

Brief History of ARV/Anglicare Castle Hill Estate

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Dixon's of Elwatan

The land of the Anglican Retirement Villages (ARV) Castle Hill Estate was part of the 3rd Government Farm in the late 1700's but was never developed until the early years of the 1900s when Robert Dixon and later his wife Eva (Holland) purchased a number of land grants, totalling 117 acres (about 47 hectares). The property functioned as a working farm producing fruit, vegetables, and dairy products. The farm raised dairy cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and goats. At weekends the Dixsons stayed in a cottage on David Road near to the farm manager's cottage (where Ferntree Court is now in Hopetoun Village).

In 1926 the big house 'Elwatan' (Arabic - place of living) was built as the family home. It was one of the largest houses designed by BJ Waterhouse, melding both Georgian and Italian Mediterranean styles and was built in an era when fine craftsmanship using quality materials was the norm. The wainscoting and all the joinery is walnut and the original fireplaces, mantels and hearths remain. Throughout the principal rooms the floors were laid with parquet in herring bone and basket weave patterns.

Several other buildings accommodated live-in staff, garages, a gatekeeper's lodge, a tower house built to contain a large water tank, and a diesel generator for the electricity supply. The staff cottages were designed by JF Munnings – similar designs to cottages in the new Federal Capital in Canberra.

In those early years the property had to be self sufficient - they generated their own electricity and used water from the streams and springs on the property. The water tank in the Tower House provided water pressure for upstairs in the big house. A septic system was installed and the waste was collected in tanks downhill on the farm near Willow Pond. When the telephone was connected in the 1920's there were only 12 subscribers in Castle Hill and Baulkham Hills.

In the big house every room, including the staff rooms, had to have a view to enjoy the surrounding countryside. In the main house there were five bedroom suites and upstairs accommodation for female staff. On the ground floor there was ample space to entertain weekend guests – a small entry foyer led into a spacious living room. Opening off the living room was a drawing room (later called the Chinese Room commemorating the Mowll's years as missionaries in China), a dining room, and a covered veranda. A short hallway led to the library and billiard room. Nearby was the flower room containing a strongroom that was used to store the household silver. (It's now unusable as it doesn't meet current safety standards.)

There was a walled kitchen garden and a magnificent larger walled garden that extended from the open veranda side of the house down past the kitchen and servants' wing to Western Road. Robert's uncle William Dixon was a great collector and a horticulturist specialising in exotic plants of the Pacific. (His name is commemorated in the Dixon Room at the Mitchell Library that houses his archive and book collection.) The large cycads outside the house were planted by Robert. He also propagated many of the trees still growing on the site, including the eucalypts in Broughton Avenue. The sundial (heliochronometer) outside Lober House was brought from England and was used as the household timekeeper.

Some of the farm buildings remain. The silos, used to store water and grain, were probably built from locally available materials. The tractor shed later became a residence for a gardener, Alix Scott, and has now been renovated and named the Alix Scott Community Centre. The former dairy is now the Property Office, and a brick and tiled roof storage shed is located behind the Men's Club and Silo Workshops which include the Red Shed.

The orchard was down the hill from Langshaw Circuit in Warrina Village, adjacent to Gough Drive. The whole strip of Warrina Village from Castle Hill Road through the centre of the property was never built on but was used for grazing land until the late 1990's. Brian King Gardens now stands where the horse sheds were.

The stone gateposts were brought from the family home 'Abergeldie' at Summer Hill and re-erected at the entrance to the driveway (now Broughton Avenue). The Dixson family is regarded as one of the most prominent pioneering families in the district.

Purchase of Property for Retirement Village

Howard Mowll was Archbishop of Sydney from 1936 – 1958. His wife Dorothy was concerned about providing homes for aged clergy and church workers. The only aged care homes in existence at that time didn't cater for married couples.

Together Dame Pattie Menzies and Dorothy Mowll pushed for the introduction of provision for aged care. In 1954 when the Bill was passed in Parliament it provided 2 for 1 Government Funding (ie for every pound raised by an organisation, the Government would match it with 2 pounds). This allowed a period of intensive development on the site from the 1960's to the early 1970's when this funding was phased out. By then long service leave, superannuation and pension provisions had improved.

In 1958 the Church of England National Emergency Fund (CENEF) Committee had the task to find a suitable property to fulfil Dorothy Anne Mowll's vision, of a place 'where church veterans might live in an atmosphere of active restfulness and meaningful fellowship'. The CENEF Committee consisted mainly of clergy. The only lay member was Mr Lober. The Archbishop favoured a property at Bowral but other members of the committee felt that this property at Castle Hill was more suitable and would allow for future expansion. Approval to purchase the property, 'Elwatan' was given by the Archbishop on the 21st October 1958 – just three days before he died. Mrs Mowll had predeceased her husband in 1957, so neither of them saw the realisation of her vision.

The Anglican Church bought the main residence and six cottages on 117 acres for 75,000 pounds. Only 7,000 pounds was in hand, and a large part of this was from Mr and Mrs W.H. Lober. A condition of the sale was that the name 'Elwatan' could not be used so the house was re-named Lober House in recognition of this gift. Mr Lober was the driving force behind fundraising in the Sydney diocese to raise the necessary finance to purchase the property.

The official opening by Archbishop Gough was on 24th October 1959, the first anniversary of Archbishop Mowll's death. Unusually, the opening was attended by all the Anglican Bishops of Australia, General Synod being held in Sydney at that time.

In the beginning Lober House was the focal point of Mowll Village. The first staff and residents arrived in February 1960. Women were housed in Lober House and men were housed in the other cottages on the site. Initially it was hostel type accommodation.

As additional hostel accommodation buildings were erected there was a need for a larger dining room for the growing number of residents so the Dixson family donated money to build Wills Café – the name recognising the Dixson's connection to WD and HO Wills.

Period of Rapid Growth

Increasingly people preferred to live in self care accommodation (Independent Living) so older hostel accommodation was converted into self contained units and more villas and duplexes were built. From 1964 – 68 Sisson Clinic, Nell Slade Respite Centre, and Leumeah Nursing Home were established to provide health care for residents. In 1965 - St James Chapel, Dover Hall and the Craft Room were built.

For many years Lober House was a focal point for all residents of the Castle Hill complex. In the early years the Dixsons library was used as a chapel. The Margaret Free Room (originally the Billiard Room) was used continuously for meetings. The Sun Room (an enclosed veranda) was used for carpet bowls and recreational activities. The reception rooms were used for Welfare Committee meetings, special occasion parties and morning teas, and by ARV administration for meetings and light luncheons. The Foundation for Aged Care also entertained guests and benefactors in these pleasant surroundings. In recent years Lober House was gradually taken over to provide additional office space and meeting and training rooms for ARV staff. Consequently many residents on the site had limited access to this wonderful old building.

Additional Villages on Castle Hill Site

Originally the whole property was known as Mowll Memorial Village. Now Mowll Village is one of six villages on the site – Nuffield Village was officially opened in 1966, Hopetoun Village and Warrina Hostel in 1970 (Independent Living Units came later in 2004), Kilvinton Village - Phillip Lodge in 1973 and Hunter Terraces ILUs in 1976, and Flinders Village in 1976. In 2019 Kilvinton Village has been closed for major redevelopment beginning in 2020. Currently there are five residential care facilities – Farrer Brown Court in Nuffield Village, Donington in Flinders Village, Warrina Residential Care, Brian King Gardens and Donald Coburn Centre all in Warrina Village.

Time for Renewal

In 2010 ARV committed a major investment into a widespread period of renovation and renewal on the Castle Hill site. Preparatory work began with the decommissioning and removal of the ARV Laundry and the construction of 13 new independent living villas on the Ebbs Lane site. When the Property Office near the silos was relocated to Western Road their former building became the new Men's Club. The Club had to relocate from the Tower House that was marked for redevelopment. The new Club House building was renovated by a group of men. They also redeveloped the Silo Workshops, using re-cycled materials from buildings due for demolition. The workshops are now safe and fit for purpose.

In 2011 Kingerlee Lodge in Nuffield Village was renovated to become the Nuffield Community Centre. In 2012-13 the Hopetoun Community Centre underwent a \$1m renovation putting all the buildings under one roof with the same level floor throughout, and providing lift access to the Leisure Centre on the lower floor. In 2013-14 The Gatehouse in Mowll Village was renovated and enlarged, becoming a community centre. From 2014 to 2016 major upgrading of community facilities and resident rooms, to include ensuite bathrooms, was completed in Farrer Brown Court, Warrina Residential Care, and Donington Court. The Donald Coburn Centre was upgraded and internal changes were made within Brian King Gardens. Community Rooms were provided in Flinders Village and Kilvinton Village.

Parish Partnership with St Paul's

In 2013-4 ARV developed a new model for the provision of chaplaincy for Independent Living residents at Castle Hill. This involved entering into a partnership with the Parish of St Paul's Castle Hill. The chaplains are members of the staff of St Paul's and Anglicare has a contractual arrangement for these chaplains to provide church services at St James' Chapel and pastoral care to retirement living residents. The chaplains are supported by Pastoral Care Visitors. St James' Chapel has three Church Wardens and a Chapel Committee of wise and Godly people who represent the views, wishes and desires of the congregation to the Senior Chaplain. Each of the Residential Care Facilities has its own chaplain employed by Anglicare.

Lober Square Redevelopment

The Lober Square Redevelopment has been a \$100m investment in the provision of high quality unit and villa accommodation; a new state of the art health centre; flexible spaces for dining, functions and meetings in Wills Café, the Fillingham Centre and Lober House; shops; a bowling/croquet green; underground car parking; and the restoration of four heritage buildings – the Tower House and Annexe, Pine Lodge and Lober House (\$5m).

Lober House 'the Jewel in the Crown', was restored, maintaining its original character, and expanding its role as a centre of community focus. The installation of a lift provided much needed access to the first floor rooms and to the Radio Station and storage in the basement. Resident groups and activities - the Library, the Listening Library, the Computer Club, billiards and games rooms have moved into this wonderful old building. There are also a number of meeting and function rooms for use by residents and staff. Offices for some Anglicare staff including Chaplaincy, Volunteers Department, and Foundation for Aged Care are located upstairs in the former female staff bedrooms.

Merger of ARV and Anglicare

The merger of ARV and Anglicare officially took place on 1 July 2016, with a short period of transition of leadership from ARV CEO Rob Freeman to Anglicare CEO Grant Millard. It took about two years for the merger of all aspects of the organisations to become fully completed. Under the new organisational structure Gavin Pretorius became the General Manager of all Residential Services across Anglicare. Eric Aldeguer continued as North West Regional Manager with responsibility for the Castle Hill site.

Further development from 2016

Along Hilliard Drive on the site previously occupied by Fairfax House and Hermon Slade House two new apartment buildings with 33 apartments and a community room commenced in early 2016. Also during that year Gough Drive was re-routed to a new roundabout on Hilliard Drive. Following extensive consultation with residents Dover Hall, St James Chapel and the Craft Room were replaced with a new \$7m multifunction building that has a new St James Chapel, Dover Hall, large foyer, Chaplaincy Office and facilities. There is lift access to underground parking for cars and electric scooters. This car park is linked to the larger car park below the Green. The former Sir Vincent and Lady Fairfax Therapy Centre in Warrina Village was demolished to make way for the construction of 22 apartments and two villas in Glade Lane.

Future planned development

The Kilvinton Village, Western Road, Dorothy Mowll Court and adjacent Barker Drive sites will be redeveloped in four stages commencing in 2020. This will include demolition of Hunter Terraces, Dorothy Mowll Court, chalets on Barker Drive and houses on Western Road; ground work and installation of essential services; widening of Barker Drive; relocation of the entry from Old Northern Road; construction of retirement living villas and apartments; a new Residential Care Facility; a Research Centre; a café and community facilities.