised by their survival and enamoured of their heritage. We both wrote about the plantings for various publications over the years and were relieved that a bushfire on Red Hill c. 1998 did not destroy the shrubs.

On February 3 this year a horticultural historian friend and I visited Red Hill to check out the current state of the plantings. The rather steep and slippery path and steps leading down the hill to the callistemons provided a delight as the shrubs appeared to be in excellent health despite the extreme summer heat and drought this season. May they thrive for another century and, with heritage listing, which I support, their future should be afforded additional protection.

Susan Parsons  
17 February 2017

20 Barnet Close  
Swinger Hill ACT 2606

**86 Hilltop Road  
Burra NSW 2620**

**For the attention of  
Mr David Flannery and  
Members of the ACT Heritage Council**

This letter is written to support the nomination of *Red Hill Historic Planting* by the Red Hill Regeneration Group.

Red Hill, in its own right, is a treasured significant cultural landscape of Canberra. It is a landmark feature of the city and one of the inner hill ridges that defines central Canberra. It is a popular destination for Canberrans and visitors. As well, Red Hill is an integral component of Canberra's National Open Space System that I understand is a feature of the National Heritage List Nomination of Canberra (under assessment by the Federal Government).

The historic red plantings and their continuation in a modest regeneration pattern is a significant feature of this hill that strongly links the Hill to its Griffin era history. Linked to this is the long established Red Hill Regenerators Group that now have given Red Hill a social value through their caring management. The red plantings area is can be considered an organically evolving cultural landscape adding another dimension of history and interest that can easily be interpreted for the Canberra residents and visitors.



Juliet Ramsay  
Honorary Member ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes  
Co-convenor Australia ICOMOS National Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Routes

7 February 2017