

## Land prices vs literature

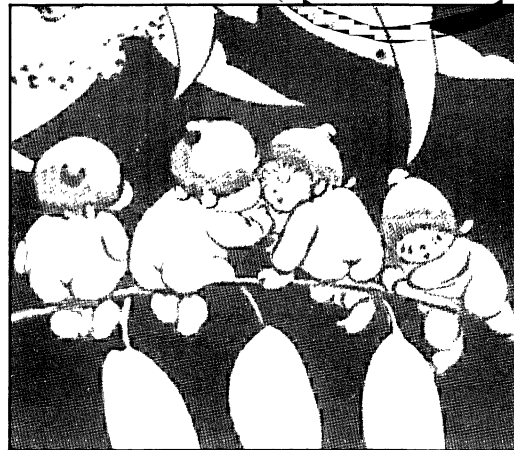
— developer 10, May Gibbs 0

Early November will be an exciting time for all fans of May Gibbs and everyone interested in reserving a vital part of Australia's literary heritage. As previously reported in *InCite*, May Gibbs' house and garden, 'Nutcote', in Neutral Bay, Sydney, is under threat of development. The state-of-play at the moment is that the Commissioner of Inquiry's recommendation is now before the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Mr Bob Carr. It is likely that the house will be preserved, but the garden may go to villa apartments.

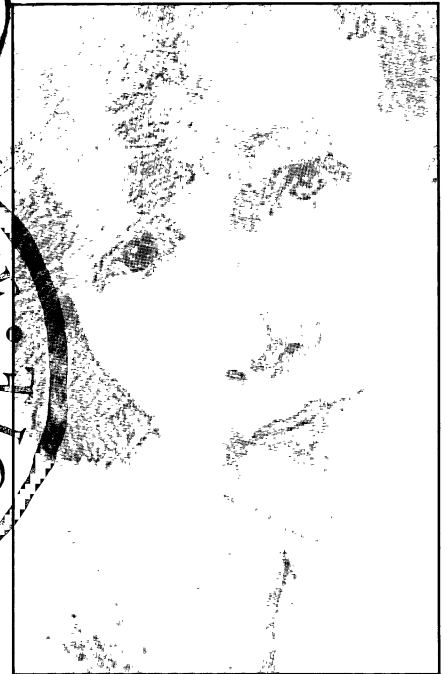
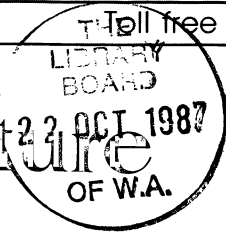
A cool \$1,500,000 is needed to save 'Nutcote' intact. The May Gibbs Foundation, a group of enthusiastic but penniless volunteers, is working in a race against time to raise this large amount. So far no financial support from the NSW government has been pledged and generous benefactors seem to be few and far between. As yet no literary Dick Smith is on the horizon and so a number of vital fundraising events have been organised.

The first week of November has been named May Gibbs Week — as *Snugglypot and Cuddlepip* was first published in November 1918. The official opening of this Week will be on 3 November in the Sydney Botanic Gardens. A well-known personality will read May Gibbs' stories and children will be invited to dress-up as a May Gibbs character — lemonade will flow.

During May Gibbs Week school children throughout Australia will be invited to help save 'Nutcote' by making donations through their schools. Kits containing information and a beautiful full-colour poster have been sent far and wide. Public libraries are asked to make a feature of May Gibbs Week with displays and story-telling, and by commending the Foundation's appeal for funds to users of all ages.



A further fundraising effort will be an art auction on the evening of 6 November. The well-known Sydney art auctioneer, Bill Ellenden, will conduct the auction at the North Sydney Council Chambers. Ted Mack, North Sydney's mayor will be guest of honour. Members of May Gibbs' family have donated some of her paintings as well as ones by May Gibbs' father, H. W. Gibbs — a turn-of-



Below: May Gibbs and her scottie dogs in the garden at 'Nutcote'; left: printed fabric (detail) made by Turnbull and Stockdale, 1929; above: May Gibbs — a self portrait.

the-century watercolour painter who has works in the Holmes-a-Court collection and the Western Australian Art Gallery. Contemporary artists and illustrators have also donated works to the auction. To attend the auction it is essential to RSVP as soon as possible after 19 October to Helen Wood on (02) 810 5788.

Robert Holden, (soon to be Director of the Australian Children's Museum, at Juniper Hall, Paddington, NSW) has organised a travelling exhibition of some of the works of May Gibbs and Meg Maltby. The exhibition includes works in the James Hardie Collection and original drawings and sketches, watercolours, bookmarks etc. The exhibition will be held in the Canberra Botanic Gardens from early October until 8 November and will then move to the Melbourne Botanic Gardens from 17 November.

The race to save 'Nutcote' is on. The gauntlet has been thrown down. Raise the money, keep the home. So far it's developers 10 and the literary world 0 or perhaps more sadly, apathy 15! 'Nutcote' has a lot to give — a place where school children can learn about a famous Australian, a place where illustrators can go to be inspired, a focal point for literary gatherings and new exhibitions, and importantly a quiet meditative haven on the harbour foreshore. It's all up to us! Send some money, visit the travelling exhibition and make a donation, buy a painting and tell your friends.

The May Gibbs Foundation, PO Box 500, Drummoyne 2047

Find enclosed my contribution of \$..... to help save May Gibbs' home and garden

Donations over \$2 are tax-deductible!

