Dappeto

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Contents

Cover: Dappeto, Undated, but probably the 19th century. Gibbin's glass fern-house can be seen at left. Photo: Bayside Council Library.

Glossary

Adaptation	Finding a new use for a heritage structure compatible with the building, while retaining its historic character
Citadel	Salvation Army church building
Congress	Annual conference meeting of the Salvation Army in each capital city
Congress Hall	Main Salvation Army churches in the capital cities. Often used for Congress Meetings, but also for regular weekly inner-city meetings.
Conservation	All the processes of looking after a historic building in a way which retains its cultural significance. Depending on the circumstances this may include maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, and adaptation.
Corps	Group of Salvation Army members meeting in a specific location or citadel
Corps Cadets	Teenagers engaged in weekly bible study sessions and studies of Salvation Army doctrine
Curtilage	Land immediately surrounding a building and forming one enclosure with it
DA	Development Application lodged with council seeking permission to build
DoHA	Federal Department of Health and Ageing
General	World leader of the Salvation Army
Hipped roof	A style of roof where all sides slope downwards from a ridge to the walls
HIS	Heritage Impact Statement
Industrial School	An institution set up to house and educate destitute children
Junior Soldier	Child member of the Salvation Army
ILU	Independent Living Unit
LEP	Local Environmental Plan produced by council which dictates the type of development permitted in each zoned area
Life-Saving Guards	Young people's group, similar to boy scouts and girl guides
Mercy Seat	A bench placed in front of the speaker's podium. During evangelistic meetings, penitents are invited to kneel at the bench to dedicate their lives to God.
Officer	Salvation Army minister of religion or pastor
Promoted to glory	Died
Physical culture	A 19th century exercise training system, drawing from dances, sports, military training and medical calisthenics. Practitioners often used equipment such as medicine balls, wands, or bowling-pin shaped clubs
Preservation	Conservation technique to preserve the structure in the state in which it is found, by repairing it to arrest further degradation
Reconstruction	Conserving a heritage building using new materials
Restoration	Recreating a specific date in the building's history and faithfully replicating each detail from this period using original materials
SEPP Senior's Living-2004	State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) 2004
Senior Soldier	Adult member of the Salvation Army
Soldier	Salvation Army member
Song Brigade	Choir
Songbook	Salvation Army hymnal
Timbrel	Tambourine— played in Salvation Army marches or meetings
Timbrel Brigade	Group of Salvationist women who play the timbrel in choregraphed displays

Introduction

Perched on top of the hill, at 171 Wollongong Road, Arncliffe, is a distinctive, elegant two-story structure. To some, it looks a little out of place, planted amongst a huddle of suburban houses from the inter-war period, but this was not always the case. It was once a focal point of the area; a beloved family home, commanding expansive views over a large estate.

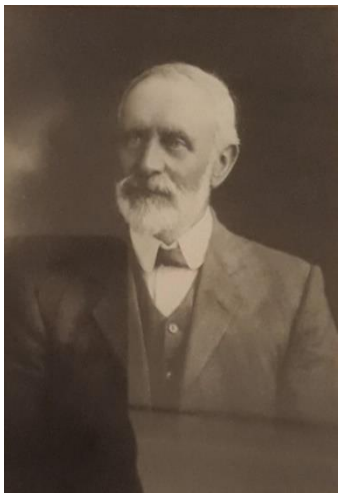
Although Wollongong Road is now well off the main road, construction of the house at this location was an obvious choice at the time. Wollongong Road was surveyed by Major Mitchell in 1831 and constructed by convicts as the main thoroughfare south to the Illawarra district. It stretched from the Cooks River Crossing at Tempe to the Lugarno crossing of Georges River. [1]

The building is currently a part of Macquarie Lodge Retirement Village, but it has had a varied history and several names over the last century or so. This work will examine its origins, its functions, changes to the structure, its owners and the people who lived there. It will also review changes to the estate on which Dappeto house stands and look at the conservation methods employed to preserve the building for future generations.

The house's original name was Dappeto. It was built in 1885 by Frederick John Gibbins, wealthy oyster merchant and trawling magnate. Dappeto is classified under the Heritage Act 1977. The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage declares it to be a structure of State heritage significance as;

> 'An excellent example of domestic style Victorian architecture…
>
> Physical description: Two storey house of domestic style Victorian architecture. Constructed of sand-stock face bricks which were mixed with whale oil to protect the building against dampness. Patterned slate roof surmounted by an ornate captain's walk accessed by a cast iron spiral staircase. The two-storey verandah has an iron balustrade and trim to the upper floor and frieze to the lower floor. Features several beautiful fireplaces and over-mantles of various imported English timbers. The name Dapetto [sic] appears above the fanlight. Coat of Alms with initials F.J.G above side bay windows. [2] [3]

Following its nomination by Rockdale Council, Dappeto was issued with an Interim Heritage Order on 16 May 1986 under the provisions of the Heritage Act 1977, [4] transitioning to a Permanent Conservation Order # 00638 on 1 February 1989. [5] It currently appears on the State Heritage Register, listing # 00638, gazetted 02 April 1999; and the Local Environmental Plan, listing # 00044, gazetted 02 September 1988. [6]



Frederick John Gibbins. **Photo from Lydham Hall's collection**

Frederick John Gibbins

Family

Frederick John Gibbins was born 25 May 1841 at Dapto in the Illawarra, which at one time was known as Mullet Creek. The coming of the railway in 1887 shifted the centre of the township, which was previously further north than today's Wollongong suburb. Frederick was the eldest son of ex-convict John Gibbins (transported 1829 on the Claudine), and free-born Ann Meredith, daughter of the Liverpool Chief Constable.[7]

The aboriginal name of his birthplace Dapto is supposedly Dappeto, or Dabpeto, hence the origin of the curious name of his home. The word is said to mean 'water plenty' in the Dharawal language. However, the aborigines called the area 'Mookoonburro' meaning 'grub.' [8]

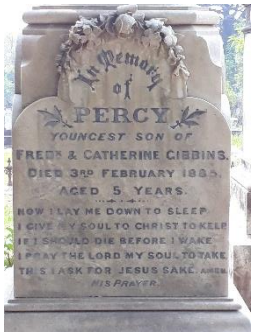
John Gibbins was a butcher, looking after the stores in the Government Stockade attached to the road building convict gang, which started at Mt Keira near Wollongong, and progressively worked its way south to Dapto, where John and Ann's son was born. [9] [10] Later in October they baptised their young son at the family church of St Luke's in Liverpool NSW, where they had been married the year previously on 16 March 1840.

John and Ann raised three daughters; their first, Sarah Ann was born in 1843, Mary J. in 1846, while Adelaide Amelia, was born in 1852 but tragically died before reaching the age of two.

Eventually John moved his family and his butchery business to George Street in Sydney. His son Frederick grew into a handsome young man with a slim build, blue eyes and brown hair. It is unknown why the conflict occurred, but the 16-year-old teenager had a dispute with his father and abruptly left home one Monday in October 1857. His father placed an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald, threatening legal retribution on anyone who harboured his son. [11]

Perhaps after the argument Frederick headed north to the Central Coast. We may never know, but it is known that seven years later he met a young woman from Kincumber, near Gosford. Frederick married Catherine Louise Pickett (1844-1929) at Brisbane Waters in 1864. [12] Catherine (sometimes spelt Katherine) was the daughter of William and Anne Pickett and the sibling of Henry (1831), Susannah (1833), James (1839) and Phebe (1849). The Pickett family were well-known pioneers who had lived on the Central Coast since 1835. [13]

Frederick and Catherine celebrated the birth of their first child Alfred John in Sydney in 1865 (d.1921). [14] Their second child Emma was born in the Shoalhaven district in 1867 (d.1940).[15] This was followed by the Sydney births of Ernest (1869-1928), [16] Amy (1870-1912), [17]Frederick J. (1872-1932), [18] Walter (1874-1923), [19] Edwin (1876-1940), [20] Ada (1878-1951),[21] and Percy (1880-1885). [22]

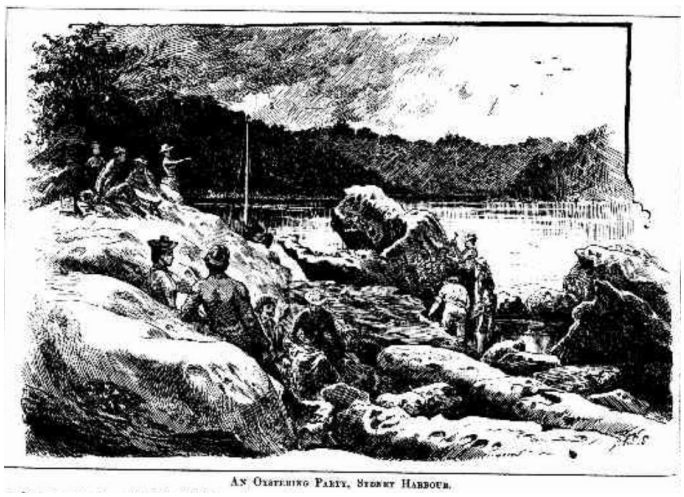


Percy's headstone on the Gibbins family grave at Rookwood, inscribed with a children's prayer. "Now I lay me down to sleep I give my soul to Christ to keep. If I die before I wake I pray the Lord my soul to take, This I ask for Jesus sake. His Prayer." Photo: Leonie Bell [23]

Businessman

Frederick Gibbins was an oyster farmer. From the early days of the colony, the settlers had followed the example of the aboriginal populace by hand harvesting oysters along the oyster reefs of New South Wales. The oysters were either dredged with a basket lowered from a boat to about four metres below the water mark, or hand collected from banks in the intertidal zone between high and low water marks (bank oysters).[24]

Unlike the indigenous people, however, the colonists overfished the coastline, harvesting not only the flesh of the shellfish, but burning the shells, which were a valuable source of lime, used extensively in building construction. Consequently, by the mid-1860s much of the reef ecosystem had been decimated and oyster farmers turned to cultivation techniques. As a result of declining oyster stocks, the government passed the Oyster Beds Act 1868, prohibiting burning live oysters for lime, and regulating oyster culture. The wild oyster industry collapsed by the end of the 19th century.[25]



Collecting oysters 1889. Photo: Illustrated Sydney News[26]

Each lease was permitted to a maximum length of one mile of coastline under the conditions of the Act. [27] The leasee did not hold rights or title to occupation of the land, but 'the exclusive right of depositing propagating, dredging and fishing for and taking oysters.' If they were caught burning live oysters for lime, a ten-pound fine was imposed, and the government reserved the right to close an oyster lease for up to three years if it was thought to be under threat of overfishing. [28]

In 1871 the Illustrated Sydney News alerted the public to the possibility that the government would open the Clarence, Hunter, Parramatta and Georges Rivers for the cultivation of oysters through the new leasing system. [29] Frederick sensed a tremendous business opportunity and successfully tendered for an oyster bed lease in the Hunter River in 1873 for £775 per annum, [30] employing Hans Anderson to manage the beds. [31]

Gibbins sold the oysters, and those of others on commission, from his Sussex Street, Sydney, premises, to the nearby Oyster Saloons in King Street, a popular location for many such establishments. [32] The Sydney Morning Herald reported that in 1873 there were 20 oyster saloons in Sydney, selling salt fish and oysters of lamentable quality.

> 'Compared with American sea-port cities, the oyster saloons in Sydney are deficient both in number and in quality.' [33]

Oyster Saloons occasionally came into conflict with the law regarding Sunday trading or liquor laws. Some owners sold illicit alcohol to imbibe with the oysters, which could cause other problems with the police, as evidenced in this 1885 Melbourne report'

> 'Some time ago the officers of police reported to Superintendent Sadleir that having succeeded in compelling the publicans to observe the law with regard to closing their houses

at 12 pm each night, and all day on Sundays, they had found that persons of questionable character frequent oyster salons in the city after the hotels have been closed: and although the keepers of those oyster saloons pretend to send to the hotels for liquor for their customers, they in reality have supplies on the premises.' [34]

King Street Sydney looking east 1910, the site of numerous oyster saloons Photo: RAHS Photograph Collection

Sydney had similar problems, as experienced by oyster proprietor Contesi Giacomo, who found himself in trouble with the law in 1889 and hit with the alternatives of a £30 fine or 3 months in jail, when caught selling liquor in his Liverpool Street oyster bar. [35] Likewise, Mary Glynn, a Castlereagh Street proprietress was fined more than £30 for selling liquor without a licence in 1888, [36] while a Newcastle oyster saloon was fined £5 when police raided houses of 'doubtful respectability' and accused him of allowing 'bad characters to assemble' on his premises in 1880. [37] Lorenzo Solari was fined 20 shillings for opening his Sydney oyster saloon on the Sabbath in 1882. [38]

Five years after purchasing his initial riverside leases, Frederick Gibbins was in court with 'The Oyster Case' where James Campbell was accused of selling oysters belonging to Gibbins. [39] The issue was a technical one and not completely resolved, reappearing in court two years later. There was some question as to whether Smiths Creek, which ran into the Hunter River, was technically part of the lease, and whether the Oyster Beds Act 1868 permitted leasing of natural oyster beds (as opposed to cultivation on mangrove sticks sunk into the riverbed). Complicating this was the issue of Gibbins not possessing the correct paperwork to prove his lease, although he had been paying rent to the government for years. [40] Eventually the accused were acquitted.

Regulation was successful and the industry boomed, with annual oyster production in NSW reaching about 7000 bags (approximately 438 metric tons) of oysters by the early 1880s. Oysters were a valuable commodity, selling from 3 to 20 shillings a bag at auction in 1876, depending on the size and quality of the product. [41]

An act of NSW parliament in 1881 had imposed not only rental leases for use of the foreshore, but a royalty to be paid per bag of oysters. This was increased in 1884 to three shillings a bag plus rent. The main players in the industry approached the government in 1887 to ask for repeal of these charges, which made export of their product uncompetitive compared to Queensland and New Zealand fisheries. The Colonial treasurer, Mr Burns, was sympathetic to their case and promised to look into the matter and attempt to remove the royalty, although not the foreshore rental licence fee. [42]

There was clearly plenty of money to be made from oysters. In February 1889 Gibbins dissolved his business partnership with Francis Buckle, John Paul and John Larkham, which had been trading as Gibbins and Company. It seems his business was thriving without the need for partners. [43]

In 1898 he purchased another oyster lease at Camden Haven near Port Macquarie, where he cultivated shellfish along 264 yards of foreshore.[44] The new century commenced with great expansion of his oyster leases. He now increased his Newcastle operations, consolidating a string of adjacent leases to include the western side of Moscheto Channel fronting Dempsey Island, [45] 660

yards at Stockton, [46] and the north-eastern side of Sandy Island, near the entrance to Fullarton Cove,[47] In the following decade he invested heavily in multiple oyster leases on the Hunter, [48] Bellinger and Nambucca Rivers [49] [50] and Camden Haven, monopolizing the industry. [51] [52] [53]

The Board of Fisheries was set up 27 March 1903, authorised under section four of the Fisheries Act 1902 (Act No.119, 1902). The Governor appointed Frank Farnell as Chairman and nine board members, consisting of industry representatives, a licensed fisherman, an oyster leasee, one representative of the inland fisheries, and six Crown representatives. It was only natural that Frederick John Gibbins was chosen to represent the oyster leasees, as he held extensive leases and was a prominent and respected oyster cultivator and oyster merchant. The other members were James Cox, John Want, Alfred Spain, William Shipway, James Batchelor, Richard Jenkins, Edward Fanning, and Henry Dawson. The new board's purpose was to 'protect, develop, and regulate the fisheries of New South Wales.' Its functions included supervising fishing and oyster licencing, leases, conservation of fisheries, and enforcement of the conditions of the act, de-registering companies if necessary. Unfortunately, the predominance of Crown representatives who knew little of the industry was a major stumbling block. Added to this were problems of 'the conflicting nature of the interests that had to be conserved, and the inability of a cumbersome Board to deal promptly with such matters as required immediate consideration' and it was eventually disbanded in November 1910. [54] [55]

In July 1903 Gibbins registered his business as an oyster merchant, with premises at 88 Sussex Street Sydney. [56] Over the next three years the business increased, and Frederick decided he needed more investment capital to expand. Gibbins registered a second and third firm in July 1906. One was in partnership with John Comino, selling oysters to retailers from office premises at 150 Sussex Street Sydney.[57] Gibbins also owned adjoining numbers 146-148, and received £288 per annum rent from the brick and slated-roofed Sussex St properties. They were not huge premises, with the three shallow shopfronts only extending 50 feet from the street frontage, but they were more than adequate for his business requirements. [58]

The other company registered in July 1906 enabled the enterprise to expand yet further into oyster wholesaling, with additional capital invested by partners. The new partnership consisted of four prominent oyster merchants. Charles Edward Woodward put in £1200 capital. John Comino and John Moriarty, together with Gibbins, invested £600 each. The firm was known as Woodward, Gibbons & Comino, with offices remaining at 150 Sussex Street Sydney. [59]

John Moriarty owned oyster leases around Forster, the Karuah River at Port Stephens and the Manning River near Taree, while Charles Woodward leased multiple areas on the Karuah River. [60] [61] [62] Moriarty migrated from Dumfries in Scotland in the mid-1880s. He became a well-known racing identity, helping found the NSW Trotting Club in 1902, but his main business interests were in fish and oysters. When Moriarty prematurely died in 1914, at the Jenner Hospital in Macleay Street, at the age of 55, his executors William Symons Gray and Mrs Margaret Jane Moriarty joined the partnership. [63]

Athanassio Comino (abt. 1844-1897) and John Comino (abt. 1858-1919) were known as the Oyster Kings. Athanassio migrated from the Greek Island of Kythera in 1873, and within five years had opened his first oyster saloon at 36 Oxford Street, Sydney. During the 1880s he purchased a number of oyster leases. His brother John arrived from Kythera in 1884 and also commenced oyster farming. When Athanassio died in 1897, John not only inherited a sizable portion of his £5,217 estate, but the title Oyster King. He soon became a force to be reckoned with in the oyster industry, so it was natural that he and Frederick Gibbins should form a partnership. Their firm dominated the market

for years, while by 1919 there were 'Comino' oyster saloons in Parkes, Maitland, Armidale, Gunnedah, Moree and Katoomba. [64] [65]

Another new investor in 1908 was James Clark, a prominent Queensland oyster cultivator from Moreton Bay, who had expanded to Pittwater in New South Wales in 1906. The Queensland industry was shipping 1.5 million plates of oysters to Sydney and Melbourne annually, so it made a lot of sense for him to apply for 16 leases on Broken Bay, covering eight miles of foreshore.

Over the previous two decades, the Moreton Bay oyster industry had suffered from worm-disease, incursion of salt water from the ocean, and floods suffocating the oyster beds in mud, so diversification of oyster leases was a good move for Clark. He now could offer high quality fresh local oysters to the Sydney market, and joining with the other four Sydney merchants would open up profitable distribution channels for him in New South Wales.

Clark would have been well-known to his new partner Charles Woodward and was an obvious choice to add to the partnership. Around 1870, in the days before oyster leases and regulations, Woodward had sent men up to Bribie Island to work the prolific oyster banks. He continued to employ men in Queensland for over thirty years. This would ensure he had a constant supply of oysters for his Sydney fish shops.[66] [67]

The Partnership itself did not own oyster leases but obtained 80% of their stock from leases owned by the individuals within the Partnership. This ensured, ‘more regular supplies and a better quality of oyster than would be the case if forced to buy in the open market’. These oysters were not sold by the company directly to the consumer, but retailed to oyster saloons in Sydney, who then sold to customers. [68]

Gibbins was a progressive businessman. The company had a competitive edge, as suppliers and customers were able to contact them easily via the new telephone service. More and more businesses saw the need for a phone, but it was still such a novelty to possess a phone, that new subscribers were listed in the newspapers. [69]

His business was flourishing under the care of his seven staff, including his sons Edwin and Frederick who were employed at the Camden Haven leases and Walter who worked in the Sydney office. [70]

By 1909 there were allegations of price fixing in the industry, so Frederick Gibbins and his partner John Moriarty appeared before the Fisheries Board to put the case that no such cartel existed. The firm was selling around 28% of the oysters coming into the Sydney shops, but they strenuously denied any conspiracy, and the board took them at their word. No doubt the fact that Gibbins was a member of the Fisheries Board would have imparted a great deal of weight to his argument. [71]

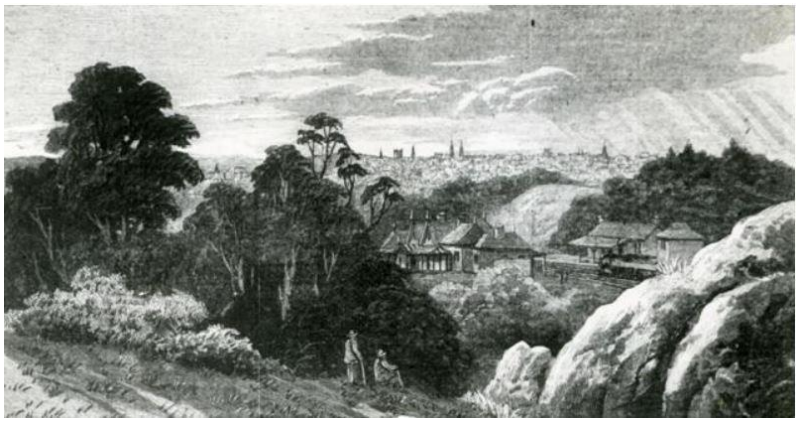
Gibbins also invested in timber. Since he already had oyster leases on the North Coast, it made commercial sense to diversify into timber. In 1885 he purchased a vessel to transport logs and split timber from the Manning River, around 340km south to Sydney. [72] [73] Three years later he purchased another vessel to transport his sawn timber from the Manning River. [74] He was listed in Sands Directories as a ship owner and timber merchant from 1886 to 1889 and as a shipowner until 1905.

Land Investment

Frederick's prosperity permitted him to purchase property at 171 Crown Road Ultimo for £475 in 1880. [75] He also owned 25 Sussex Street Sydney and 6 investment properties in Pyrmont. [76] In early 1885 the family was living in 94 Kent Street North when they heard the news that Frederick's father John had died at his home in Palace Street, Petersham in January. [77] Tragedy struck the family again the following month when their young five-year-old son Percy tragically died on 3rd February. [78] The grief of his mother Catherine was immense. Over 20 years later, she continued to lament his loss as she placed memorials in the newspaper for her son. [79]

Meanwhile, plans were made for the construction of a new home just outside the small village of Arncliffe, which would display Gibbins' wealth and success to the Sydney business community.

The land on which the Dappeto house stands was originally given as a Crown Land grant to Thomas Hill Bardwell on 5 September 1853. Arncliffe at this time was fairly remote, with just two rough roads leading into the St George district; Mitchell's New Line of Road (constructed 1843-45) and Rocky Point Road. The roads allowed rural workers to move into the area, including market gardeners, farmers, and those who exploited the riches of the lush forests, timber fellers, shingle splitters and charcoal burners. Part of the Bardwell land grant was sold to George Penkivil Salde on 18 September 1879, who on-sold the land within a couple of years to Frederick John Gibbins on 6 August 1881. [80]



Sketch of hilly countryside overlooking Arncliffe Station 1885. Photo: Bayside Council Library

This was part of a trend beginning in the 1880s, where many of the old land grants were gradually subdivided into housing plots. However, the owners would often retain a sizable portion of their property on which to build their family home. Freed of the small plots and cluttered terrace houses of the inner city, in these outer suburbs it was possible to construct a grand house to demonstrate your status and prosperity to the world.

In 1884, tannery owner Edward Manicom Fairleigh purchased 5 acres on the corner of Loftus and Wellington Streets, where he built beautiful Cairnsfoot house. It was located in the vicinity of two similar homes built in the 1880s. Fairview and Belmont were identical houses built by brothers Thomas and Alexander Milsop with their wealth from the Gold Rush. Belmont was restored and re-opened in May 1997. [81] Local businessman, Mayor of West Botany Council and Member of the Legislative Assembly, William George Judd, purchased 7 acres in The Village of Arncliffe Estate, where he erected grand Athelstane house in Wollongong Road, not far from where his neighbour Frederick Gibbins would soon build a home.

When the Illawarra Railway passed through Arncliffe in October 1884, this signalled a new era of land speculation, as the area was now easily accessible from the city. Waltara Heights Estate was offered for sale a mere week after the railway opened.

In February 1885 Innesdale Heights Estate was created, followed by Begs Estate in October that year. In 1886, merchant landowner Samuel Terry MLC owned 60 acres of Edward Flood's 1825 land

grant, which he subdivided into Avenue Park Estate, while retaining two acres of elevated land for his home. Unfortunately for Terry, construction of his house was well under way when he discovered to his horror that his glorious views over the surrounding landscape would not be of bucolic rural land, but a planned sewerage farm. Consequently, he cancelled the land auction, aborted the project and moved to the inner suburbs.[82]

Gibbins did not develop his site until 1885, when he constructed a grand two-story brick home, with iron lace balconies. Entering through double frosted glass doors into the linoleum-floored entrance hall, past an arched timber architrave, a beautiful cedar staircase could be seen rising to the upper levels. A large plaster rose dominated the high ceiling, with an elegant four-sided light fitting illuminating the scene. Potted plants were strategically placed on small tables lining the hall.[83]

Dappeto entrance hall. Date unknown. **Photo: Macquarie Lodge.**

Frederick began to furnish the property with elegant and fashionable pieces. Rejecting locally made products, he asserted his status by commissioning bespoke furniture, imported from prestigious Bartholomew of London.

In the dining room, there was seating for twelve at a massive 18-foot (5.5m) oak table, necessary for both his large family and for hosting business and social dinner parties. Together with the carved sideboard and the dinner wagon used for serving the food, the dining room furniture alone was valued at £43. This was in a period when a female domestic servant was earning between £20-40 per annum and the gardener would have earned 20-30 shillings per week with board and lodging. [84]

Dappeto's oak dining table **Photo: Bayside Council Library**

The family's morning would commence in the breakfast room, relaxing around a smaller nine-foot long (2.74m) oak dining table, seated in one of its ten chairs. Food would be served from a carved sideboard with a bevelled glass back. On chilly winter mornings, the house was kept cosy with roaring log fires in beautiful marble fireplaces.

Passing into the carpeted drawing room, visitors would note the small Chippendale table, a beautiful walnut cabinet filled with ornaments, and tasteful prints hung from picture rails.

The windows were festooned in luxurious tapestry curtains. Ferns and aspidistra potted plants were placed on occasional tables, where they reached for the filtered light streaming through the tall windows.

Dappeto interior, possibly the drawing room. Photo: Bayside Council Library

Frederick enjoyed card games and shooting a round of billiards with his friends and business colleagues, played on an exclusive Borroughs and Watt 'Cottage and Dining Table'. This company, founded in 1836, and under the patronage of Queen Victoria, produced a three-quarter size billiard table, which could be converted to an extra dining table when guests were invited to a dinner party. [85] The Gibbins loved to entertain. Each of his daughters celebrated their wedding at the house, and Frederick Gibbons celebrated his fiftieth birthday in style in 1891, with a dance held in his elegant home, an occasion shared by 60 guests. [86]

The Baltic pine timber floors were covered with the latest patterned linoleums, a flexible and durable linseed oil-based product, and sumptuous rugs from Brussels and the famed Axminster factories.

Dappeto interior showing oak table and sideboard and a carved mantlepiece decorated with glass lamps, fine porcelain and a mantle clock. Photo: Macquarie Lodge

The ornate mantlepieces over the fireplaces were adorned with a collection of expensive and delicate Honiton, Sevres and Dresden bone china pieces and exquisite Parisian marble clocks. Visitors would admire the tasteful engravings, water-colours and oil paintings in gilt frames, hung from high picture rails under the cornices.[87]

The small library featured a fashionable writing desk, where Frederick wrote letters and business documents, surrounded by leather-bound volumes displayed on oak bookcases. He kept his money and more sensitive legal documents in an iron safe, made by Phillips.

The upstairs bedroom furniture was carved from American Walnut, Cedar and Maple. Some beds were timber, while other rooms featured iron bedsteads. Each of the eight bedrooms was furnished

with a wardrobe, a pedestal cupboard, a dressing table, and a washstand with a porcelain jug and basin for washing, essential in an era before bathrooms with running water.[88]

The water supply for the house was obtained from an iron windmill, located on a stream near Lorraine Street and what is now Firth Street. [89]

With a flourishing business and a beautiful house, his social standing was now firmly established, and Frederick was appointed a magistrate in April 1888. [90]

Dappeto Gardens

The extensive grounds were maintained by a gardener, Henry Hardge, who was well equipped with a wheelbarrow, tools and an iron roller for trimming the enormous lawn. This latter task must have taken a considerable portion of his time and energy.

The family were keen gardeners, but they particularly loved the fern-house, where hanging baskets draped exotic ferns from the rafters, and palm trees imparted a semi-tropical feel. The family would sit in the shade of the wide verandahs on Coalbrookdale verandah seats, surveying the sweeping lawns and the nearby Cooks River which meandered through the valley below. If they were feeling energetic, perhaps they might indulge in a game of tennis, pick fruit in the orchard, climb the tightly wound wrought iron spiral staircase to the lookout on the roof of the house, with its panoramic views, or fetch a horse from the stables for a brisk ride around the vast estate. [91]

The Gibbins employed a young 22-year-old groomsman, John Richard Radcliffe, who had emigrated from the Isle of Man. He lived in the brick stable block, which had stalls for three horses, with a feed room, man's room and hayloft, harness room and coach-room, although Gibbins didn't own a carriage. [92] John's grand adventure in the colonies was to be short-lived; a mere three years. On a fateful January day in 1888 the weather had been swelteringly hot. Mucking out the stables and grooming the horses had left him fatigued and sweaty so he invited young Master Frederick and two other friends to join him in an impromptu dip after work. The Cooks River was some distance away, and Lady Carrington Beach even further, so the lads decided to cool off in a dam on the nearby Bexley property of White's Brickpit. Perhaps they were larking around or maybe John couldn't swim and slipped and fell into deep water. The sun was setting and despite the deepening shadows of dusk, Frederick suddenly became aware that his friend was in difficulty. He dived in to rescue the groom who had disappeared beneath the surface of the murky water, but it was of no use. The young man could not be revived.

The following day an inquest was held at Dappeto. In addition to the witnesses, there were most likely 12 jurymen gathered around the body to deliberate on the cause of death, with the coroner delivering a verdict of accidental drowning. [93] [94]

The location of the inquest may seem bizarre today but was a logical choice at the time. Inquests were frequently heard in pubs or other public venues near the location of a death.[95] The incident had been traumatic for 16-year-old Frederick and it must have been reassuring to have his father present as he gave witness regarding the facts surrounding this dreadful event. Radcliffe's parents were in Britain, and he died penniless, [96] so it is possible that the Gibbins family paid for the simple engraved stone plaque at their servant's Rookwood Cemetery gravesite.

The gardens of Dappeto were flourishing under the tender care of Frederick Gibbins' gardener, who was a keen exhibitor at the Rockdale Flower Carnival in September 1887. The three-day event, held at the New Brighton Assembly Hall in Saywell's Hotel on Lady Robinsons Beach, was opened by the Honourable. J. O. Inglis, Minister of Public Instruction, who arrived at Rockdale on a special train, together with other guests and the Royal Naval Artillery Band, where they were amazed to see the station platform and building decorated with palm branches. The contingent then made its way to the water's edge by a special steam tram.

The eighty or so women who had prepared the stalls proudly assembled in the street for a group photo, which had to be taken in two batches due the large number of volunteers. Finally the doors were thrown open to allow the guests of honour and the privileged opening-ceremony ticket holders to enter. The event had attracted many local notables including William George Judd, Major of West

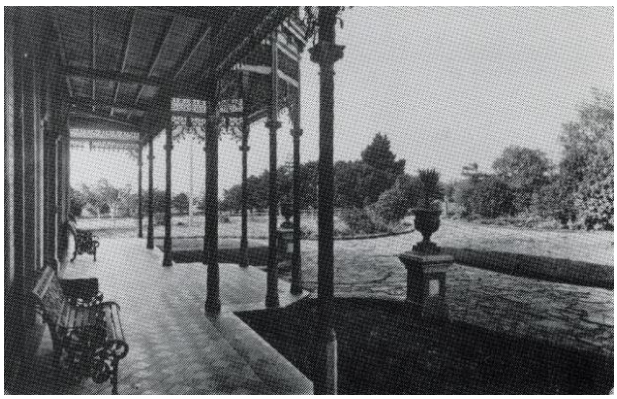
Botany, Alexander Milsop, Mayor of Hurstville, Edward Hogben, Mayor of Kogarah, and most importantly, the judges (Messrs. Henderson and Howlison). The opening speech by Minister Inglis, was flattering, and as flowery as the displays surrounding the dais. Inglis commented on their;

> 'Most exquisite taste, in transforming that commodious and beautiful hall into a perfect bower of sylvan beauty. If they would permit him, he would indulge in the hope that the beauty which they saw displayed around them might be reflected in the lives, characters, and actions of all residents in that district. He was quite sure that if they would only take to themselves the lessons which the beautiful objects of nature taught them, and would try to reflect in their lives and characters the exquisite formations of gentle, unostentatious, and unpretending beauty, taught them by the flowers and birds and the endearments of nature everywhere around them, there would be less tittle-tattle, and irritation, and fewer grits in the machinery of life.'

1887 'A tasteful stall contributed by Miss Gibbins'. The Gibbins women pose in front of their Rockdale Flower Carnival exhibit. Possibly Catherine and her 20-year-old daughter Emma. **Photo: Bayside Council Library**

There was a carnival atmosphere at the flower show, as attendees browsed the spectacular floral displays, under a ceiling festooned with garlands of flowers and hung with colourful banners. No doubt they were impressed with the striking display of waratahs presented by Miss Gibbins. Her stall was backed by a lush red curtain, contrasted by the attractively draped greenery of Rickau Palm fronds, but it was Emma's offering in the vegetable competition which won her the prize for best broad beans. [97]

Just two months later the Gibbins family entered a beautiful floral display into the Kogarah Flower Show, held at the School of Arts. The opening ceremony in the hall was performed by the Mayor of Sydney, Alban Joseph Riley M.P. Afterwards, the guests proceeded outdoors to a grassy area on which two marquees had been erected for flower displays and sales and the partaking of refreshments. A magical atmosphere was generated as evening fell, created by Chinese lanterns illuminating the stalls, powered by an electric generator. The strains of music filled the air as a series of promenade concerts entertained the guests. Frederick John Gibbins won first prize for his amateur collection of roses.[98]



View of the garden from Dappeto's verandah. Date unknown. **Photo: Bayside Council Library**

Their gardener, Hardge, also attended the Royal Horticultural Society's monthly meetings, held in Sydney Town Hall. The members were keenly competitive and would bring displays of their best flowers for judging. In February 1889 attendance was modest, but the competition still keen, with entrants presenting plants ranging from dahlias to roses. The Dappeto garden had produced a respectable display of 12 varieties of brilliantly coloured dahlias, delicate

lilac-coloured blooms of cleome pargen, and a strappy-leaved Chlorophytum comosum spider plant. However Hardge could not compete with J. W. Gelding from the Summer Hill house named 'Victoria'. He had spent considerable time and effort preparing a spectacular display of 120 varieties of dahlias, 20 varieties of zinnias, and a selection of cut flowers. After the judging, the members listened raptly to descriptions of a Japanese Plum tree that had been successfully cultivated in Brisbane over a two-year period. [99]

Hardge was more successful when the members met in the Pitt Street School of Arts Hall in December. After learning of the wonders of crop rotation and fertilisers, Henry and his fellow gardeners eagerly awaited the results of the judging. Despite the dry weather severely affecting the gardens of Sydney, Dappeto won second prize for a colourful display of cut flowers and fuchsias with their pendulous two-toned blossoms. [100] [101]

The house and gardens were ideal for entertaining, particularly for significant family occasions. Emma Gibbins married John Dale Pattison 31 May 1888 at her parent's house Dappeto. [102] John (1862-1938) had a diverse range of business interests. He was an importer of cigars and pianos, with business premises in Pitt Street, Sydney. Pattison also owned a Billiards Licence at the Sydney Palace Hotel, George Street, Sydney. Billiards was one of Frederick's hobbies. One imagines Pattison and his new father-in-law shooting a few balls on the green baize in Dappeto's billiard room, filling the air with pungent odours as they puff on the best quality cigars, prepared with Frederick's elegant gold-plated cigar piercer. [103] The new family moved to 24 Boyce Street, Glebe [104] and later to The Boulevarde in Strathfield. [105]

The grounds of Dappeto were a choice setting for a midweek wedding in late October 1893, when Frederick's daughter Amy married accountant William Thom (1866-1942) from Glasgow. He had migrated with his mother and siblings in the 1870s after the death of his father. The Thom family were in mourning, so in respect the bride wore a silvery grey dress. Her bridesmaid and younger sister Ada appeared in a pretty cream gown, adorned with a striking diamond brooch, which was a gift of the bridegroom. Williams' brother, solicitor John Stuart Thom, was best man, as Reverend C.J. Byng conducted the holy service.

As they departed in their carriage for the honeymoon, the guests showered the happy couple with rice and rose petals plucked from her father's precious rose bushes. The wedding guests were reluctant to leave and remained socialising in the beautiful grounds of the house for several hours after the bride and groom's departure. [106]

Frederick Gibbins' daughter Ada (1878-1951) was married at Dappeto on New Year's Day 1907 to local Arncliffe man David George Stead (1877-1957), in a ceremony officiated by Reverend W.R. Bowers. [107] George Stead had a young daughter Christina (1902-1983) from a previous marriage, who would become a famous novelist in the 1930s and 1940s. Frederick generously offered nearby Lydham Hall as a home for the couple. It was built in 1860 for wealthy butcher and landowner Joseph Davies. Davies' widow sold it to Gibbins in 1899, after which Gibbins leased the house to various tenants. Lydham Hall was situated on a spacious 2-acre block in Bexley. It sold in June 1917, after Gibbin's death, for £2,885. [108] Much later it was bought by Rockdale Council in 1970, who operate it as a museum. [109]

Lydham Hall. **Photo: Leonie Bell**

Frederick probably met his son-in-law through business connections or the Fisheries Board, as David Stead worked in the fisheries industry, rising to become General Manager of the State Trawlers Undertaking in May 1902. By 1915 he was earning a huge annual salary of £600, [110] and they could afford to move to exclusive Vaucluse. [111]

Frederick and Catherine's other children married at the bride's family church. Their son Ernest (1869-1928) married Jessie Dunlop Logan (1870-1925) 10 July 1895 at St. Michaels Church of England in Surrey Hills. His brother Edwin Gibbins (1876-1940) married her sister Margaret Thomas Logan (1880-1967) also at St Michaels, 11 November 1897. Edwin worked as a clerk in the Railways, [112] however, he later followed in his father's footsteps, moving to Laurieton with his wife, where he pursued a career as an oyster man on his father's leases. [113]

Fredrick John jnr. (1872-1932). married Mabel Larnach in 1895, raising a large family of 8 children. During the Great Depression he was thrown out of work. Struggling with mental depression, and horse-racing gambling debts, he tragically committed suicide by swallowing poison in May 1932, dying shortly afterwards in St George Hospital, Kogarah. [114] [115]

Alfred John Gibbins married Louise Albertina Leistikow in 1886. Moving to Laurieton he managed three of his father's Camden Haven oyster leases for some years, where he was a well-respected figure. After the death of his first wife he married Isabella Perrott (nee Middlemiss), then moved to Narrandera to manage a sheep and wheat property, before moving back to Laurieton and finally returning to Sydney, where he tragically died from self-administered cyanide after a bout of depression in 1921. [116]

Walter married Ada May Morris, from the Manning River village of Pampoolah, at Taree Presbyterian Church in 1898 and lived in Laurieton.[117]

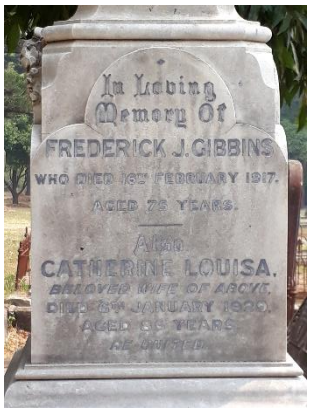
Sale of Dappeto

The big estates of the early landowners were a maintenance burden to future generations, who additionally had to bear the cost of death taxes which fell due on the demise of the original owner.

As the new century dawned, the lands surrounding Dappeto were rapidly subdivided for sale to families wanting to escape the city to build a home in the fresh air of the suburbs. From the house at Dappeto, Frederick could see his expansive views of Arncliffe increasingly obscured by housing development. The nearby grand old house Belmont, on Wollongong Road to the west of Dappeto, was subdivided and sold in 1905. [118] On the opposite side of Wilsons Road, the Fairview Estate with its grand old house was also sold two years later. Henry F. Halloran's real estate poster shows the location of Dappeto beside the cluster of plots being sold. Within a decade, Frederick J. Gibbins' family would make a similar decision to sell their beautiful family home.

Fairview Estate shows the location of Dappeto on the right edge. Photo: State Library NSW. [119]

Frederick and Catherine celebrated their Golden Wedding in May 1914, with a special church service at Christ Church Gosford, a location chosen because Catherine was raised in Kincumber on Brisbane Water.[120] Three years later, Frederick was admitted to the new Jenner Hospital at 2 Macleay Street, Potts Point, a private facility housed in an elegant Georgian Revival building designed by Edmund Blacket, where he died 16 February 1917, aged 75. His wife Catherine survived him, passing away 6 January 1929. [121]



Frederick and Catherine Gibbins' monument and inscription on the family grave at Rookwood Cemetery. Photos: Leonie Bell [122]

Frederick's Last Will and Testament was lengthy and complex. One would perhaps assume that the house would go to his wife, with the remaining estate divided between his children, however Frederick had something quite different in mind. If the estate went to Catherine and she remarried, then her new husband would own her property. Frederick wanted his estate to sustain his entire family for many years to come, and for his business empire to remain intact as his legacy.

Frederick specifically mentions in his Last Will and Testament that there should be continued investment in the oyster industry after his death, stating that money could be invested for,

> 'the purchase or acquisition of freeholds or leaseholds (including Oyster Leases or parts shares or interests therein or in any partnership or company whose chief object is or shall be

the holding working or otherwise turning to account such oyster culture or other leaseholds) in any of the said states.'

In emphasis, his will reiterated this sentiment several times.

He appointed his son-in-law William Thom and his daughter Emma Patterson as executors.. Thom was given extensive powers to administer the assets as he saw fit, investing the income and any sales revenue for the benefit of the family. Dappeto and the surrounding property was to be sold and the money held in trust. From this trust fund, his wife Catherine would receive an annual income of £250, paid monthly, and his son Walter Gibbins was allocated a stipend of £100, to be paid in monthly instalments, while the other children would also be suitably cared for from the profits of the continuing oyster business and invested funds from estate sales.

Catherine Gibbins was to move to a smaller house. After all, a two-story eight-bedroom house with a huge 12-acre estate was a massive property for a lone widow to handle. She was given the unlimited right to take any of the Dappeto furnishings she chose. These luxurious items had been valued at £197/1s./6d. Frederick's daughters were to choose furnishings from Dappeto, to the value of £20 each. The remaining furniture would be sold.

The Sussex Street properties were to go to William Thom and Frederick's daughter Ada Stead, while his daughter Emma would inherit the shop in 131 Oxford Street Sydney. The Oxford St building was extremely narrow at a mere 14-foot-wide, but extending to a huge depth of 100 feet. Nevertheless it generated £4 per annum rent, although the Tax Office regarded it as virtually worthless for the purposes of evaluating death duties.

Unusually for this era, Ada and Emma's inheritances were to 'be held for her sole and separate use and benefit, free from the debts control interference or engagements of any husband,' although there was nothing separate mentioned for Amy, who was married to William Thom. Presumably Gibbins considered she would be adequately cared for simply by being the wife of a man who had inherited control of a vast property trust and who Frederick clearly trusted implicitly.

Gibbins held no shares in mines or public companies at the time of his death. He held a life policy taken out in 1881 with the Australian Mutual Provident Society valued at £1,370/19/3 but deposited no cash in the bank; in fact he was £16 overdrawn. In addition to his real estate and personal effects, over £800, derived from his share of the business partnership, was added to the value of the estate for the purposes of tax calculation, and there were dreaded death duties payable of £1,098/14/3.

Thom and Emma would now become heavily involved with his oyster wholesale business as investors in the partnership. The Deeds of Partnership stated that in case of the death of a Partner, the partnership would not cease, but the executors of the will would be considered partners in Gibbin's stead for continuation of the business. Therefore William Thom and Emma Pattison took control of Gibbins share of the business.[123]

As for his oyster leases, they would be managed on behalf of the trust fund. There were 11 leases on the Bellinger River (valued at £2,007), 40 at Camden Haven (£5,049) and a further 32 leases on the Hunter River (£1,232). There was also quite a bit of plant, including motorboats, oyster boats and oyster farming equipment. His son Edwin was allocated a quarter of the profits from the Camden Haven oyster leases, which he had been working on for many years, together with the land and cottage in which he had been living. His brother Alfred John Gibbins inherited the cottage and land at Laurieton.

Dappeto was valued for death duties at £6,700. His other properties totalled £15,544 in real estate owned (at Rockdale, Urunga, Sussex Street, Oxford Street and Camden Haven), and £8,288 in leased properties, plus cash investments of £1,370 /19 shillings/3 pence. The total value of his assets was £26,624, with debts owing of £10,017 /6 s./11d. It has therefore been previously incorrectly suggested, in one of the pamphlets held by Rockdale Local History Library, that Dappeto was sold to pay debts. This is patently untrue, as Frederick died an exceedingly wealthy man, who was clearly determined to care bountifully for his family, for the remainder of their lives. The debts were normal operational expenses for a prosperous ongoing business, which Frederick intended to pass to the next generation, if not beyond. [124]

Frederick had a 'general intention to let one or more of my sons succeed to my business or shares of businesses', the choice of whom was up to the discretion of the trustees to establish who they thought was 'desirable and expedient and suited to the health and inclination of such son or sons'. He had a particularly long-term view, mentioning his intention that the investments should pass to his grandchildren if his sons or daughters died.[125]

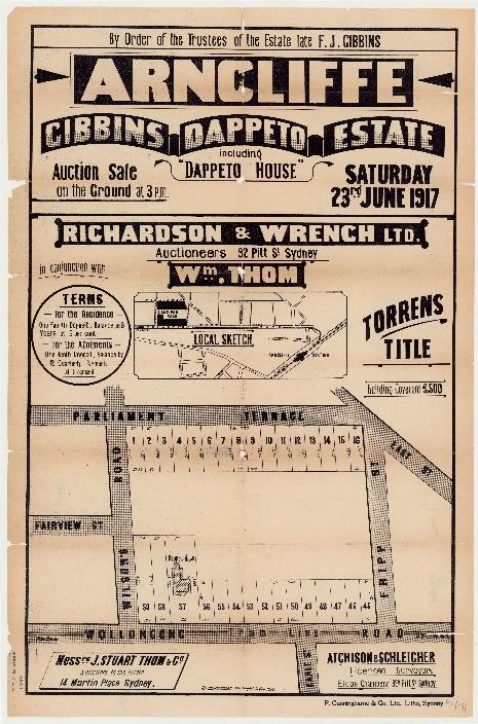
Most of the debts were not huge. The largest was a loan from De Fraines Trustees for £5,800 plus £36 interest, and a smaller overdraft and interest owed to the Commercial Bank for £3,699. There were also hospital, chemists', doctors' and nurses' fees, including the outrageous sum of £78 for the services of prominent Sydney surgeon Sir Herbert Maitland. [126] Presumably Frederick had been ill for some time, requiring regular medical attention.

Other than that the largest debt was council rates for Dappeto at £102, but most other items were for small amounts under £10 for groceries, fuel, freight charges, commission for oyster sales and almost £50 in oystermen's wages, which Frederick would normally settle at the end of each month.[127]

No doubt Frederick Gibbins had seen the writing on the wall for vast gentlemen's estates, as he watched properties surrounding Dappeto gradually sold for suburban housing. His will gave William Thom the specific right to subdivide the land into housing plots if he chose to, and to create any necessary roads that would facilitate their sale. Accordingly, in the second Dappeto land sale of 1918, Fairview Street was extended through the estate, between Wilsons Road and Frith Street. The sale of Dappeto and the building plots required significant outlay for the construction of the Fairview Street extension, surveys, pegging out the plots, advertising, commission to real estate agents, and solicitor's fees. The process was handled within the family, with son-in-law William Thom administering the finances and his brother John Stuart Thom handling the legalities.

The house and land were advertised for sale by auction on 23 June 1917 by Richardson and Wrench. The estate would be broken up into 54 allotments. The first sale would be the house and a subdivision of plots fronting Wollongong Road and Parliament Terrace. [128]

The hill top house was described as of 'brick with a slate roof, verandahs and balconies, front side and rear, and contains hall, 13 rooms, dressing room, bathroom, 2 pantries, and kitchen' and was offered for sale together with luxurious furnishings, that spoke of a wealthy man of good taste and deep pockets to match.[129] [130]



Richardson and Wrench's real estate poster advertising the sale of Dappeto 1917. Photo: State Library NSW [131]

The house and 5 plots were sold to the Salvation Army for £2,200, with the remaining allotments selling from £2/2/ to £3/5/ per foot frontage. The family now possessed a large sum of money with which to pay death duties. Total sales amounted to £5,325. [132] [133]

Suburban houses didn't require stables, so the family auctioned the 'commodious', but redundant, stable block as building materials. [134]

The Salvation Army had purchased Lot 54 of 27 ½ perches [135] and Lots 55-59, consisting of 1 acre 3 roods 4 perches. [136] This was a small portion of Gibbin's 12 acre 1 rood 25 perch purchase, which in turn had formed a minor section of Bardwell's original vast 61 acre estate.

Why was Lot 54 purchased separately on a different title deed? A 1962 article in the War Cry may give some insight. It describes how Commissioner Hay was discussing the sale of the Arncliffe property with his solicitor. In the course of the discussion he happened to mention that the Army was interested in purchasing a vacant block of land adjacent to the property, to be used as a children's playground.

Instead of replying to this immediately, the solicitor unexpectedly recounted how as a young man he had been roaming rural New South Wales, feeling alone and estranged from his parents, when he came upon a Salvation Army meeting. The local officer spoke to him and discovered the young man had nowhere to go, so he took him under his wing, offering him a bath, a meal and a bed in his own home for the evening. Before sending him on his way the officer prayed with him. This episode re-set the tone of the young man's life, and he promised God he would repay the kindness of the officer.

It was many years later when he was able to fulfil his promise. He told the Commissioner that he was going to purchase the property and alter his will to donate it to the Army. Lot 54 was transferred early 1918, months after the original purchase of Dappeto. It is possible that the solicitor in question was John Stuart Thom, the brother of Gibbin's son-in-law William Thom and Lot 54 is the land referred to, although this is pure speculation.[137] [138] [139]

According to the caveat stamps on the reverse of the Dappeto Title Deed Lots 55-59, the Salvation Army took out a mortgage from William Thom in General Bramwell Booth's name 10 December 1917, although the Title Deeds were not finalised until 23 July 1918.

Much land was purchased by Commissioner Hay around this period on the authority of Booth, for both social welfare homes, Collaroy Camp and citadels. Founder William Booth had granted Hay Power of Attorney, and now Bramwell Booth also granted Hay Power of Attorney on 4 September 1912 to facilitate this expansion. [140]

The General lived in London, and with the Australian branch of the Salvation Army operating as a distinct entity, governed initially from Melbourne, and later from 1921 in two divisions from Melbourne and Sydney, it was decided that the registered proprietor to the property should be from the local command. The mortgage was accordingly transferred to Alfred Henry Packer, Petersham

Salvation Army Officer, in November 1920. As the Director of the Salvation Army's Social Work he was now legally considered to be the 'properly designated' proprietor the of land. The mortgage was finally discharged 8 November 1923.

Following the death of General Bramwell Booth 16 June 1929, a Bill was passed through NSW State Parliament enabling the formation of The Salvation Army NSW Property Trust to take control of any Salvation Army properties which remained in the name of the late General. [141]

> 'The general objects of the Bill are to create a corporate body under the name of The New South Wales Salvation Army Property Trust and to vest in such body the whole of the property real and personal of The Salvation Army in New South Wales which was at the time of his death held by and now stands in the name of William Bramwell Booth formerly General of The Salvation Army upon the trusts of certain deeds poll.'

The Trust became the Registered Proprietor of Dappeto on 16 January 1931. [142]

Bardwell Park subdivision plan, undated.
Photo: State Library NSW [143]

This undated suburban map of Bardwell Park and the Village of Arncliffe demonstrates the complete subdivision of the Dappeto Estate on the corner of Wollongong Road and Wilsons Road, into individual housing plots. The second part of the sale of the Dappeto Estate occurred in March 1918, with lots being offered for sale fronting Fairview Street.[144]

California Bungalow style houses were built in the expanded Fairview Street after sale of the estate. Photo: Leonie Bell

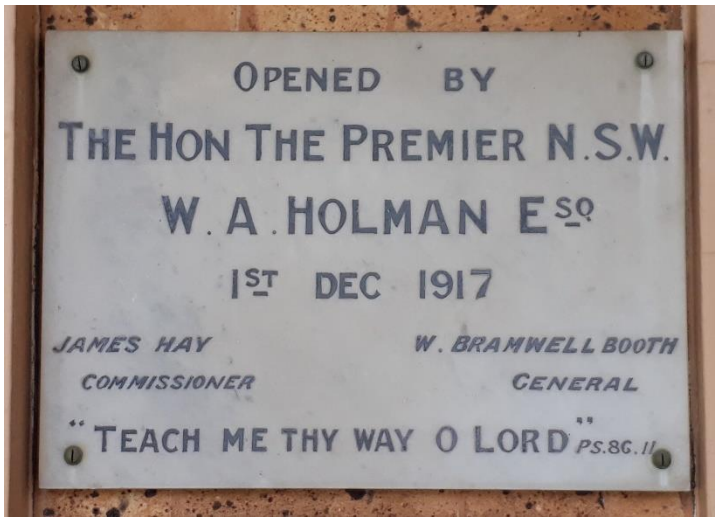
Salvation Army Girls Home

Industrial school

The Salvation Army has always considered care for the welfare of the downtrodden as an essential part of its ministry to spread the gospel. From its inception in 1865 in the slums of London, and later as the Salvationist message spread to Australia in the late 19th century, children's ministries were an important outreach activity for the Army. Their social work began with the Prison Gate Brigade in Melbourne in 1883, progressively adding a Fallen Sisters home in Melbourne in 1884, and children's ministries rescuing children from brothels in 1886.[145] Social work has developed to become a key activity for which the Salvos are well known.

A 1917 report by Henry Stead titled 'Another Army', states that the Salvation Army was caring for 371,879 people in 62 men's, women's and children's shelters throughout Australia, including 1300 boys and girls in 11 homes. [146] [147]

The Salvation Army purchased Dappeto as the site of the Arncliffe industrial Girls Home in 1917. It has been suggested that this ministry began the year before Dappeto came on the market, presumably in rented premises in a nearby suburb, possibly Burwood, while another Army source indicates it may even have commenced as early as 1912, although it has not been possible to confirm this. [148] [149] [150]



Dedication plaque at the entrance to Dappeto. Photo: Leonie Bell

Both the War Cry and the Sydney Morning Herald sent reporters to record the official opening by NSW State Premier W. A. Holman KC MP in December 1917. Holman was a man of vision and ambition. He was a working-class man who had studied law, despite the privations of unemployment that plagued Australia in the 1890s. Holman stood for political office, rising to become Premier. At the opening ceremony, he praised the Army's work amongst the poor, recognising the importance of its spiritual foundation, a view he was uniquely positioned to understand from the perspective of his personal humble beginnings. Holman would prove to be a staunch ally of the Army, often appearing at important Salvation Army meetings as guest of honour.[151]

Other dignitaries attending were Commissioner James Hay, Brigadier-General Arnott (Melbourne), Lieutenant- Colonel Grahame (Acting Divisional Officer for New South Wales), and various officials from headquarters, together with local clergymen. [152] It is not implied by the dedication plaque that the General was present. He was in London directing the worldwide operations of the Salvation Army.

The new house was ideal for the purpose of a girls' home, with numerous rooms for the girls' accommodation, large parlours for meetings or instruction, and expansive grounds for sport and recreation. It was also located far from the squalor and deprivation which many of these children had experienced in the inner city.

Often people who had been blessed by the Salvation Army's ministry would pass on the blessing by aiding others. Bob Spiers was a young man who had been in financial difficulty some years previously. When he asked an Army Officer for assistance it was freely given. As time went on, his finances recovered and he was so grateful to the Army for that early gift, that he donated a suite of furniture to the newly opened Nest at Arncliffe. [153]

Officers were appointed to administer and staff the new institution. Commandant Horsley was the initial Commanding Officer, assisted by Adjutant Morter, Captain Barnes, and Lieutenants Housden, Hoepper and Blackmore. [154]

Adjutant Morter, was promoted to Glory three years later in July 1920, after several month's illness. She had become an officer at the turn of the century, and was Matron of Brisbane Women's Shelter at the time of her death. [155]

Annie Hoepper retired as a Senior Major after 36 years' service. She left her home corps of Rockdale in 1916 then served 4 appointments in Victoria, spending 18 months at Arncliffe Girls Home. [156]

The Nest Girls pose in front of Dappeto in 1918, ranging from 3 years to 14 years old. Photo: Salvation Army Museum [157]

Originally there was intended to be an age restriction for admission of 10-14 years, but this was expanded to younger girls, from 3 years old, particularly when sisters of different ages were admitted to care. By 1934 over 1,000 girls had passed through its doors. [158]

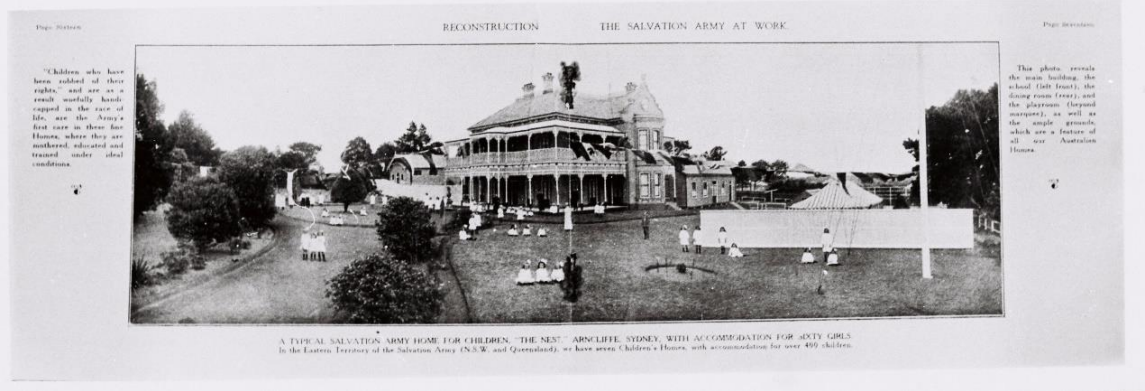
The reasons for admission could be varied. Although it talks about a mid to late 20th century reflection on children's homes, this following quote could equally be said to be indicative of the situation in the early 20th century. There was,

> 'A general pattern of reasons regarding the admission of children to homes in Australia, including those relating to family finances, parental abuse or neglect of children, and children's behavioural problems. These reasons were shown to be strongly interwoven however the lack of finances often led to problems and fragile situations which in many cases, contributed to a child or children being admitted to residential care. ' [159]

Some children were orphans, while deserted women or widows of either sex may not have been able to care for their children. Others had parents unable to care for them due to financial stress, particularly when there was a loss of income due to illness or retrenchment, in an era prior to the Dole and other social welfare assistance payments. There might be alcoholism, mental illness, sexual or physical abuse in the family situation. There would also be girls who had been made Wards of the State, and those juvenile offenders who were directed to an institution by the courts. As the 2004 Senate Committee concluded;

> 'The legislation underpinning the children's court actions punished children for being neglected rather than the parents for being unfit guardians, and it did not make provisions to assist the child-family situation.' [160]

This was a difficult mix to manage sensitively and justly without punitive measures being undertaken.



The Nest Girls Home. The school is to the left of the main building (Dappeto), the dining room (now demolished) is located at the rear, and the playroom is peeking out behind the marquee. At the time this photo was published (1921), The Nest catered for 60 girls, one of the Salvation Army's seven Eastern Division homes, housing a total of 400 children. The source is a Salvation Army publication, Reconstruction in New South Wales and Queensland, the Salvation Army at Work, published 1921, when the Eastern Territory (NSW and Queensland) separated from the Southern Territory (Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia). By 1924 the Eastern Territory operated five girls homes accommodating 249 children at Weeroona in Rockhampton (1920-1934), Yeronga (1898-1942), Chelmer in Brisbane (1923-1941), The Fold (1920-1942) for younger girls at Stanmore and The Nest in Arncliffe (1916-1969). They admitted 162 girls that year and passed on 175 girls to friends or situations. [161] **Photo: Bayside Council Library**

Industrial Schools were based on the British model, which dictated that children should attend three hours of school daily, with instruction in reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, and if practicable, history, geography, and vocal music. Additionally, in Britain they were to be employed for 4-6 hours daily. Boys were to undertake farm and garden work, while girls learned needlework, washing, cooking and housework. These tasks would prepare them for the life of a typical working-class labourer of the period. Anxious to provide for the soul and well as the body, the institution was also required to provide religious instruction, accompanied by attendance at Divine Service on Sundays, hymn singing and daily prayer.[162]

The Industrial Schools Act in Australia was introduced in 1886; 'An Act for the relief of Destitute Children'. It provided for the creation of Industrial Schools to which children under the age of 16, who were deemed at risk, could be sent by order of two Justices of the Peace, until their 18th

birthday. Such schools were both privately and publicly run, segregated the sexes, and were to be inspected annually to ensure they were run in an appropriate manner. The school Superintendent was responsible for educating, clothing, feeding and lodging the children, and providing religious instruction.

If a child over 10 years old left without permission, they could be kept in close confinement for up to 14 days as a punishment and deterrent. The Superintendent held great power over the children, to 'make all necessary rules orders and by-laws for the regulation and management of the school under their charge.' They could also transfer them to another school or arrange an apprenticeship for a child who was over the age of twelve, whether or not the child wanted to go.

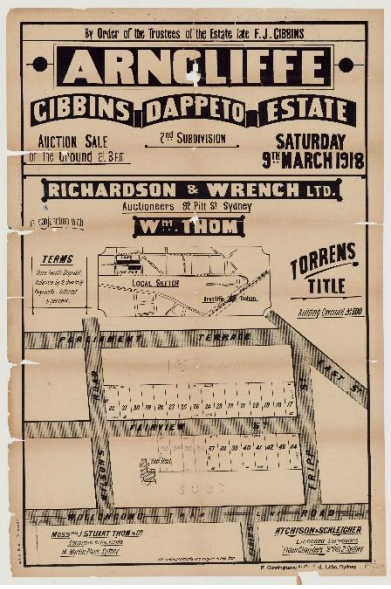
If one or both parents were still alive, they could be directed to contribute up to 10 shillings per week for the child's maintenance in the home, at pain of having their goods and chattels confiscated and sold to pay the bill, although one speculates that if the child was living on the streets it implied the parents were also destitute. Moralistic views of the time, however, designated the parents as being at fault for failing to provide for the child's welfare, and non-payment of dues could result in a home undertaking punitive measures, such as withdrawal of visitation rights. [163]

An Industrial School was intended as a place of tuition for neglected children, who would be trained and suitably equipped to join the workforce. It was not intended as a reformatory for children who had committed crimes, but often the lines between the two types of institution became indistinct. The Find and Connect government website suggests Arncliffe Industrial Home was expressly set up to care for and educate young girls who had run afoul of the court system, but since the youngest residents were three years old, they obviously would not have appeared in court on criminal charges.

The overlap can be clearly seen in the Industrial Schools Act, which specifies in paragraph 4:

> 'Every child whose age in the opinion of the person apprehending or ordering the apprehension as hereinafter mentioned shall not exceed sixteen years who shall be found lodging living residing or wandering about in company with reputed thieves or with persons who have no visible lawful means of support or with common prostitutes whether such reputed thieves persons or prostitutes be the parents or guardians of such child or not or who shall have no visible lawful means of support or who shall have no fixed place of abode or who shall be found begging about any street highway court passage or other public place or who shall be found habitually wandering or loitering about the streets highways or public places in no ostensible lawful occupation or who shall be found sleeping in the open air may be apprehended by any constable or peace officer or by any other person and taken before any two Justices of the Peace to be dealt with as hereinafter is directed.'

In other words, it applied to those whose parents were unemployed and children who today we would call homeless 'street kids', who were surviving as best they could by begging, scrounging or stealing. There was no policy of social workers inspecting a family's living situation or taking children from their parent's home.



Although official records on Find and Connect state that the name of the Arncliffe home was not changed to The Nest Children's Home until 1930, it is shown on the second Dappeto Estate auction subdivision map of 1918 with that name. Newspaper accounts corroborate that the residents of the industrial school were known as the 'Nest Girls' from the beginning. [164] [165]

However there is evidence that the term 'The Nest' applied to Salvation Army children's homes internationally and may be considered to be a reflection of the Army's attitude to the care of children, which often differed from the judicial and secular social welfare view. A nest implies the love of a parent, providing sustenance, and protection for youngsters from the perils of the world around them.[166]

March 1918 The Nest (Dappeto) is shown on the auction poster. The vendor is Gibbin's executor and son-in-law William Thom. Photo: State Library NSW

The Salvation Army opened a home for mothers with young children in Shore Road, Hackney, London, in 1895, which they named The Nest. It moved to Lanark House, Clapton in 1896, and was relocated to Upper Clapton in London in 1901. By 1906 it was solely a girl's home, which catered for 50 children under the age of 12.[167] Lanark House closed in the 1930s. The Army opened a second Nest home in Ramsgate in 1908.[168] [169]

There was a Nest in Turin Italy in 1918. [170] The Salvation Army has run a Nest Children's Home in Kingston Jamaica, for 60 years, [171] while the Nest Children's Home in Hamilton, NZ commenced in 1919, with the donation to the Salvation Army of a six-acre property with homestead. It officially opened the following year and operated until 1989 when the Army changed its care model, but in 1990, The Nest children's home reopened as a Community and Family Service programme.[172] Closer to home, another Nest opened in Chelmer, Brisbane in 1920. [173]

No matter which official name(s) the institution registered under, to the Salvation Army officers and their young charges, Dappeto was simply The Nest.

Left: Nest girls pose at the entrance to Dappeto. Date unknown. Photo: Macquarie Lodge.

Right: The Nest Girls pose in front of Dappeto, with some leaning out of the upper floor windows. Date unknown. Photo: Macquarie Lodge.

Life at the Nest

An early visitor in 1918 was most impressed by the house, the children and the general ambience of The Nest, commenting that, 'Had I not been told what the institution was I should have taken it to be a high-class school for young girls.' He effused that Dappeto was 'a Palatine, a magnificent looking building such as only a very rich man could possess.'[174] In fact, it was merely 18 months prior to the visit that a very rich man and his family had indeed occupied the house.

The staff were constantly reminded of their religious duty to care for the girls, by their large aprons, with, 'for His sake' embroidered across the top.

The girls were healthy and well-fed, accommodated in 17 clean, airy dormitories and engaged in numerous well-organised educational and social activities.

The 'Nesties' were considered members of one large family, and as family members were expected to contribute to the running of the household. The Nest had a practical, pragmatic, attitude. It was considered to be 'a structure for which the young are trained for the larger sphere which will claim them at an early date'. '[175]

They rose at 7 am, filing to the lavatory, where white porcelain basins were arraigned along two sides of the room. Taking their towel and a small bag containing a brush and comb from a row of individually named pegs in the third wall, the girls would proceed to the adjacent bathroom, which contained a number of cast-iron white-enamel bathtubs, some equipped with overhead shower roses. They would promptly take a bath or shower and quickly comb their hair. There was no time for delay before the breakfast bell summoned them to the dining area at 7.30 am, to sit at long cloth covered tables in the bright dining room, following which would be communal morning prayers. [176]

The girls were provided with three meals per day, cooked by the staff. Their laundry was also carried out by staff, which would have been a dangerous, laborious, time-consuming chore, in an era when linen was simmered in copper tubs of hot soapy water, stirred by a wooden paddle, passed through the rollers of a hand-operated mechanical wringer and hung to dry in the fresh air. It was no small task, dealing with sheets, towels and clothing for 60 children and a number of staff who lived at the home. In the 1920s, Captain Squires handled the laundry, while the meals were cooked by Sister Lois Ashton on a large iron range. [177]

However, the children were inculcated with personal discipline and a strong, so-called 'Protestant' work ethic, by completing other less dangerous household chores, both in the mornings and after they returned from school each afternoon. They would each be expected to make their beds before completing their assigned morning tasks, smoothing the crisp white sheets and carefully positioning the fluffy pillows, with pillowslips embroidered with 'God is love'. Those assigned to kitchen duty might make the sandwiches for everyone to take to school, prepare breakfast or wash up in the scullery, before changing into school uniform and walking to the adjacent schoolroom, or in latter years to nearby Athelstane Public School. Others might be required to clean the brightly patterned linoleum floors, while the classic black and white checked Victorian tiles on the terrace had to be thoroughly scrubbed on a regular basis. [178]

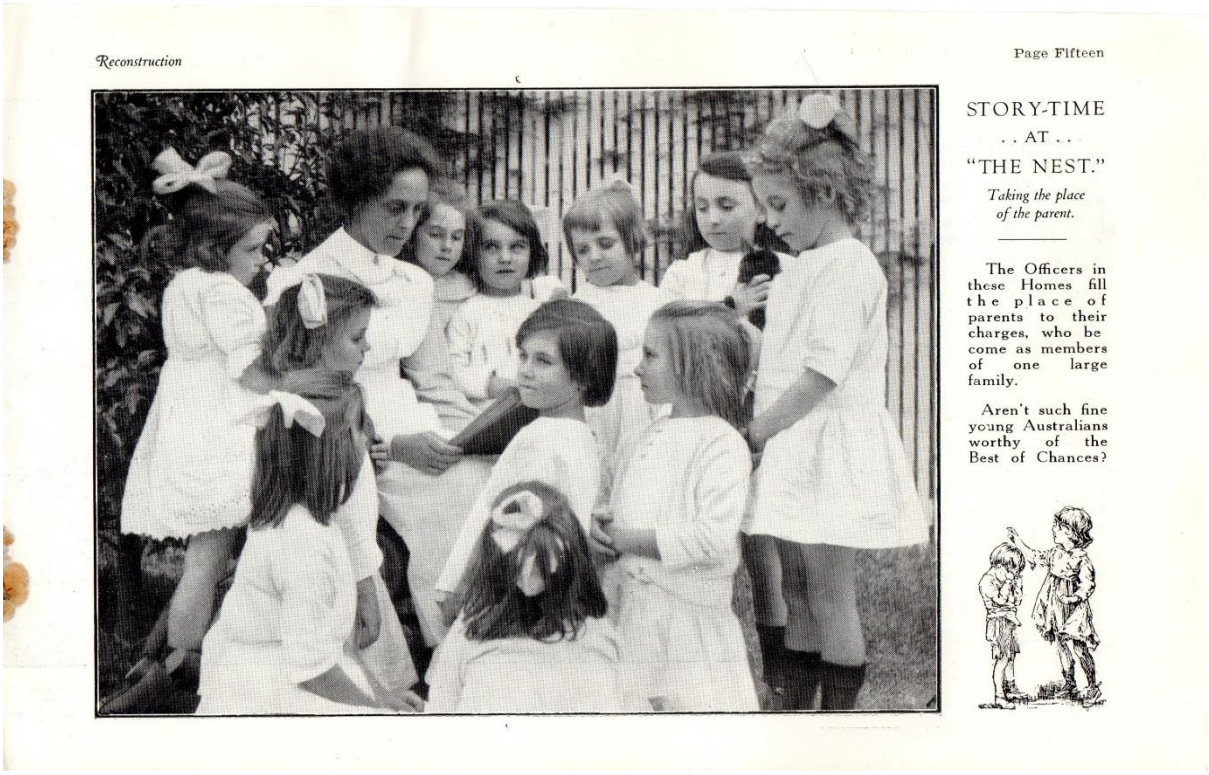
The tiled porch that was scrubbed by the girls as part of their assigned household chores. Photo: Leonie Bell 2020

Women of the day were expected to become good wives and mothers, so the staff also aimed to teach the girls 'current work methods.' Housework was laborious, but definitely not unskilled labour. Many of these orphaned or neglected girls lacked a mother to set an example of how to carry out these tasks in preparation for fulfilling the expectations of their future husbands. Doing the housework also fit them for paid work, which would have predominantly been in domestic service in an era when women had little or no career prospects and limited education. Modern sensibilities should not judge this harshly, as it sensibly provided the girls with life skills and work skills considered important at the time. [179]

Young girls at The Nest. Date unknown: Photo: Macquarie Lodge.

The Nestlings engaged in a sewing class in 1932.[180]

Life was not 'all work and no play'. Recreation was an important feature of life in the girl's home, both passive and active. Ball games and simple children's activities were undertaken on the grassy lawn. There was even a tennis court nestled behind a lattice fence. The children were free to play in the extensive grounds after school, until the dinner bell rang at 5pm. After-dinner prayers were held in the dining room, then it was off the bed in times staggered according to age, the youngest at 7pm followed by 7.30 pm and finally 8pm for the eldest girls. [181]



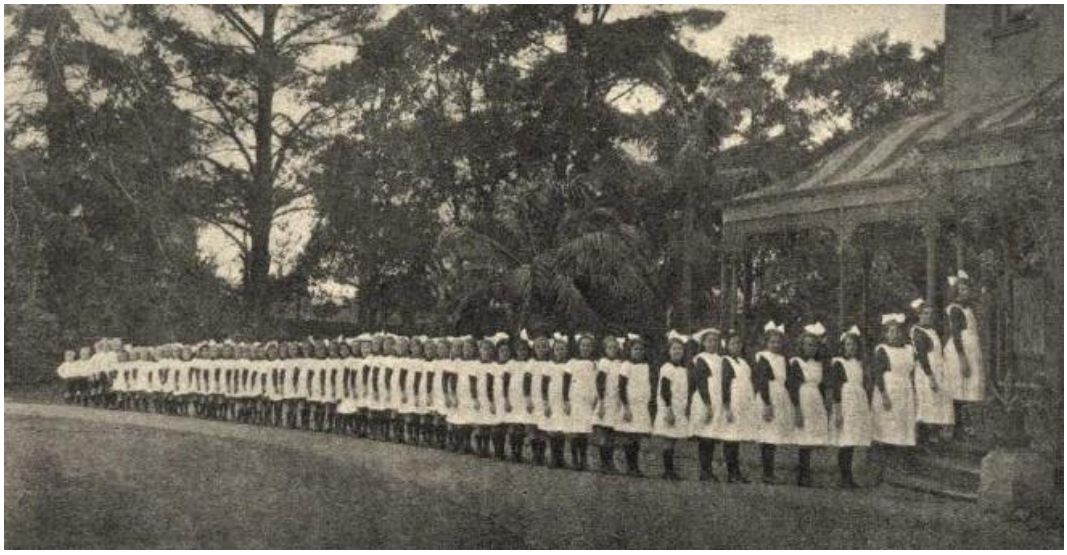
The girls of The Nest listen attentively to a story.[182]

There were times when the staff would read stories to the children. Birthdays were celebrated, when the Matron would kiss the birthday child and give her a small birthday gift. On Saturday afternoons the girls' mothers would visit and sit with their children on the lawn, to listen to their stories of life at The Nest. There was always ample opportunity for outdoor play. In the 1950s the extensive green lawn of the home was home to 2 sheep named Bluey and Curley, who were affectionately named after characters from a popular comic strip by Alex Gurney, which featured the antics of two larrikin World War 2 soldiers. [183]

The children playing Oranges and Lemons at the Nest in 1932 [184]

The girls would also carry out physical culture exercises to improve their health and coordination. Dressed in loose, knee-length white dresses, with long black socks and flat shoes, they would assemble outdoors for stretching and exercise. By the 1930s the uniform had changed to simple cotton shifts with Peter Pan collars, long white socks and flat, black, strap shoes. In the 1950s, the girls

wore a house uniform with a straw boater hat when they attended church at Rockdale Corps, but at other times, unless required to wear school uniform, would dress in individual styles of informal play wear.[185]



The Nestlings line up in front of Dappeto in 1918, smartly dressed in their house uniform. Photo: Victory Magazine 1918 [186]

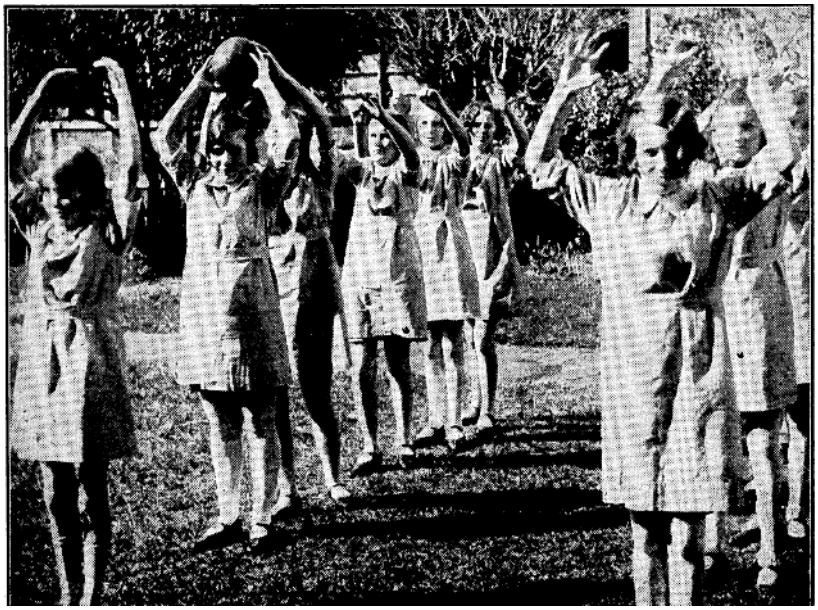
Wearing a house uniform might seem overly regimented, but uniforms are designed to create a sense of identity and reinforce group cohesion. Their other advantage is that they are essentially egalitarian in nature, because no-one is dressed more expensively than their neighbour.

Reconstruction. Page Nineteen

MERRY MAIDENS OF YERONGA HOME, QUEENSLAND, EXERCISING IN THE ROOMY GROUNDS.

Situated on the banks of the beautiful Brisbane River, near Brisbane, with fine open country surrounding, this Home is producing a splendid robust type of young women.
There are other Homes for Girls at Rockhampton and Chelmer, besides others in New South Wales.

This 1921 photo from Yeronga Children's Home in Queensland shows an exercise class similar to those which would have taken place at The Nest. Matron Merrifield held a post at Yeronga prior to being appointed to The Nest. [187]



The Arncliffe Nestlings exercise with balls in 1932 [188]

Fresh air and a change of atmosphere were considered vital to the childrens' mental, physical and spiritual health. A highlight of the year from the 1920s through to the sixties was the summer camp at Collaroy, which is still in existence today, although with a better class of facilities than in its simpler, early days, now encompassing activities such as abseiling, laser tagging, tennis and basketball.

In a visionary move, several hundred acres of prime beachside property were obtained by the Salvation Army in the late 1800s, as a recreational area for spiritual and physical revival. [189] This formed part of the original land grants given to William Cossar in 1819, James Jenkins in 1834, and Elizabeth Jenkins in 1831. [190] It is believed that the land was given to the Salvation Army by Miss Elizabeth Jenkins in exchange for an annuity.[191] On her death in 1900, Elizabeth Jenkins bequeathed her entire estate to the 'principal commanding officer of the said Salvation Army in the Colonies for the time being to be used by him in spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the customs and usage of the said Salvation Army'. [192]

Over the years the Salvation Army sold large chunks of the land to finance other ministries, but the Collaroy camp remained intact. This placed the Salvation Army in a unique position. It is doubtful that any other secular or church organisation had the capacity or will to send orphaned and neglected children on an annual holiday.

The War Cry describes several wonderful trips to Collaroy by the Arncliffe girls, such as in 1930 when the Fold and the Nest joined for the annual holiday. Despite the inclement weather the children had a marvellous time, with planned outdoor activities relocated to the hall.

The Sunday sermon that year naturally was based on the theme 'Building on the Rock' of Jesus and not on the sinking sands. The significance of the concept was not lost on the girls, surrounded as they were by the sandy seashore of Collaroy beach. There was the usual gospel message and singing of religious songs, and then a little active learning was engaged, with the girls challenged to seek bible verses and devise ways to illustrate them by presenting mini tableau. One youngster carried a lamp onto the platform to illustrate 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet', while another demonstrated, 'He that bearing precious seed, shall return rejoicing and bringing his sheaves with him,' by miming sowing seeds. [193]

The Nest and The Fold enjoyed another fortnight's camping trip together at Collaroy in 1934, under the watchful eyes of Matrons Majors Docherty (from the Fold) and Baker (The Nest), a highly experienced officer who had served in both Australia and New Zealand. The War Cry quaintly reported that they, 'Will have charge of the maidens, who will enjoy rambles in the bush, swimming, and surfing, and games on the hill.' The camp was a welcome break from city life at Arncliffe. It was

surrounded by natural bushland at the rear of the site and fronted by miles and miles of pristine sandy beaches.

This campsite was not only enjoyed annually by The Nest, but also Bexley Boys Home, and over 120 poor inner-city women and children who were given the opportunity for a much-needed holiday which they could not have afforded without the charity of the Salvation Army. [194] The women were offered a special treat of enjoying a cup of tea in bed and total respite from cooking and cleaning duties, which must have seemed like two weeks of heaven.[195]

Many of the girls were actively involved in Salvation Army activities, attending meetings (church services) at the local Corp on a Sunday, and mid-week meetings at the home. Many of the girls became Christians through the ministry of the home's staff. In addition to morning and evening prayers, it was compulsory for the children to attend weekly Sunday meetings at Rockdale Corps, where they would give personal testimonies of 'Gods power to keep them in their many trials and temptations'. [196] It would also lead to some becoming Salvationists and enrolling as teenage Corp Cadets, engaged in weekly bible study sessions and studies of Salvation Army doctrine.[197] Others took the Junior Soldier's oath, or joined the 'Life-Saving Guards'(an organisation similar to Girl Scouts), who in the 1920s were overseen by Captain Marjorie Simmons, and Matron Merrifield's daughter Jean, together with schoolteacher Captain Andrew as their Chaplain. [198] Some assumed non-ordained Local Officer positions such as Young Peoples Sergeant-Major, while a few progressed to the Training College to become full-time Salvation Army Officers, following the example set by their mentors at The Nest, ministering to others in need. [199] [200]

In 1919 there was concern at Army Headquarters that Salvationists were becoming lazy in their spiritual life, content to let others work hard for God's Glory, and that it was time for everyone to lift their game. To counter this apathy, they conceived The Great Offensive Campaign, with the aim 'To increase all branches of our spiritual operations by 20% by May 31, 1919'. The timing of the campaign may have been unfortunate, as the Spanish Flu spread to Australia, afflicting 40% of the population, killing around 15,000 in Australia and 50 million worldwide. [201] Despite the restrictions imposed by the government trying to prevent the spread of the influenza pandemic, closing schools and places of entertainment, many revival meetings were conducted over a three-month period. At The Nest in Arncliffe, this resulted in 23 girls dedicating their lives to God. [202]

Christmas always saw an air of celebration, with staff striving to make it a family occasion. In December 1928, two hundred children from Army homes across Sydney, including The Nest, were treated to a Christmas party at Taronga Zoo. The sun blazed in an azure sky and a light breeze ruffled the air as the children wandered amongst the exbibits wherever their fancy took them, seeking out the elephants and tigers, penguins and bears. Other visitors were impressed with their behaviour and gathered nearby with great interest. The group clustered in the shade under a rock ledge, and 200 voices rang out in song, followed by Mrs Commissioner Sowton's short encouraging message. The day was particularly poignant for those children whose siblings had been separated by assignment to boys' and girls' homes, giving them the opportunity to renew vital family ties. [203]

The following year Christmas was held on the lawns of Dappeto, with Commissioner and Mrs Maxwell joining with the Nestlings for an afternoon of merriment, singing and games. The arrival of Santa was met with a great deal of jollity and excited anticipation and the air rang with laughter as the children opened their gifts. [204]

As usual, Christmas 1930 was a busy time for Mrs Commissioner Maxwell, who would customarily visit each of the children's homes, usually accompanied by Commissioner Maxwell, but this year her

husband was still en route from London and unable to make it to The Nest. That year was a damp affair, but the girls' spirits were not dampened. From their refuge on the verandah, there was great excitement when Santa drove up the hill in a motor car, loudly tooting his horn and shouting "Merry Christmas." The car was laden with a bag of goodies. Some girls received dresses, while others played happily with their new tea sets or dolls.[205]

Santa then had to outdo himself in subsequent Christmas celebrations. The following year he arrived on the rooftop, apparently flying in from above, in reality climbing the narrow spiral staircase, emerging from the Captain's Walk that topped the house. He was clutching a bunch of balloons, which supposedly had enabled his 'flight'. [206]

The staff received an unwelcome surprise when one of their number contracted diphtheria in 1923. [207] This deadly disease is caused by Corynebacterium diphtheria and Corynebacterium ulcerans bacterium, which cause grey and white patches on the tonsils, forming a membrane which makes it difficult to breathe. It is spread by coughing and spitting and contact with painful skin sores. Today it can be treated with antibiotics, but antibiotics were not available until after World War 2. An anti-toxin developed in the beginning of the 20th century saved many lives, but the first vaccine was not developed in 1923. Diphtheria vaccination campaigns began in Australia in the late 1920s. The combination vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP) was created in 1948. The disease was more or less eradicated within Australia by the 1975 National Immunisation Program. [208] [209] but millions of children contracted the illness worldwide.[210]

The victim at The Nest was cheerful Captain Smith, the choir pianist and Sewing Room Supervisor. [211] Since the disease was highly contagious, the Captain was removed to isolation in a hospital ward. The children were also placed in isolation to prevent spread of the disease. [212] Whenever the children of The Nest contracted a contagious illness, such as chicken pox, measles or diphtheria, they would be placed in quarantine in the attic room at the top of the house as a precaution against further infections.

As in all Salvation Army homes, the Commanding Officers would change regularly, and staff moved from post to post. Commandant Merrifield was Matron in charge of the girls in the mid-1920s. As a young woman, Ellen Norrie Stirrat (born in Ballarat in 1876) had been interested in the work of the Salvation Army. After being visited in her home by the local officer, proffering a copy of the War Cry, Nellie avidly purchased the newspaper each week. The War Cry is the official newspaper of the Army, covering news of the outreach of each ministry, stories of corps (church) activities, testimonies of salvation, and religious articles aimed at bringing the public to repentance and God. It was, and still is, sold on street corners by uniformed soldiers, with the proceeds going towards various ministries.

One day she saw two policemen from her window, engaged in taking down the names of two Salvationists for the 'crime' of disturbing the peace by marching down the street. This was a common, but controversial, Salvation Army practice, usually accompanied by brass bands, singing, drums and timbrels and noisy outdoor sermons. Intrigued by the sight, she attended a Salvation Army meeting and was converted.

Matron Merrifield and staff at The Nest 1927.[213]

She quickly became involved in local ministry in Ballarat and in 1902 was commissioned as an Officer (Minister of Religion) with the rank of Captain. Her initial appointment was to the Western Australian mining fields at Mount Magnet Corps, moving later to Mount Morgan, Midland and then opening the new Maylands Corps. After she married Captain Frederick William Merrifield in 1905, [214] the couple moved to Queensland for a brief eleven months. Sadly her husband died three months prior to the birth of her daughter Jean, who would later join her in ministry at The Nest. [215] Mrs Merrifield carried on, ministering in Women's Social Work at Glenroy Girls Home, then was transferred to the Women's Social Training Home, back to Glenroy for a second stint, then Yeronga Girls Home in Queensland.

This was excellent training for her next appointment to The Nest in 1921, when the Salvation Army restructured into the Eastern and Southern Territories.

Matron Captain Merrifield was described as 'a true mother and homemaker, with a delightful sense and fund of humour, common-sense, sympathy and understanding' and the children regarded her as a second mother.[216] There is a touching story of two young girls who were gently informed by Matron Merrifield that their father had gone to heaven. She sent them out to play, giving them a piece of fruit each. They cheerily announced to their fellow playmates that "Our father has gone to heaven and mum gave us this fruit". Not long afterwards, a young child popped her head around the corner of the room. "Mum," she hopefully addressed a highly amused Matron Merrifield, "my father might die tonight." [217]Captain Merrifield remained at Arncliffe until Matron Commandant Edith Mann from Rockhampton was appointed in March 1928. [218] [219]

Sometimes a generous donor would enable the staff to take the girls on an excursion, perhaps to nearby Carss Park to enjoy a picnic and a swim, or perhaps to Taronga Zoo to see the lions and tigers and the elephants in their exotic Indian pavilion.[220]

The girls had educational opportunities at the on-site school, and opportunities to be creative through the performing arts. Moreover, as they were given the chance to travel throughout the state, they developed confidence and a sense of self-esteem, as evidenced by the glowing reports wherever they went.

Sometimes Matron Baker would accompany the girls on an excursion to the city. One Saturday in 1934 they visited 'Titania's Palace' at David Jones city store, where it was on display for two months. No doubt the girls' entrance fees, of one shilling each, would have been sponsored by a generous supporter of The Nest. This wonderous 26-year-old, doll's house palace, designed by leading British architect Sir Neville Wilkinson, was the talk of the town, touring the country, moving from Melbourne, through Adelaide, Hobart and Sydney to Newcastle and then travelling to New Zealand, attracting thousands of children to marvel at its intricacies, and raising money for crippled children's

charities. In Melbourne alone, 35,000 people flowed through the doors and in Sydney 43,000 patrons swarmed the department store, raising £1,508/14/3 for local charities. [221]

After queuing in excitement for more than an hour, the Nest girls were fascinated by Queen Titania and King Oberon's throne room, the chapel with its tiny playable organ, Sleeping Beauty's spinning wheel, Alice in Wonderland's cat curled up by the fireplace, Queen Mary's tea-set and the miniature grand piano.[222] The Commissioner would often visit the girls home. Now they returned the favour. Since they were in the vicinity, the group then walked down Elizabeth Street to Headquarters to greet the Commissioner, who had recently returned from a visit to London.[223] [224]

In 1921, when the Salvation Army Eastern Territory separated from the Southern Territory, they registered the annual expenses for the Social Work Trust for New South Wales and Queensland as £89,084 / 4 shillings/ 8 pence. However the financial report does not give a breakdown of how much was spent on children's homes specifically. Dappeto was now part of the new territory, which held Freehold Property assets of £77,916 /5/7 for men's, women's and children's institutions combined, and Total Assets of £96,852 /2/7. [225]

A souvenir bookmark commemorating the 1939 fete. Photo: Macquarie Lodge.

The Nest was operating on a deficit, and always with the threat of insufficient finance hanging over their heads. It was necessary to organise annual fundraising fetes to raise funds, a tradition which has continued today with the popular Macquarie Lodge Fete. [226] [227] These events always attracted local politicians. The fete held 8 December 1928 was opened by the wife of the Premier of NSW, Mrs T.R. Bavin. The crowds strolled the grounds eating ice-cream, eying the scrumptious homemade jams, cakes and sweets, purchasing knitted and embroidered items, rummaging through the jumble sale items. There were plenty of stalls to interest the attendees and of course the Nest Girls and the boys of Bexley Boys Home provided the entertainment. [228]

Dappeto had always been noted for its lush gardens which had been lovingly cared for by the Gibbins girls and their gardener. In its newest incarnation as a children's home, the gardens continued to impress, as the local newspaper noted in 1933 that at the annual fete the flowers bloomed profusely, looking particularly fresh after light showers of rain. The event was opened by The Hon. Albert Lane MHR, and presided over by the Territorial Commander and other high-ranking army officers. Yet again the stalls had to be dismantled and re-assembled undercover when rain fell, and the Hurstville Band retreated to the verandah.[229]

PREMIER'S WIFE (Mrs. Bavin) opened the garden fete at "The Nest," Salvation Army girls' school, at Arncliffe. Some of the principals.

Premier Bavin's wife attends a fete at Dappeto. Photo: Telegraph 11 December 1928 p12. [230]

While some donations were earmarked for experiences that would enrich the girls' lives, at times other supporters would give more practical gifts towards the work. The girls would sit in the dining room to do their homework, and the space was often used for recreational activities. It could be a chilly place in the large house, so everyone was delighted when a benefactor donated two large gas heaters. The generous donor was solicitor Mr William Thom, who no doubt knew very well how cold the room could be, from his days spent with the Gibbins family when he first married Miss Amy Gibbins.[231] Food supplies were delivered from the markets by horse, so the Matron was very pleased when another donor gave them a sulky.[232]

The Governor Sir Philip and Lady Game visit a selection of Salvation Army welfare institutions in October 1930, including the Dowling Street Hostel, Bexley Boys Home, Dulwich Hill Eventide Home for elderly women and The Nest. **233 234**

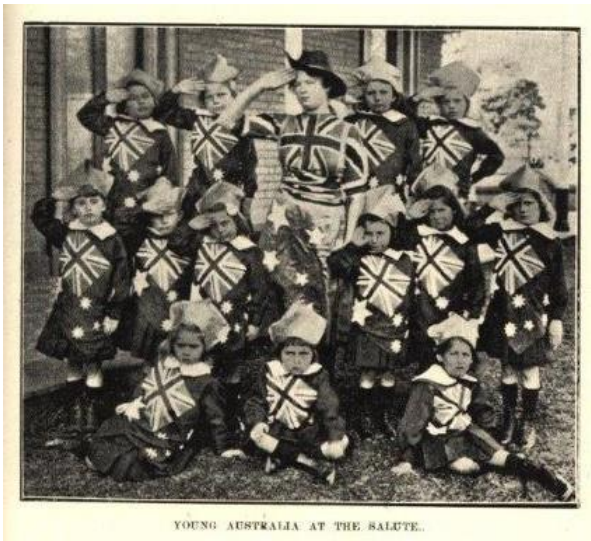
A more unusual donation came their way in 1961. Two Salvationists were visiting Katoomba with some overseas guests when they lost their bag containing an expensive camera. However the most identifying object in the bag was a copy of the War Cry. They decided to ring the local Salvation Army officer, in case it had been found and the person had the foresight to hand it in to the Army. The officer informed them the bag had already been found. However, the woman who had found the bag and phoned the local Salvation Army officer, had handed in the bag in Sydney, asking that the reward be given to a childrens home. Arncliffe was the lucky recipient of the reward. [235]

The Nest Girls

The Salvation Army has always considered music an essential tool of evangelism; writing sacred words to popular tunes of the day, rather than singing ancient hymns, and most notably forming song brigades (choirs), brass bands and timbrel brigades to promote the message. School Matron, Commandant Horsley, formed the girls into a choir called the Nest Girls Company.

Captain Smith lead rehearsals, with the girls clustered around the piano, while the home's resident cat would regularly stalk around the room, perhaps resting on the claret-coloured mohair rug in front of the fire grate, comfortable with the sound of the young girls' voices raised in harmonious song. [236] [237]

Within its first year of operation, the girls were touring both north and south of Sydney to Ashfield, West Maitland, Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, East Maitland, Wallsend, Newcastle, Lambton, Bulli, and Wollongong. [238]

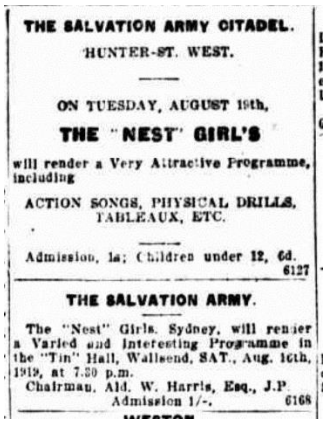


In 1918, in the throes of World War 1, patriotism was rife, and the Nest Girls wear an Australian flag in support of the Anzac troops. Photo: Salvation Army Museum [239]

The following year they performed in the Sydney Town Hall and at assorted citadels (Salvation Army churches) around Sydney. They spent many weeks gathered around the piano at Dappeto, practicing songs and sketches, so the girls were excited to learn that Matron had arranged another series of concerts in the Hunter Valley region north of Sydney.

In August 1919, they packed their little brown cardboard suitcases with a few belongings and walked downhill together to Arncliffe Station to board the steam train to the city. It was a big leap from the platform to the steps of the wooden train carriages, so the older girls assisted hoisting the little ones onto the train. Arriving at Sydney terminal they changed for a train that chugged over the iron Hawkesbury River Bridge towards Newcastle.

They were scheduled to appear in several locations in the region, so the local corps members (church members) billeted the girls. Over the next eight days they performed at West Maitland Town Hall, Wallsend 'Tin Hall', and Hunter Street West Citadel, culminating in the Newcastle Citadel. [240]



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6127

THE SALVATION ARMY.

The "Nest" Girls, Sydney, will render a Varied and Interesting Programme in the "Tin" Hall, Wallsend, SAT., Aug. 16th, 1919, at 7.30 p.m.
Chairman, Ald. W. Harris, Esq., J.P.
Admission 1/-. 6168

The program was essentially a Christian variety show. At each venue they might sing a selection of hymns or songs from the Salvation Army Songbook (hymnal), accompanied by piano. One of the girls would recite an inspirational poem. At other times the whole company would recite the poem, or they might perform an action song, play in a mandolin ensemble, enact a character song, play a violin solo, or entertain the appreciative audience with physical culture drills involving cymbals or short brass rods.

The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate 16 August 1919, p.12, advertised forthcoming performances by the Nest girls

Sometimes the group played handbells. This traditional British art involved a team taking a small tuned bell in each hand and ringing them in a synchronised fashion to perform melodies. [241] The girls loved dressing up to enact a tableau of a biblical scene as a finale, but it was always the adorable babies who stole the audience's hearts. The little five-year olds looked so cute and the church members applauded each item enthusiastically.

Learning the finer points of Bell ringing from a resident of the Eventide Home in 1932 Photo: War Cry [242]

The one typical Salvation Army activity they never performed at these concerts, was playing the timbrel. This was generally reserved for female Salvation Army junior or senior soldiers, although individual girls might play the timbrel in the local Rockdale Corp meetings. Most of the children were not members of the Salvation Army but represented many different denominations, although all were required to attend meetings as an essential part of their education.

After a concert they would take up an offering to assist in the costs associated with the train fares or to aid other charitable work of the Army. The performances were so successful that they travelled further afield for a fortnight's tour of the NSW Western Districts, for a series of concerts which were very well received, with audiences demanding encores. [243] [244] Sometimes the girls would combine with the boys of the Bexley Boys Home for a local concert at Rockdale. [245]

The choral events were so popular that they re-visited the Hunter region in August 1920. [246] With all the energy of youth, they were on tour again with an exhausting, solidly packed 14-day itinerary to the Central Coast and Hunter regions, performing 15 concerts at picture palaces and town halls. [247] [248]

The Salvation Army was famous for holding outdoor church services, often preceded by an exuberant march down the main street, accompanied by a brass band, beating the drum and singing Christian songs. Christmas 1920 was time for just such an enthusiastic outdoor service at the Nest, where the girls were joined by Sunday Schools from the surrounding area Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, and Methodist churches. In true Army style they commenced festive celebrations

with a march along Wollongong Street, proceeding through the swinging gates and along the driveway between the flower borders, to the lush lawn surrounding the home. The girls sang carols, and the boys' brass band blew their instruments with gusto, if not always with finesse. [249]

The following year saw them headed north again for a short tour to reprise their performances at Newcastle, the Central Coast, Western Sydney and the Illawarra including the coastal town of Kiama, while in 1922 the girls sang in the Southern highlands, Albury region, Goulburn and the Riverina. [250] [251] [252] [253] [254] [255]

They were back in Kiama early October 1923 at the Oddfellows Hall. [256] With little rest between engagements the choir set off again to visit western Sydney for a weekend, where approximately thirty girls played and sang at the Windsor Picture Theatre, the Australian Hall at Wilberforce, and a Home for the Infirm. They were treated to a tour of several historic attractions in the area. Wherever they went, people were enthusiastic about these young women and their carers. The local reporter enthused;

> 'They are a fine body of young Australians, and their healthy appearance, their alertness and their intelligence, speak volumes for the care and training they 'receive at the ''Nest" at Arncliffe. The fine performances they have reflect the highest credit on those who have the training of the girls.' [257]

At the end of the month the Nest Girls revisited Kurri Kurri and paid a visit to Inverell where the Mayor and townspeople were most impressed, not only by the performance, but by the girls' demeanour, with a local newspaper commenting that, 'It was evident that the children are well cared for and trained in the graceful arts, as well as being prepared in the essentials of good citizenship on the practical side.' [258] [259]

This charming photo of The Nest Girls appeared in several Salvation Army publications.[260]

Their 1925 tour of the Central Coast took them by steam train to Macksville and on to Kempsey by goods train, then to Frederickton by charabanc. The 20 girls, accompanied by female officers Captain McInnes, pianist Captain Smith, and 'kindly and energetic' Ensign Macauley, would have found this mode of transport quite exciting, although perhaps not too comfortable on the four-kilometre drive.[261] The charabanc was an extended length vehicle, fitted with bench seats arranged in rows facing forwards, suitable for around two dozen passengers. With poor suspension and often travelling on rutted or dirt roads, they were not known for comfort and the journey could be noisy and dusty. This concert was followed by an appearance at Kendall and finally Taree, before the 'nestlings' headed for home and The Nest. [262]

They were still performing in the 1930s, with songs, recitations, musical items, handbells, physical culture drills and biblically-themed tableaux, such as the 1934 concert at Bexley that finished with a scene in which the girls appeared on stage in brown dresses representing flower bulbs. A new character appeared, a disillusioned maid, tired of life. As the girls shed the dull costumes and transformed into blossoms, she regained a new interest in living. This little play was a religious allegory for the renewal that could be experienced through repentance and salvation. [263]

The Nest Girls performances were often described in glowing terms such as a 1932 review which wrote that the girls were, 'variety, brightness, sweetness, grace, colour, prettiness, humour, rippling music, rhythmic grace, intoxication of movement'. [264]

However, despite the popularity of the concerts, they were becoming less frequent, mostly a local presentation of one or two items, and often connected with fundraising for the annual Self-Denial Appeal or singing one or two items at Sydney corps meetings, congress meetings and Salvation Army social welfare homes. [265] There were no more big tours, such as had occurred in the mid-twenties. The final country tour appears to be in September 1925 when a contingent of 19 girls headed for Glenn Innes to perform.

The Nest Girls pose in front of Dappeto, date and source unknown. They hold mandolins, a drum, a violin, and handbells, which were used in their concerts. **Photo: Salvation Army Museum**

Such events require the dedication of a passionate person with exceptional organisational skills, coupled with a supportive management and staff.

Item selection and music preparation was time consuming. Rehearsal of the items would take a significant amount of time over weeks or months, but this was not what occupied the bulk of the planning. The tour organiser would need to coordinate dates and venues with regional Salvation Army officers. Most people did not possess a phone, so communication would have been slow, with letters posted back and forth. There would be billets to arrange for the girls' accommodation, and communal meals supplied for some days. Train tickets needed to be booked in person at the Sydney Central Station Booking Office for each sector of the trip. The organiser would write advertisements and place them with local newspapers and Salvation Army newsletters. Organising tours required dedication, time and expertise.

Presumably there was a change of personnel, and the people who had spearheaded the tours were engaged in other work or had moved on. Salvation Army postings tended to be fairly short in the early days –-generally a brief 6-12 months. During the 1940s–1970s it remained normal for officer postings to change every two to four years. In the words of Commissioner Condon in 2014, this was 'because they were viewed as evangelists rather than as settled pastors,' This made the continuity of programs such as The Nest Girls choir rather difficult, however the children continued performing smaller-scale items locally until the home's closure in 1969. [266]

Despite this change in focus, there were often moments of great excitement as they were invited to play at large Salvation Army gatherings such as the Easter evangelistic meetings held in Prince Alfred Park in 1949. There would have been much chatter and anticipation as the Nest girls set off in the train for Central Station and the adjacent park, with its luxuriant canopy of fig trees, where a huge tent had been erected for a youth outreach program which attracted huge crowds. Hymn singing, brass solos, gymnastic displays, choral items, and rousing tunes played by the massed Young People's Bands, stirred the emotions of the attendees. At last the time came for their items, a short recitation and a beautiful rendition of the song "Jesus died for me," which were applauded appreciatively by the audience. [267]

The Nest Girls again played the tent at Easter 1953. The Blood and Fire flag waived above the Prince Alfred Park tent which held 1,100 people. The massive event saw prayer meetings, sermons, a musical festival featuring seven brass bands and three songster brigades, congregational singing and on Easter Saturday a special youth evening where The Nest Girls sang. As usual the night was a mix of flashy timbrel displays, band numbers, rhythmic physical culture routines, songster brigades, instrumental and vocal solos and short dramatic scenes with a spiritual message.[268]

A visit from the General

In January 1935, Matron Major Alma Baker was reassigned to Booth House, home for elderly women, while Adjutant Dulcie M. Rae was appointed as Matron of The Nest. [269] Bexley Citadel welcomed the new Matron at the Holiness Meeting on a February Sunday morning, where the Bexley Boys and Nestlings enthusiastically sang a new song "The World for God", which they taught the congregation. [270]

Most matrons were appointed for short terms, sometimes as brief as 6-12 months, but Major Baker had been a major influence at the home, in an exceptionally long five year posting. She saw the potential in each girl that passed through the doors, declaring, "Always have I had faith in even the worst of girls". This was to be the Major's last appointment before retirement a year later in 1936, after an energetic 32 years of service as an Officer in Women's Social Work. She was born in Auckland, New Zealand, but spent her initial seven years of appointments in Australia. Although she mostly worked in children's homes and industrial schools, the Major spent a term at Adelaide Maternity Home, before returning to New Zealand to work in children's homes in Dunedin and Wellington. As Matron of Dunedin Industrial Home, she was often called upon to accompany girls to court and operated as their probation officer.[271]

In contrast to the lengthy appointment of Matron Baker to The Nest, neither Dulcie Rae nor her successors spent long at the children's home. Major Edith Rogers was appointed to replace her in January 1937,[272] followed swiftly by Adjutant Cocking, from The Fold, in February that same year,[273] while Matron Lawrence took over briefly before she was moved on to become Matron of Bethesda Mothers Hospital Marrickville in June 1937. [274] Adjutant Florence Arundell was temporarily placed in charge of the Nest, until officially appointed Matron in September 1937.[275]

Matron Baker would probably have been disappointed to miss the excitement of the next few months following her departure, as The Nest's 53 children, ranging from two to fourteen years old, prepared for their most prestigious visitor yet in 1935. [276]

They were excited to learn that General Evangeline Booth (1865-1950), seventh child of founder William Booth and world leader of the Salvation Army, would be visiting the Nest in April. [277] This was her first overseas campaign since being appointed in March 1934. General Booth would spend 44 days in Australia before heading for the New Zealand leg of her tour. She would be visiting the capital cities for their annual congress meetings.[278] The Methodist newspaper described her as;

> 'A highly gifted woman as evangelist, of distinctive, intellectual, and emotional quality, and as orator, and leader of one of the greatest religious, moral, and social forces of modern times.'[279]

Arriving in Fremantle by ship on the 12th March 1935, she was greeted by a tumultuous crowd. Salvationists were excited to take up a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet their General. The general public experienced the added intrigue of seeing a woman leading an international church movement.

She spent a week in Perth before proceeding to Melbourne via Kalgoorlie. [280] The schedule was arduous, and the thoughtful organisers had planned a week's respite from the busy schedule at historic Winderradeen sheep and cattle station near Collector, located off the Federal Highway between Goulburn and Canberra. The General was accommodated in the gracious old whitewashed building, built in 1837, with its verandah and traditional green window shutters providing privacy, shade and ventilation. She was able to indulge in her favourite pastime of horse-riding and enjoy the simple pleasures of exploring the Australian landscape. [281] [282]

The Wellington Times report the visit of General Evangeline Booth to Winderradeen 1935 [283]

Now fully recharged, General Booth was driven to the station, a few hours later passing anonymously through Sydney's Central Station, where she boarded a steam train for Brisbane. [284285]

Following a series of meetings in the Queensland capital, she caught a train south. On her official arrival in Sydney, the General alighted at Central Station on April 16 to the cheers of thousands gathered to catch a glimpse of the powerful woman who commanded a worldwide church. As she emerged from the platform concourse, the people broke out spontaneously into singing a hymn, in a joyous scene never before witnessed by the railways. At the civic reception hosted by the Lord Mayor at Sydney Town Hall, the cheering crowds were jostling for position, so that the police were needed for crowd control. [286]

For such an august figure, her modest choice of accommodation would have surprised many people, but humble Evangeline had lived and worked in the slums of London and New York and her needs were modest. After meeting the crowds in the city, a car conveyed her down the Princes Highway to Arncliffe, up the hill and through the gates of The Nest. Seventy of the boys from Bexley Boys Home were gathered at the driveway entrance, together with 30 of the girls from Dappeto, all in a mood of great anticipation. Three children sprang forward to attach paper streamers to the car bonnet, which they led through the grounds to Dappeto as the other children energetically tossed the brightly coloured paper streamers across the roof of the vehicle.

Alighting from the car, and ascending the steps to the porch, she was greeted by Matron Rae, Major Watkins and Commandant Baskin, and presented with a bouquet of flowers and a fruit basket by a boy and girl representing the two children's homes. Her gentle reply was encouraging to the young people;

> "Thank you ever so much, I am going to be happy. I have lived longer than you dear girls and boys, and my heart has grown bigger and bigger. I am coming to see you boys and girls, and when I come, I'm going to bring you something you like—something sweet."

The children sang a song of welcome, after which there was one more quirky presentation to be made – a kangaroo with a ribbon tied around its neck, from which dangled a card reading,' Welcome to the wee Nest'. If the General was surprised, she didn't show it, but graciously told the assembled crowd that she would try to take it back with her to England. [287]

The unrelenting schedule pushed on. Commuting from The Nest at Arncliffe, she addressed 600 officers from around New South Wales at three sessions of the Sydney Congress meetings in the Elizabeth Street Congress Hall on the 17th April. [288]

General Evangeline Booth greets Rockdale Band from the balcony of Dappeto 1935. Photo: Salvation Army Museum

When the General appeared at the Sydney Town Hall for a Young People's Congress, the War Cry declared, 'Triumphant! The General receives an overwhelming welcome from Sydney Young People'. The enthusiastic children were described as, 'radiantly happy boys and girls'. A tremendous roar arose from the crowd when the General walked down the aisle. A sea of colour was created in red, yellow and blue as Salvation Army flags were vigorously waved in the air, and cries of "Cooee" echoed through the resonant auditorium, almost drowning out the call of the live kookaburra laughing into the microphone on stage. Young people from throughout the Sydney region presented edifying songs, tableaux and physical culture displays. The popular Nestlings were naturally invited to present a piece, along with the Fold and Bexley Boys. They chose a graceful physical culture exercise with rods, the Fold presented biblical tableaux and Bexley Boys created an exciting human pyramid as part of their gymnastics display.[289]

General Booth went on to address a raft of public and private meetings, including a luncheon meeting held at the Blaxland Galleries of Farmers department store in George Street Sydney, for the wealthy businessmen of the Millions Club. [290] [291] It was a whirlwind tour, finishing on April 24th, when she departed for New Zealand by ship. Evangeline Booth had been impressed with the dedication and service of Australian Salvationists, and they were most impressed by her. [292]

General Evangeline Booth was not the only Salvation Army leader to visit Arncliffe Girls Home. Two decades later, in March and April 1956, General and Mrs Wilfred Kitching (General from 1954-1963) conducted 65 'sell-out' Congress Meetings in five capital cities, attracting huge crowds and resulting in 750 (or possibly 1,000 as the same edition of the War Cry quotes both figures) men and women throughout the country coming to the altar (Mercy Seat) to dedicate their lives to God.

The General and his wife Kathleen were no strangers to Australia, having served as General Secretary in Melbourne for 14 months in 1946-47. [293] This visit did not excite as much general press interest as when Evangeline Booth visited but was still of importance to Australian Salvationists. [294]

After preaching at the Sydney Congress from April 19-24, the couple were delayed in their departure to London via the Lloyd Triestino cruise ship M.V. Neptunia. This afforded them an unexpected opportunity to visit The Nest. Saturday's visit commenced with afternoon tea with Commissioner and Mrs Edgar S. Grinsted, former Matron Olive Allitt, who was now a Brigadier and Territorial Women's Social Secretary, together with the current Matron Senior Captain Florence Winstanley and the staff. The General's speech kept the 40 children enthralled, so much so that when they announced their intention of leaving, the girls begged them to stay a little longer, which they did. [295]

Salvation Army officers never stayed long in one place during the early days, frequently being assigned to new corps and new roles. It seemed that the staff of Arncliffe Girls Home were in an ever-revolving door, Florence Winstanley was appointed as Matron in February 1953, with Pearl French as her Second Officer. [296] Pearl later became Matron at Canowindra Girls Home.[297] Again there was a swift change of staff as Matron Winstanley moved to Toowoomba Girls Home after a

brief 2 ½ year appointment in the St George area, and Senior Captain Constance Worley took on the role at The Nest. [298]

However, the girls also enjoyed the visits of many high-level Salvation Army officers over the years. A succession of Commissioners regularly preached during Sunday meetings at the home, visited on Christmas Day (usually accompanied by Santa and a sack full of gifts), and were guests of honour at the annual fund-raising fete. Accounts of these visits indicate that the children thoroughly enjoyed meeting the visitors and hearing their sermons. Likewise, the officers were always impressed by the children. Commissioner Joshua James described his impressions of the Arncliffe home in 1950 as having a 'homely atmosphere of affection and agreement, and the fine administration which oversighted with law and love.' [299]

The girls pose a during a visit from a senior officer, Date unknown, Photo: Macquarie Lodge.

Wilsons Road School

One of the legal requirements of an Industrial School was that the children were provided with an education. The Salvation Army leased a portion of their land on the corner of Wollongong Road and Wilsons Road to the Department of Education. A two-classroom weatherboard, prefabricated building was set up for the girls on the perimeter of the property. An officer was appointed who had worked as a teacher for the Education Department. Later, a former pupil assisted the teacher in the classroom. Captain Kendrick was in charge of the school in its early days. [300]

The school day commenced at 9.30, with a brief 15-minute pause for morning tea at 10.45 am, after which studies recommenced till lunch at 12.30. There was plenty of time for both eating and play, as afternoon classes commenced at 1.45 pm, finishing two hours later. [301]

Originally the Wilsons Road Girls School taught 60 pupils from the Girls Home, but within a couple of years it was taking male and female students from the surrounding area, as enrolments at nearby Arncliffe Public School were overwhelming that institution.

The Arncliffe Progress Association was thrilled to receive a positive response from the Minister for Education, Hon. D.H. Drummond, in December 1934, when they requested a new infants department for boys be set up in the grounds. The minister promised action as soon as funds became available. [302] Drummond was as good as his word, and the new classrooms and students were added the following year. [303]

The little school burgeoned and was bursting at the seams with 170 students by 1937, necessitating the provision of several more buildings to house them, but re-siting the school was deferred until World War 2 was over. [304]

By the end of the war in 1948 there were 125 students attending Wilsons Road Public School. It was decided that the Education Department should buy the nearby site on the corner of Wollongong Road and Dowling Street, known as 'Athelstane,' as a second campus. The following year they commenced construction and opened Athelstane in 1950. [305] Although the Dappeto campus later closed, Athelstane Public School still exists.


"THE NEST" GIRLS AT SCHOOL.—View of the schoolroom at The Army's Home for girls in Arncliffe, Sydney. (Below) AN OPEN-AIR MEETING IN KOREA.—Such gatherings never fail to

Wilsons Road School in 1933 Photo: War Cry [306]

A key figure in the Wilsons Road school was Senior Major Elsie Andrew, an 'alert and buoyant' woman who devoted most of her 38 years as a Salvation Army officer to young people' s work.[307] Born in Cassilis NSW, a tiny village lying between Merriwa and Dunedoo, 351 km north-west from Sydney, Elsie was converted to Christianity at nearby Mudgee. A quirk of fate, or as some would say, the hand of God, saw the young teacher humiliated one day in church when pranksters filled her bible bag with lollies. Feeling quite embarrassed at the innocent practical joke, she declared that she would change churches and join the Salvation Army.

The Army had a reputation as being outrageous in their approach to religion. Her siblings dubbed them, 'those terrible people' and were quite shocked at her rash decision, but it was to prove to be the catalyst for finding her life's work. Moving to Sydney, Elsie was able to exercise her talent for teaching first at Bexley Boys Home, then following Officer Training College, she spent several years as an Officer-Teacher at Camberwell Girls Home, The Fold and The Nest in Arncliffe, where she remained for 8 years.

Her influence at the small Arncliffe school was profound. The quality of the education was excellent. In an era when the school leaving age was 14, and most children only completed basic schooling, Major Andrew promoted Secondary School education for girls. The first group of 14 Nest girls to study at secondary education level passed with flying colours, impressing everyone by topping the inspectoral district. Girls graduating from the school would regularly progress to Domestic Science Schools or even High Schools.[308]

After an impressive career in Army youth work, Elsie retired to her home in Gymea in 1955. [309]


Senior Major Elsie Andrew

Major Elsie Andrew Photo: War Cry [310]

Legislation changes

The Salvation Army saw its social welfare homes as a ministry to vulnerable and neglected families, with the aim of raising them out of poverty and despair and into the light of Christian Gospel teachings. In contrast, government policy viewed the purpose of children's homes as something quite different; as institutions which controlled problem children.

The New South Wales Government introduced the Child Welfare Act 1923, superseding the Industrial Schools Act 1886. The new legislation covered children who were, 'living under such conditions as indicate that the child is lapsing or likely to lapse into a career of vice and crime,' and the definition of a neglected or uncontrollable child was modified and expanded.

Unlike the Industrial Schools legislation of the previous century, it now included more than just the homeless, beggars, associates of thieves, children of prostitutes or those found living in a brothel or in an opium den. The new act widened its definitions to include children under 18 years old who were ill-treated, and those whose parents were insane, incompetent, destitute, in jail, drunkards, or not providing their offspring with sufficient and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging. [311]

Industrial schools were to be retained, and temporary shelters or special needs homes were established under the Minister's control. Those homes caring for children under the age of seven, now had to be licensed and inspected every three months. Previously, homes were annually inspected.

The act dealt, far more comprehensively than previously, with the problems of uncontrollable children, institutional homes, adoption, maintenance of children, and underage criminals. The most notable aspect of the legislation is that it fails to see a distinction between neglect and criminality. The act treats neglected children and juvenile delinquents in the same way, tarring them with the same brush and committing them to the same institutions as Wards of the State.

New South Wales legislation changed again, when the Child Welfare Act 1939 superseded the Child Welfare Act 1923, its 1924 Amendment, and the Government Relief Administration Act 1930.

The Child Welfare Act 1939 attempted to reduce the incidence of abuse in institutional homes by dictating the categories of behaviour that warranted punishment, placing restrictions on the type and severity of punishments in section XI 56.

Children could be punished for disobedience, profanity, threatening behaviour, assault, theft, idleness or irreverence. Punishments included loss of privileges, modification of diet, being assigned fatigue duty or undertaking physical exercises. Corporeal punishment was limited to three strokes on each hand.

What would today be considered the most controversial punishment was being locked in a room— euphemistically described as 'isolated detention from other inmates in a room constructed for the purpose'— for a limited period of 24-48 hours depending on their age, which was a distinct improvement on the previous 14 day solitary confinement inflicted on children in the early years of the century. This punishment was only to be used in exceptional circumstances and the conditions of confinement were clearly described. In practice however, many homes flouted these rules and punishments could be punitive and excessive.

The reasons legislated for committal to a children's institution remained more or less the same as in previous legislation, but now added truancy to the list in section XIV 72 (o).[312]

As in previous regulations, the act lumped together uncontrollable children and juvenile offenders with neglected children, and comprehensively covered the treatment of juvenile offenders, showing a continued overlap or blurring of distinctions for the reasons to be committed to a home as a Ward of the State.

Whereas previously only those caring for youngsters under the age of seven needed to register with the authorities, now all homes had to apply to the Minister for a license and were to be inspected every three months. There was no longer a reference in the act to the concept of Industrial Schools.

The Arncliffe Industrial Girls Home at Dappeto, known affectionally as The Nest, had changed its official name to The Nest Children's Home in 1930. It is unclear whether this was due to policy or legal changes, a rebranding to reflect the Salvation Army's ethos of caring for young children in need, or simply an acknowledgment of its colloquial name.

It was renamed the Arncliffe Girls Home, in 1941, which remained its title until its closure in 1969, although again, the residents had never referred to themselves as other than The Nest Girls. While it is not clear why this second name change occurred, presumably when they had to licence the school under the new legislation, the Salvation Army changed the name to reflect that it was no longer an Industrial School but a home for neglected children. Despite the official name change, it was still frequently referred to as the Nest Girls Home.[313]

World War 2

The Second World War had a severe impact on many children's homes. It has been estimated that as many as 50% of children whose fathers served in the armed forces were placed in care in the post-war period. This could be due to either the death or injury of their parents, or post-traumatic stress disorder which rendered the parents incapable of caring for their children.[314]

During the war, it also forced the relocation of some children to inland centres for reasons of safety. Not all children in homes were orphans. Moving the children would have separated them from family members, but for all the affected Wards of the State, it must have been disorienting and disturbing as they were removed from familiar surroundings to a rural setting.

During the conflict 577 children were evacuated to Australia from overseas, however, the war in Europe was far away.[315] As Australian citizens read newspaper reports about the evacuation of children from the key British cities to the countryside, and some evacuees arrived in Australia, they little realised that soon they would be discussing the pros and cons of the issue for their own children.

The idea of evacuation was brought to the fore early in 1941 at the Gunnedah Agricultural Conference, when it was noted that pastoralists had been asked by the National Emergency Service (NES) to identify local homes with room for potential city evacuees. It was felt that although people were willing to assist, 'hostesses' did not fully understand the difficulties of boarding 'strange and possibly frightened' children. [316]

Australia, and the rest of the world, was shocked by the Pearl Harbour bombings of 7 December 1941 and the subsequent entry of Japan into the war. Within a week of Pearl Harbour, many Sydney residents were talking of a move to the country, The railways reported exceptional numbers of people purchasing tickets to the Blue Mountains, Goulburn, Wagga Wagga and other country areas, while real estate agents noted a significant demand for properties to buy or rent in Katoomba. [317]

The dangers to the Australian mainland were further driven home after raids by the Japanese air force on Darwin, 19 February 1942, which killed 235 people, and injured another 200-300. People assumed incorrectly that Japan intended to invade Australia and the government began to contemplate following the British example of evacuating large numbers of children to a secure location. As the bombings continued across Darwin, Townsville, Katherine, Wyndham, Derby, Broome and Port Hedland until November 1943, evacuation preparations took on a new urgency. [318]

There was some debate as to whether the children should be evacuated immediately, or delay until local air raids occurred. After all, the strategic targets of Sydney, and the industrial port cities Newcastle and Port Kembla, had not yet been subject to bombing. It was felt by the majority that they should plan immediately for evacuation, but delay implementation until danger loomed imminently. [319]

Many country towns and cities in the Hunter, Riverina and Central West regions supported the concept and offered assistance to locate suitable accommodation. Several local councils and NES committees took it upon themselves to prepare plans, even though they had not yet received clear communication on the subject from the state government. In December 1941 Katoomba ambitiously announced it could easily take 50,000 children, Singleton 2,000, Temora 1,500, Wagga Wagga 500, Scone 150. Albury claimed it had completed plans including education and accommodation for 3,000 evacuee children. It was reported that more than 30,000 evacuees would be sent to the Riverina, 23,000 to the North and Central Slopes and 30,000 to the Upper Hunter Valley.

It was proposed that the children would be placed in private homes, empty houses, hotels, boarding houses, and there was even some suggestion of emergency accommodation in fruit packing sheds and shearing sheds. The Minister for National Emergency Services (NES), Mr Heffron, claimed, 'Hundreds of houses in country districts are empty because of enlistments in the army and the drift of workers to the city for munition work.' [320]

That same month, the NSW Teachers Federation asked the government to support the evacuation of school groups from areas most at risk. They were of the opinion that evacuating families individually would result in chaos, and that there needed to be a coordinated plan to evacuate all school and pre-school children. They urged such a plan should be organised within a fortnight.

Amazingly, although governments generally move much slower than this, preliminary plans were announced within a couple of weeks, but not to the satisfaction of the educationalists. The Teachers Federation was annoyed that the government rejected their advice to move teachers, pupils and school to the countryside as a wholistic unit. [321]

In January 1942 NSW State Cabinet announced a plan to evacuate city children to the country. However, this was not a comprehensive evacuation. They intended to oblige parents to arrange for their children to board with country relatives. Those without rural relatives would presumably be left to their own devices. Minister Heffron announced that the government would subsidise concession travel fares for those travelling inland, and free travel for those in dire need. It was a start, but it was not the universal evacuation model proposed by the teachers. [322] [323]

Parents and children in Newcastle, Sydney and Port Kembla were assembled in preliminary meetings at selected schools on 23 January 1942, to prepare for potential evacuation of some of their students. It was estimated that only 10% of parents initially registered their children, but this seems an optimistic figure. [324] By the 30th January only 150 parents had applied for the scheme. [325]

In March, ninety-six Newcastle volunteer women were recruited to escort the children to country destinations. They would travel by steam train and supervise children aged 4 to 12 years old, delivering them to their rural relatives if the parents were unable to do so. [326] Parents had to pay for the train ticket, but the escort service would be free. [327]

In this climate of slight hysteria and fear of invasion, it is not surprising that the Salvation Army felt a pressing need to transfer their children temporarily to a safe place in the countryside. The Army was in a unique position regarding evacuation, because the children in their care did not need to have parents in the countryside as a prerequisite for evacuation, and supporters donated properties or made them available at heavily discounted rates. [328]

The Eastern Territory command was making plans for emergency evacuation of all its children's homes in Sydney and Brisbane. Chief Secretary Colonel Grattin announced in March 1942 that the Army had secured properties in Toowoomba, Kalbar and Canowindra.

Mrs Alford, the owner of the Toowoomba property, donated the land to the Army for the care of children evacuated from their Yeronga home, which was now under the care of former Nest Matron (1937-1941) Adjutant Florence Arundell. [329] [330] In memory of the owner's father, it was to be named the James Horton Memorial Home for Girls. It boasted flower and vegetable gardens, and Mrs Alford had thoughtfully planted additional vegetables to ensure a good supply for the girls who would shortly be moving there. The boys from Indooroopilly were evacuated to a property in Kalbar, donated by owner Mrs Weinholt for the duration of the war.[331]

A New South Wales property at 31 Blatchford Street, Canowindra, was sold to the Army at an extremely favourable rate, for use as a children's home for evacuees. It was to be under the supervision of Sister Cready and Matron Major Lizzie Clulow, who transferred from Grenfell Corps. The Matron was assisted by a team of officers; Captains Isobel Olsen, Miriam Lawrence, Zena Exton, Jean Geddes, and Adjutants S. Hemming and Cornwell. [332] Later in the year, Captain F. McLaren from the Stanmore Fold [333] and Captain Lillian Sanders were also transferred to Canowindra, and [334] not long afterwards, Jean Geddes was promoted to Major, superseding Major Clulow as Matron of Canowindra. [335]

Meanwhile it was intended to use The Nest and The Fold as annexes to the Dulwich Hill and Burwood Eventide homes for the elderly. [336]

Thirty girls from the Arncliffe Nest were consequently transferred to Canowindra Girls Home in late March 1942, along with 44 children from The Fold at Marrickville. and two boys and a girl from Bethesda Hospital. [337] Perhaps the girls were excited at the opportunity to travel to a part of the country they had never visited before. The Nesties of the 1920s had travelled to country areas far and wide for concerts, but the current batch of girls had only sung around the Sydney area for the last few years. Or perhaps they were unsettled and fearful as they entered the unknown, being shuffled around the country whether they wanted to go or not, with little consideration that those who were not orphans were now completely separated from their parents by a distance of over 300km.

The trip was exhausting; catching the steam train from Arncliffe to Sydney Central, walking to the country platforms to connect with the train heading west, and then transferring to the 'Tin Hare' rail-motor at Cowra for the last 28km on the Eugowra branch line, finally arriving wearily at the skillion-roofed, mustard-yellow weatherboard Canowindra railway station after a full day of travelling.

The girls and their carers traversed the dusty streets to their new home, built in 1920 by Andrew Purcell, who originally named the house Lucerne, after his most profitable crop. The Salvation Army renamed it Lyndon House after Australian Salvation Army General George Lyndon Carpenter, who had opened the Canowindra Corps hall 12 years previously, when he was simply a Colonel and Chief Secretary for Eastern Australia. [338]

Walking through the large garden, they approached the building by a tiled path and surmounted the three shallow steps onto the wide, shady verandah. As they stepped over the lintel, the children noticed the name Lucerne set out in small black and brick-red hexagonal tiles in the doorway. The single-story house, with its gabled roof and decorative finials, featured timber-panelled interior walls, and elegant lead light inserts above the timber doors and in the door panels.[339]

Canowindra was not officially opened until the afternoon of 7 October 1942. Lieutenant Commissioner E.J. Harewood performed the opening ceremony, which drew local dignitaries including the Shire President, and a crowd from the surrounding districts of Cowra and Orange. Soldiers from Grenfell Corps also attended the event and their Brass Band played some inspiring tunes, while The Nest Girls sang sweetly. The Commissioner unveiled the foundation plaque and prayed for the success of the new venture, before the crowd surged forward to inspect the spacious new facilities, which were decorated with freshly cut flowers. In the evening they held a public evangelistic meeting. [340]

The Nest may have moved out west, but the girls were thinking of those suffering in Sydney. It had been a custom for many years for the Nesties to sing in the wards of Newington State Hospital and

distribute donated gifts to the patients at Christmas. They sent telegram greetings to the hospital in 1943, conveying their best wishes for the event, while the women of the Wollongong Home League provided the musical program in their absence. [341]

The Nesties songster practice continued, in the tradition that had started in Arncliffe 25 years previously. Although they were unable to perform at their usual venues, there were still plenty of outlets for their talents. Hopefully, singing, attending school, playing sport, and the familiar routines of life at the new home, helped soothe the anxieties of their removal from the city. The girls not only excelled in singing and sports, but also in school studies at Canowindra, where they regularly came first and second in their classes.[342]

The annual fundraising fete was another Arncliffe tradition that they continued to uphold in their new location. It was also an opportunity to present their popular program of songs, handbell ringing and physical culture drills to an admiring public. At the 1944 fete, Mr C. McCarron, deputising for his brother, the Boree Shire Council President who was preoccupied fighting bushfires on his rural property, gave a speech espousing their 'fine example of womanhood' and hoped they would not be withdrawn from Canowindra. Whether the girls agreed with that sentiment is probably arguable, but the comment was kindly and well-meant.[343]

Congress is an exciting time in Army life, when far-flung corps members travel to the capital for massed meetings, prayer and encouraging sermons. Although located far-away across the Blue Mountains, the Nesties from Canowindra were still a part of the Eastern Division, which met in Sydney. The girls had sung many times at Congress and they now travelled once more to the annual Congress meetings at Sydney Town Hall in 1944, presenting a moving Schubert's Lullaby during the Home League Rally. The stirring event was attended by many important invitatories including keynote speaker Lady Wakehurst, the wife of the NSW State Governor, her daughter, Commissioner Harewood and the Lady Mayoress Mrs R.J. Bartley. The experience of broken home life that had caused the girls' removal to The Nest and now Canowindra, may have allowed them to relate closely to her message. She admonished the women to "Fight the good fight", stating that, "Home problems are the same all the world over. Our young people have suffered. Mothers have experienced loneliness in the training of their families; our boys and girls see glamour in living dangerously".

The evening before, they had been a popular ensemble at the Young People's Demonstration, adding a gymnastics display of vaulting and pyramid building to their repertoire, surely a challenge to Bexley Boys Home who amazed everyone with their famous pyramid display, but were generous in their cheers for the girls. As usual the program was varied with youth groups from around the state offering a mixture of marching, brass band numbers, biblical tableaux, a 500 strong Singing Company and the flashing ribbons of complex timbrel displays.[344]

The war had been lingering far longer than anyone expected. The initial panic at the thought of a Japanese invasion had subsided, as it was clear that such an event was unlikely. The Germans would not surrender until 8 May 1945, and the Japanese until 2 September, but Eastern Territory Headquarters now considered it time to repatriate their young charges. They began preparations to return the Eventide residents to other locations and reopen Dappeto as a children's home. Captains Phyllis Buttriss and Joyce Nash were assigned to The Nest at Arncliffe in January 1945,[345] followed by Esther Ward, now promoted from Adjutant to Major, Lieutenant Lillian Dickens who had just graduated from training college, [346] and a new Manager, Adjutant George Woodland, in March. [347]

It seems that by early 1945 The Nest at Arncliffe was back in operation, although the precise date is unknown, and it is unclear whether all the Canowindra girls were transferred back to Arncliffe, or

whether there were new residents at Dappeto. [348] The Canowindra home continued operations, closing in 1977. [349] The Nest was now generally known as Arncliffe Children's Home, although the children were occasionally still referred to as Nesties or the Nest Girls.

The girls were reintegrated into Rockdale Corps, participating in their April Harvest Festival celebrations. Young people brought baskets of food and groceries, to be distributed to the poor, a musical program entertained members and guests, and the home's Manager Adjutant Woodlands conducted several meetings for Rockdale Corps.[350] The following year two of the Nest girls proudly wore the navy Salvation Army uniform with its quaint ribboned bonnet, as they were sworn in as Senior Soldiers and Corps Cadets at Rockdale Corps.[351] Meanwhile, the girls continued to sing locally at Bexley, at youth meetings, at Congress and in hospitals. [352] [353] [354]

It was the custom before the war for the Commissioner and other inspirational guest speakers to pay regular visits to Dappeto. These meetings now resumed. The War Cry reported in June 1945 that the Field Secretary Lieutenant-Colonel C. Duncan would accompany the British and Foreign Bible Society Commonwealth Secretary Reverend W.H. Rainey, on visits to several social welfare institutions including The Nest at Arncliffe on June 17.[355] The rain outside could not dampen the enthusiasm of the girls as Reverend Rainey held a rapt audience captive with vivid tales of his missionary travels through the arid deserts of Central Australia, preaching the Gospel and distributing bibles to both the indigenous inhabitants and colourful local characters. [356]

It was a joyous occasion when at last when the girls were able to enjoy the entertainment of the annual Nest fundraising fete in 1946, following a five-year hiatus. Matron Adjutant Lorna Curtis was now in charge, and corps members from Rockdale and Hurstville assisted in the preparations, manning the stalls as eager visitors swarmed throughout the gardens. Bexley Mayor Alderman E. Jones warmly approved of the home's role in creating upstanding citizens of its young charges.[357]

The traditional fete resumed its annual status, often supported by the Rockdale Brass Band. The following year's event was held on a fine sunny day in 1947. A stiff breeze caused the flags and bunting to flutter but did not discourage the throng, who assembled for the speeches and musical items, then strolled the numerous enticing stalls. The girls looked smart, attired in their pale green 'home' uniforms, while singing their company song, "Praise the Lord". Mayor Alderman Norman Guess was most complimentary of their vocal prowess. He lived nearby and sometimes heard them practicing, saying that it "helped to keep him young." He was complimentary of the work of Matron Curtis, as the local aldermen had recently paid a visit to inspect the home, when they were suitably impressed by the social work being undertaken by the staff. [358]

Now that the war was well and truly over, the visits to Collaroy camp had also resumed by 1948, providing welcome relief from the strict routines of life at the home. [359]

There was a change of Matron when Major Olive Allitt was appointed to the position in early 1948.[360] Olive began as a Sergeant in the Training College before moving into active service in the Field, Women's Social Department and hospitals and the NSW outback. Major Allitt worked in the WAAF as a Red Shield Officer for four years, and was Divisional Secretary, and Divisional Young Peoples Secretary (North Sydney Division) before assuming the position of Arncliffe's Matron. She possessed nursing qualifications in both general and obstetric nursing and a Diploma of Social Studies from Sydney University, which would seem to be ideal qualifications for the role, but again it was a short appointment in true Army style.

This vast experience was excellent groundwork for her next role as Territorial Women's Social Secretary, to which she was promoted 18 March 1952. "I come to serve and to give of my very best" she declared at the appointment ceremony. [361] The way was paved for Captain Dora Henry's promotion to Matron at Arncliffe with Captain L Price as Second Officer. [362]

Senior Major Allitt

Photo: War Cry [363]

Closure

Attitudes to institutional care of neglected, delinquent and orphaned children began to shift in the 1950s and 1960s, perhaps prompting the changes that would soon take place at The Nest. Whether this was a concern for the welfare of children, or the government was more concerned with the substantial costs of maintaining Welfare Departments and children's homes, is questionable. The 2004 Senate Communities Affairs Reference Committee investigation, 'Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children,' suggests that;

> 'Issues about the cost of maintaining orphanages were significant and by the mid-1970s served as an incentive for governments to find alternatives. No real thought seems to have gone into the effects on children of institutional life and until the early 1960s, little attention was paid to children's emotional needs and the effects of harsh treatment on children in later life. Child protection services began to move from homes in the late 1950s-early 1960s, influenced by child development theories on the importance of maternal love and family life, but principally because of Bowlby's 1951 work about the link between maternal deprivation, emotional adjustment and mental health and childhood care.' [364]

In addition to concerns about children's emotional welfare, the 2004 Committee received numerous shocking submissions regarding the physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse of children in care homes. There was often a great disparity between the official description and reputation of a home and the actuality for its unfortunate residents, masking the true story from the public eye. A number of Salvation Army children's homes were implicated in the report, although it offers only a sampling of the hundreds of submissions received. However these issues were not fully explored in the sixties and abuse was not necessarily a primary issue in the decline of children's homes.

Ironically, for decades the government had avoided the major costs of running institutions, by allowing charities and churches to carry the burden of care, but the government now baulked at the ongoing costs. In 1958, the New South Wales Association of Child Caring Agencies commenced lobbying the NSW State Government for subsidies, as most Catholic homes had been operating without government assistance. [365]

The NSW 1939 Child Welfare Act was amended in 1961, not to ensure the welfare of the child, but to address non-payment of maintenance payments by parents. In such circumstances, the Minister could make the child a Ward of the State and the administrator of the children's home was deemed to be the Foster Parent for all intents and purposes. Subsequently, the institution received subsidy for the child's placement in the home. [366]

Unfortunately, although the subsidies were welcomed, they could also be used against a home. There was pressure for church institutions to accept troubled Wards of the State who had fallen foul of the law. In some instances, it was alleged the authorities had even gone so far as to threaten removal of state subsidies if institutions refused to take problem children who had been sent there by the courts. [367]

The regulations were amended in 1966 to limit the payment for State Wards, both to institutions and to Foster Parents. Subsidy would cease when the State Ward attained the school leaving age of 16. The amendment also covered the administration of licencing of all children's homes but ignored issues of children's welfare. [368]

A shift in government social welfare policies began in the fifties, with the reluctance of state governments to finance children's homes, and a preference emerging for foster care for endangered children, resulting in the closure of many institutions.

This move, in both government policy and public opinion, would soon affect The Nest, although momentarily, life at the home continued as normal.

There was a small addition to the site which may have been an indication that things might soon change. Seventeen self-contained retirement units were built on the eastern side of the grounds of the Girls Home in 1964, which they named Phillip House. The site was now co-habited by young children and aging pensioners.

The Nest celebrated its 50th Jubilee Anniversary at the annual fete of 1967. It was Major Phyllis Turner 's final days as Matron, as she was soon to be by succeeded by Major Thelma Entwistle. A Queenslander who had entered officer training in Maryborough in 1939, Phyllis Turner would shortly rise to the rank of Brigadier as Territorial Women's Social Services Secretary (TWSSS), after her next appointment as Assistant TWSSS.[369]

As usual, it was a festive affair, with Dulwich Hill Band, which had provided music at the home's opening half a century earlier, now playing again at the Jubilee fete on a damp December day.[370]

However, the 50th anniversary had been a brief moment of glory for the girl's home, before disconcerting changes took place in the lives of the young girls in residence there. Commissioner Scotney announced to a crowd of 600 attending the fete the following year, that soon the girls would be relocated while the Army undertook major renovations to the retirement facilities and constructed new aged care units. [371] Architects were commissioned to create a Senior Citizens' Complex within the building and grounds of Dappeto. The new works were to cost $750,000.

Late in 1968, the decision was made to finally close the Arncliffe girl's home. After the school holidays early in January 1969, the girls were moved to The Lodge at 97 Cambridge Street Stanmore, a house once owned by Sir Henry Parkes until taken over by the Salvation Army as an industrial home for girls, and later converted to a girl's student hostel. Their former home Dappeto would be safe from development and was about to receive a sandblasting to clean away eight decades of dirt, but a variety of other structures around the site were already in the process of being demolished.[372] [373]

Saturday, April 19, 1969 THE WAR CRY 5

The Nestlings at their new home in The Lodge Stanmore 1969, holding a name plate from the iron gates, retrieved when a truck knocked down one of the supporting pillars by accident. [374]

It is unknown how many girls passed through the doors of The Nest at Arncliffe. Admission records are unavailable to the researcher due to privacy laws, and it is probable that they are not accurate. It is impossible to know how many Australian children were placed in care over the last century, not only in the Salvation Army, but throughout all institutions nationally. Records were often incomplete or not kept at all. It is not even known how many orphanages existed.

Added to this, there were major differences in reporting requirements and methods between the States and also in various eras. Efforts by the 2004 Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee to establish some reasonable statistics, suggest as many as half a million children were placed in care in the 19th and 20th centuries, with a vague estimate of 200,000 in New South Wales. Possibly 30,000 children came under the care of the Salvation Army between 1950-1979, but other than that it is impossible to be more precise. [375]

Home or harm?

There is often criticism levelled today about orphanages and children's homes of this period, but a 1934 account tells of a woman possessed with a strong desire to revisit the scenes of her youth. She told the Matron, "I can never forget that I was brought up here, and shall never cease to be grateful," adding that she had been very happy at the home. [376]

This is corroborated by an Arncliffe resident who declared in 1941, "I have been a neighbour of the Nest for twenty years and not once have I heard a child cry. I have heard them laughing and singing from the first thing in the morning, and they have always been both a cheer and a blessing to us".[377]

The problem for the researcher is the inherent bias of the evidence. Newspapers, and The War Cry in particular, laud The Nest and other children's homes as caring places where the young people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs are paramount. In contrast, Senate Committee investigations and Royal Commissions are set up to investigate systemic problems and therefore most, if not all, of the submissions are negative.

While offering apologies for historic abuse, the Army does not agree that it was universal in its homes. In its 2004 submission to the Senate Committee it was stated that 19 former residents reported sexual abuse by three officers and four employees and a further 24 ex-residents reported physical abuse during the period 1950 to 1979. [378] In the 2003 ABC Four Corners program a spokesperson stated,

> 'We believe that the great wrong that was done to children abused in our care is that they were abused while the majority of children in our care were having life enriching experiences, making their trauma all the more difficult to bear.' [379]

With a Royal Commission and so much negative press emanating today from tales of abuse at children's homes across Australia, it is tempting to tar all homes with the same brush, but The Nest has never been mentioned in any of the government investigations. Unfortunately, nearby Bexley Boys Home, which often shared activities with the Arncliffe Children's Home, was named in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with 9 compensation claims made on Bexley between 1993 and 2013, [380] and several offenders jailed for sexual abuse in 2018-2019. [381] [382]

In contrast, there do not appear to have not been any reports of abuse at The Nest. Arncliffe is not among the Salvation Army children's homes mentioned in the 2004 Senate enquiry 'Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children,' [383] nor of the later 2014 Royal Commission.

In fact the complete opposite seems to be the case. A former resident related how she loved Dappeto, living there from age 5 to 13. She reported that the staff were wonderful, and could offer only the highest praise for the institution. There was absolutely no cruelty or abuse, and the discipline was firm in accordance with the standards of the day, but not harsh. She was never lonely and always seemed to be singing and playing in her spare time. The girls formed a deep bond, and many former residents from the 1950s created an informal association which met regularly for social events for 30 or 40 years, until the group moderator passed away and the activities petered out. [384]

Nursing home and retirement village

Macquarie Lodge

By the mid-sixties, the Army planned to repurpose Dappeto and its adjoining buildings for a comprehensive three-tier aged care facility for 200 residents. They commissioned prominent architect Louis S. Robertson (d. 1966) to design the new facility. Robertson also designed Winderradeen House for the elderly, Samaritan House, Gill Memorial Boys Home in Goulburn and Dee Why aged care home. [385] Architecture was in his blood, as his grandfather Louis Robertson was the NSW Government Principal Assistant Architect, and his father (also named Louis S. Robertson 1868-1932) was a senior member of the architectural firm Louis S. Robertson and Son. [386]

Territorial Commander A. Bramwell Cook opened the new brick unit block for aged care facilities in the Dappeto grounds on Saturday 14 November 1964. [387] Lieutenant -Colonel Olive Allitt, former Matron and a retired former Social Services Secretary had returned to the field to guide the development. She was present to introduce the Chief Secretary, who oversaw a comprehensive outdoor program for the event, which formed part of the annual fete. Deputy Mayor Alderman Ron Rathbone addressed the crowd of Salvationists, supporters and fete-goers, commenting that this was the first privately run aged care facility of its type in the Rockdale Municipal area, while the Federal and State Members of Parliament also commended the sterling work of the Salvation Army.

Coming in well below initial cost estimates, the £48,530 building works were free of debt, financed by a combination of donations and a government grant of £32,187. [388]

No Army occasion would be complete without the strains of a brass band, robustly supplied by Belmore corps, after which the architect ceremonially presented a key to one of the occupants Mrs Chambers, who turned the lock and entered her new home. [389] The Commissioner proceeded to unveil the obligatory commemorative stone and it was free for all to enter, to investigate the shiny new facilities for themselves. The units were a picture of modernity and convenience, as each resident had their own bed-sitting room, bathroom, and kitchen with electric stove and fridge. Social occasions were facilitated by a communal sitting room, and the residents had access to a communal laundry.

It was now planned to make Macquarie Lodge a three-tier retirement facility. Independent living units were to be provided for those able to care for themselves by doing their own cooking, laundry and cleaning, while the hostel would provide meals, cleaning and showering services for those less able, but still mobile residents. The final tier of a full-care nursing home provided nurses and aged care workers to look after the higher needs of the sick and frail.

The Nest children had been relocated early in 1969. With the lawns no longer needed for play areas, a further 46 two-story units were added the following year on the western edge, named James Cook Place, and built by K.B. Hutcherson Pty Ltd., together with a 67-bed nursing home, named Macquarie Lodge, located behind Dappeto. It was officially opened by the Minister for Social Services, Hon. WC. Wentworth M.P. 16 May 1970.

Dedication plaque at the entrance to Dappeto.
Photo: Leonie Bell

The third stage was planned for 36 units and 51 single hostel rooms in a residence built to the east of the nursing home. It would be enhanced by a translucent roofed courtyard for outdoor activities in all weathers, which would supplement the existing grassy croquet lawn outside the home.

The pale brickwork and bay windows of the new wing were designed to reflect the bay windows of Dappeto and its unique whale-oil bricks. Photo: Leonie Bell 2020

Architects Stephenson and Turner were anxious to harmonise the new buildings with the old house, echoing Dappeto in colour, materials and the incorporation of bay windows. It is debatable whether this harmony was effectively achieved. However, as part of this new development, it was necessary to demolish the rear wing of the Dappeto building, in an act that today would be considered unthinkable for a heritage listed structure. This wing formerly housed the kitchen, laundry and servants' accommodation.

Historic Dappeto was not being utilised for accommodation, but housed communal facilities, storage rooms and administration offices. The renovations to the main house catered to the residents' spiritual needs with a chapel for church services. There was also a dining room, a small library, and an auditorium for entertainment sessions, social gatherings and craft classes to keep fingers and minds nimble.[390] [391]

The new chapel at Macquarie Lodge was the setting for a historic occasion, when 87-year-old Mrs Breakspere became the first soldier to be sworn-in at Macquarie Lodge. Major Ivan Unicombe conducted the moving ceremony. The Army's newest recruit was attached to the nearby Bexley Corps. [392]

The final stage was opened in October 1971, by His Excellency the Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler, and was dedicated by Commissioner Hubert Scotney, Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army.

They now advertised a total accommodation for 230 Persons including: James Cook Place (92 people), Phillip House (20), Macquarie Lodge (51), Macquarie Lodge Nursing Home (67 persons). Age requirements reflected the retirement age; female residents needed to be over 60 years old, and males over 65. Married couples would be accepted if one of them met the age limit. [393] [394]

Statistics show that the age range of residents in the mid-eighties was 71-97, with 80% of hostel residents aged over 80. [395]The age of the independent living unit residents ranged from 65-95, predominantly in the 75-85 group, with 43% over the age of 80.[396]

The initial Matron of Macquarie Lodge was Brigadier Marjorie Dinnes, [397] followed by Major Diplock and Major Farquarson. Val Townsend joined the nursing staff of Macquarie Lodge in 1974, remaining until her retirement as Matron in 1999. [398]

In the mid-eighties the complex was run by an Administrator and Assistant Administrator, who were officers with nursing qualifications. Directly under them were: the Hostel Supervisor who was in charge of the hostel nurse; Director of Nursing with 60 full-time and part-time nursing staff under her care; Domestic Supervisor governing the cleaners, kitchen and laundry staff of approximately 40 personnel, and finally an Office Administrator who supervised a team of office staff, a handyman to deal with minor maintenance issues, and a groundsman. The lawns were cut by a contractor and tradesmen called in as required to deal with more complex maintenance issues. [399].

Capital works programs needed to be financed by the Salvation Army without government assistance, [400] however the Commonwealth Government regulated funding arrangements for operational costs. [401] The Retirement Village Administrator was responsible for three separate budgets. The nursing home operating cost was funded under a government scheme where residents paid approximately 33% of the costs of the $1 million annual budget (1985/86), an amount which constituted 87.5% of their pension payments. The Commonwealth Government would approve the budget and apply the provisions of the Nursing Homes Assistance Act to supply the remainder of the deficit.

The Lodge, units and general administration costs were maintained under a separate budget, not generally supported by deficit funding. [402] The cost of moving into a self-contained unit was substantially lower in 1986 than today's villages, with a one-off payment of $8,000 required, representing 24 times the mean weekly wage of $329 per week.[403] In comparison, 24 times the 2018 average weekly total earnings would be a mere $29,400, which would not be sufficient to enter any retirement village today. [404]This money would be used to fund further unit construction, which was not eligible for government funding. The residents were expected to contribute 20% of their pension income to the weekly running costs, and the units and hostel therefore were effectively self-funding.[405]

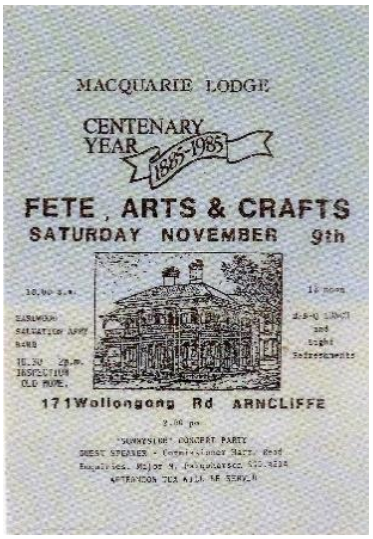
The third budget related to trust fund administration of pension cheques for those unable to deal with finances personally, and also dealt with the income from those able to pay their fortnightly or monthly accommodation fees without assistance.

By the 1980s the press was warning that there was a severe shortage of nursing home accommodation in Sydney. Village administrator Major Norma Farquarson confirmed the need for additional aged care facilities across all suburbs, as she explained to the Sydney Morning Herald reporter in 1983 that on average, she received about 25 enquiries per week regarding availability of nursing home beds. There was usually a 6-8 month wait for a place to open up. "The time you get an ordinary discharge is one in a million," she added, "The rest just go to heaven. We are waiting for someone to die." This was exacerbated by the deterioration of hostel patients who would have priority in moving into the nursing home section. The situation was even worse for those wanting a place in the hostel, where people could wait several years for a vacancy and in 1986 there was a waiting list of around 10 years for an independent unit, but special consideration was given to cases of privation or particular need. [406] [407]

At that point in time the Commonwealth Department of Health had only licenced the home for 67 beds, which were operating at full capacity, with high demand for vacant beds as patients died or moved. Two floors of the Lodge were devoted to the nursing home facilities, with the upper floor of the nursing home dedicated to high care patients. [408] Despite these problems it would be another 36 years before the Salvation Army was able to offer additional accommodation in Arncliffe.

Many retired Salvation Army officers lived there, ensuring a special atmosphere of spirituality and Christian care. When selecting residents, The Director of Nursing was guided by the Territorial Headquarters Social Department Admissions Policy, [409] with an applicant's financial needs and capacity to support themselves in retirement a key factor. [410]

Unlike the majority of today's for-profit aged care providers, the staff and administration of Macquarie Lodge have always viewed their role as one of a ministry of Christian care and compassion, and this permeated the home with a notably positive atmosphere [411] Residents in particular felt that the home provided security and fellowship, and the comforting knowledge that they would be well cared for until 'promoted to glory'. [412]

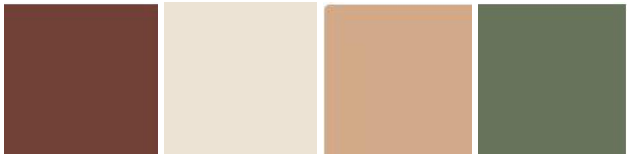


The resident's spiritual needs were well-catered for, with Sunday chapel services, morning prayers and a live-in chaplain. Their social needs were met through provision of a library, craft classes, weekly Home League meetings, visits from local Salvation Army bands every Sunday, parties for significant events such as 90th birthdays, and of course the annual fund-raising fete, which had been held more or less continuously since 1917.[413]

The tradition of an annual fund-raising fete continues until the present day. This program advertised the 1985 festivities, celebrating Dappeto's centenary.

This approach coincided with a period when the Federal Government attempted to make aged care more patient-centric, with the introduction of the Nursing Home Reform Act 1987, although it was the State Government which monitored healthcare and safety standards. [414] Amongst the 16,000 nursing homes in Australia, some were attempting to deinstitutionalise aged care, improve quality of life, balance social and clinical care, and deliver residents more control over their lives. This would eventually result in the re-development of aged care residential villages such as Macquarie Lodge, to meet new expectations amongst the community. [415]

Meanwhile, in 1999 the paintwork of Dappeto was fading, and manager Peter Johnstone decided it was time to repaint the building at a cost of $42,000. Naturally its heritage status dictated a quite specific set of hues; pumpernickel (brown), dark green, dark red, and tusk-tusk (a warm creamy beige). The old house looked resplendent and the residents staged a fundraising garden party to celebrate its new lease of life. But paint alone cannot provide quality care for elderly patients. Bigger plans were afoot to update the village. [416]



Traditional paint colours- oxide red, tusk-tusk, pumpernickel and deep green

New Millennium

Finally, in August 2007 the Salvation Army announced a major initiative for their retirement village. Dappeto stood in front of a three-story nursing home and hostel, together with a cluster of single and double story aged care residential units that were now aging and tired. They wanted to systematically tear down the existing buildings and replace them with structures that met the 2008 Accreditation Standards for aged care facilities. As each section was re-built, they would transfer residents into new accommodation.

The unsympathetic connection between the 1885 house and the Nursing Home. Photo: Leonie Bell 2020

The old pale-brick 1970s flats would be upgraded to the tune of $15 million, and a further 40 independent living units added, but more importantly, the existing 45 low-care nursing home beds would be supplemented by 90 high-care beds, with an increased provision for dementia patients. This would involve construction of a three-story building costing $20 million. An additional two million dollars would be invested in Dappeto to maintain and upgrade the 122-year-old home. There would be numerous aged care regulations, planning and heritage controls to hurdle, but the council was supportive of the concept.[417]

The first step had already been taken in August 2006, when the Salvation Army held a community forum with residents of Wollongong Road, Wilsons Road and Fairview Street, where they were invited to discuss their concerns over potential disturbance and privacy. The four people who made six objections were able to examine the plans and talk directly with the architects Thomson Adsett.

Following this, a Development Application was lodged with Rockdale Council in December 2006, which was considered at the February 2007 council meeting. The DA included an application to rezone the Macquarie Lodge site 167-171 Wollongong Road, to Special Uses 5 (Aged Housing). At present the situation was complicated because a heritage listed building could not be classified under State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) 2004 (otherwise known as SEPP Senior's Living-2004), which would ordinarily have applied to the entire site.[418] The objective of this policy was;

> 'To create opportunities for the development of housing that is located and designed in a manner particularly suited to both those seniors who are independent, mobile and active as well as those who are frail, and other people with a disability regardless of their age. ' [419]

The land on which Dappeto was located was zoned as residential, although its current purpose was certainly in line with the policy objectives.

Naturally there were heritage concerns to address with this application, however a building classified on the National Register is much more than the physical fabric of the house. The heritage value also relates to its function over an extended period of time. Thus it is possible to make changes to structures without violating the Heritage Order. The 2007 report, from the Manager of Urban Planning, stated that the Heritage Council considered that this development was not inconsistent with Dappeto's heritage value as;

> 'The heritage significance of the site relates to its ability to demonstrate historic patterns of development within the surrounding areas and for its ongoing association with, and ability to demonstrate, the social work of the Salvation Army since 1917.' [420]

Furthermore, it suggested that,

> 'The overall significance of Dappeto can be retained by achieving a careful balance between the loss of setting and intensification of built up area on site and that the proposed development will not only retain, but enhance the heritage significance of the site by allowing for the retention of the use by the Salvation Army.'

The Salvation Army could not have hoped for a more positive endorsement of the Arncliffe project. Not that it would be plain sailing. The Heritage Council had some reservations about details of Stage 2, which were deferred until DAs were submitted for this section.

Although the architects planned to build slightly higher structures, the footprint would be smaller and building separation increased, with the advantage of improving the visual amenity of the site, opening it up to wider views. Despite the reduction in curtilage (land immediately surrounding the building and forming one enclosure with it) at the front of the property, the classic view of Dappeto from Wollongong Road was not obstructed and a traditionally landscaped front garden, in keeping with the era of the building, would remain a feature.

Dappeto would also benefit, in that the old three-story nursing home located directly behind the classic house, would eventually be demolished during Stage 3, increasing the rear curtilage. It was intended to replace it with a more sympathetic single-story structure, connecting Dappeto with the Independent Living Units (ILUs) at the rear of the site. The Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) prepared by Weir and Phillips, argued that these new connecting structures would, 'be simply articulated so that they will not challenge the aesthetic significance of the form and ornate detailing of the villa'

The council report was of the view that;

> 'The proposed works are unlikely to have an adverse impact on the heritage significance of the heritage item. To the contrary, the removal of the existing unsympathetic elements at the rear of the building will substantially improve the setting and curtilage of 'Dappeto', such that an overall positive impact will be realised.'

A later report presented to council early in 2008 raised concerns from the Design Review Panel that stages 2 and 3 might face problems with the relationship between the multi-story units and the low-density housing which adjoined the site. However the report declared;

> 'The proposed redevelopment of the Macquarie Lodge site is considered to represent a design solution of an appropriate scale and appearance, that will provide for more modern and accreditation compliant aged care housing for the existing and future residents, commensurate with the long term use of this site, while maintaining an appropriate balance between the use of the site and the conservation of the heritage item .'[421]

The Salvation Army's connection with the site stretched back 90 years, and with a solid reputation for social work in the area, it is not surprising that the council backed the idea, voting to approve the Stage 1 application, with separate Stage 2 and 3 Development Applications to be submitted later, which would enable minor details to be ironed out over time.

There was a certain amount of urgency to the granting of this DA. The Salvation Army had secured funding for the project from the Federal Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA). If they didn't

finish the first stage and move in the residents by the end of 2008, they would not only lose the funding, but would fail to meet new aged care standards.

The Aged Care Act 1997 introduced a national quality assurance framework for residential aged care. The standards not only covered medical care, but also legislated the quality of infrastructure and buildings, in the areas of amenity, general and fire safety, space requirements and privacy. [422] All aged care facilities were required to be assessed by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd, (ACSAA) which would assess against 44 outcomes of the Accreditation Standards, as set out in the Quality of Care Principles 1997. [423] Additionally, the infrastructure would be assessed by a private sector company, with expertise in the building industry, contracted to the DoHA. Failure to meet the building or care standards would mean loss of accreditation and potential closure of the nursing home, a situation which both the government and the council were anxious to avoid.

Work began the following March (2008); a remarkably short period considering the difficulties associated with making changes to the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and what potentially could have been exhaustive tussles with heritage authorities. The Salvation Army ambitiously hoped to complete the project within 15 months. [424]

A number of caveats had been made by the Heritage Council in relation to their approval of the works including; a qualified archaeologist must be employed to supervise the foundation excavations in case anything of historic significance was unearthed, a landscape plan would need to be submitted which maximised foliage around Dappeto, slight amendments to be made to the planned porch so that it did not impede views to and from the Victorian house, increased setback distances between the accommodation units, and a historical interpretive display provided.

The Salvation Army had perhaps been a little over-optimistic with their projected completion date. The Stage 1 nursing home was officially opened in late April 2010. The occasion was attended by Salvation Army Commissioner Linda Bond, and Federal Opposition Spokeswoman on Aging, Concerta Fierravanti-Wells. [425]

However, it was imperative that work commenced on Stage 2 as soon as possible. There were still buildings on the site which didn't meet 2008 accreditation standards. They needed to be replaced urgently, but the wheels of government move slowly, and with great complexity. The Stage 2 Development Application was initially lodged in February 2009, but it immediately struck some potholes. Perhaps not unexpectedly, considering previous concerns expressed by the Heritage Council in 2008, they sent Rockdale Council a letter on May 20, advising of their refusal to issue an approval under S63 of the Heritage Act 1977, unless major modifications were received.

A meeting was held with officers of the Rockdale Council, the Heritage Council and the Salvation Army on 23 June 2009, attempting resolve the thorny issues. The NSW Heritage Office had requested a number of amendments, including some which resulted in a reduction in the planned number of units by four. The new plans were for 42 one bedroom and two-bedroom units (some with a study), together with basement car parking for 39 vehicles. Landscape Plans prepared by Taylor Brammer, Landscape Architects, were included in the submission.

The re-designed roof would be in a hipped form, which is a style of roof where all sides slope downwards from a ridge to the walls. The purpose of this was to harmonise with Dappeto's roof. As had been hinted at when Stage 1 was being considered, the Heritage Council required a larger setback from Dappeto, which favourably increased the view of the house from Wollongong Road. After extensive negotiations over the next year, the revised drawings were submitted 11 June 2010,

which the Heritage Council accepted on 19 August, much to the relief of the Salvation Army and its architects.

The final Development Application for Stage 2 was submitted to council in November 2010. The Salvation Army's DA 2007/303/1 applied for the demolition of the obsolete buildings at the western end of the property, and subsequent construction of an L-shaped structure with a height of 3 stories facing Wilsons Road and 3 to 4 stories fronting Fairview Street. The buildings would cover 1,917 square metres. [426]

The second stage now struck difficulties with the neighbours who were concerned about loss of privacy, increased building height limits, traffic and parking. Ms Dorothy Ayer lodged an official objection at the November 2010 council meeting. Even though the initial plans had been exhibited and had been sitting with council since 2007, she claimed the local residents had not been notified that there was a four-story building proposed on the Fairview Street side of the property. The surrounding homes were one story high and it was claimed the retirement village was inconsistent with the existing streetscape. Moreover it was suggested there would be privacy issues. In fact the new buildings would not provide a privacy problem for the surrounding houses, which were distanced from their village neighbours on the other side of the road.

A motion was proposed to immediately approve demolition and construction work, but even though the four- story plans had been anticipated since they were first proposed in late 2006, the Rockdale Councillors stood equally divided for and against. Mayor Bill Saravinovski used his casting vote to approve an amendment to defer the decision until a meeting had taken place on the site between the Salvation Army and the objecting residents.[427]

Following this meeting with the village's neighbours, Council unanimously approved stage 2. Councillor Shane O'Brien commented that there were no major non-compliance issues and therefore if council had refused the application it would have given grounds for an appeal to the Land and Environment Court, potentially a lengthy and expensive process for both Council and the Army. The Salvation Army promised to keep residents informed with a letter containing a series of 'promises.' They would replace a large tree which needed to be sacrificed for the project, plan for diversion of traffic from Fairview Street, and notify residents of noisy construction times.[428] [429]

Construction proceeded and Macquarie Lodge advertised the opening of its new aged care wing in June 2012, offering low-care, high-care, and dementia beds, plus 49 refurbished independent living units. [430]

The village now became part of the Aged Care Plus division of the Salvation Army Eastern Territory. In 2019 the Salvation Army amalgamated the Eastern and Southern Territories into one National operation. Aged Care Plus operates Australia-wide, currently offering twenty residential aged care centres, seven retirement villages, one respite centre, and Home and Community care services.[431]

It commenced the Stage 3 project of one, two, and three-bedroom apartments in 2015, named the Macquarie Lodge Retirement Village. Dappeto features prominently in its website promotional photos of the Arncliffe property; a classic property in the midst of well-designed, modern facilities.

Finally, an official opening ceremony was held in October 2017 by The Salvation Army's National Commander, Commissioner Floyd Tidd and National President for Women's Ministries, Commissioner Tracey Tidd, in the presence of Aged Care Plus Chief Executive Sharon Callister. Sydney Salvation Brass played fervently, the usual plaque was unveiled, and visitors were treated to a tour of the glossy new facilities.[432]

Conservation

Dappeto is in an excellent state of conservation. The house is used as administration offices, meeting rooms and communal areas for residents to congregate and socialise. Dappeto retains a selection of its beautiful carved oak furniture and original fireplaces with their ornate mantlepieces. In contrast to the dark 'heritage colours' of the 1999 refurbishment, today's colour scheme at Dappeto is light and airy, with a subtle classic pattern in the carpet, curtains and wallpaper.

The extensive gardens and lawns of an earlier era have been consumed by accommodation blocks, but the house retains excellent sight lines from the street, unlike some of the other early homes in the area. The entrance drive, which was formerly red gravel, is now paved in asphalt, surrounding a classic circular garden. In accordance with modern disability legislation, the units are accessible for those with limited mobility. Placing a lift in the heritage structure would not be a feasible option, but it is possible to access both levels of Dappeto from the connecting corridor of the adjacent nursing home.

Dappeto 2020. Photos: Leonie Bell

Little remains of the 10 acres of lawn which would have surrounded the building in 1885, but the classic circular drive has been retained.

Glass panelled entrance doors

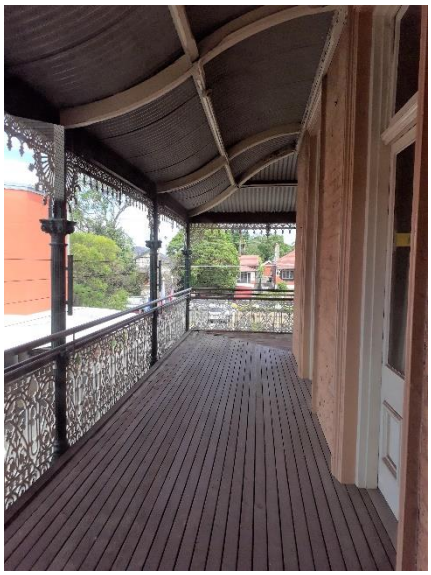
Dappeto today retains elegant wooden furniture with carved legs. Patterned carpet replaces what would originally have been pattered linoleum in Gibbin's day.

Detail of the entrance doors; etched glass panels, decorated with deer, birds and foliage.

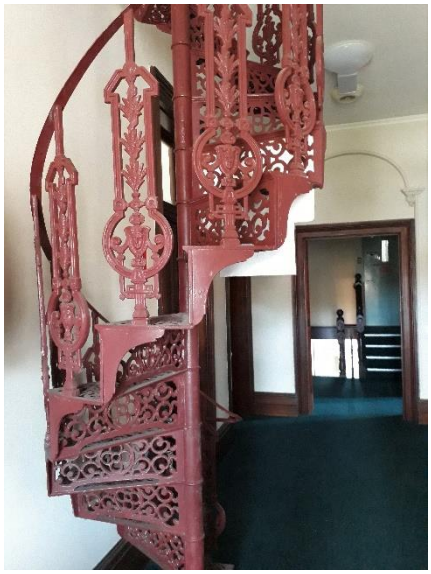
Pastel wallpaper and furnishings, combined with a patterned carpet, retain a classic look, but with a light modern touch, contrasting with curved timber architraves.

Original tiled, cast-iron fireplaces with ornate carved mantlepieces.

Dappeto showcases bespoke 19th century timber furniture



The upstairs balcony features a slatted timber floor and delicate iron lace balustrades.



The cast-iron spiral staircase once led to the roof lookout.

There are several methods of preserving historic buildings, and most structures will incorporate several different methods in their conservation plans.

One approach is to preserve the structure in the state in which it is found, arresting further degradation, but not rectifying it.

Another method is to recreate a specific date in the building's history and faithfully replicate each detail from this period either using original materials, a method known as restoration, or alternatively, reconstruction of the historic building using

new materials. This can result in a beautiful building, suitable for a museum.[433]

The problem is compounded by discussions as to a suitable period in the building's history to recreate. In this case, would the chosen period be 1885 when Dappeto was built, 1917 when it was first deployed as an Industrial School (an equally valid historical moment), or 1964 when the first buildings were constructed for the nursing home? Choosing a period and indeed choosing a method of conservation is always a contentious issue.

However, an authentic, dark, cluttered, Victorian decor would not necessarily be suitable for administration offices and retirement home recreational facilities. The Salvation Army has chosen to retain a classic look in Dappeto by carefully preserving heritage features, but blending them with a modern aesthetic touch, suitable for contemporary usage.

Adding to the conservation problem, the original 10-acre estate was severely reduced in 1917 when a substantial portion of the surrounding land was sold for housing estates, under the terms of Gibbin's will, and in accordance with his wishes. There are few large estates remaining anywhere in suburban Sydney, as they were mostly subdivided as the city grew throughout the early twentieth century, and it would be unrealistic to expect the Salvation Army to attempt to retain a vast garden area.

It could be argued that the surrounding retirement village is as much a part of the heritage of Dappeto as the original building. The 2007 Heritage Council report specifically stated that Dappeto's heritage value relates directly to the area's development and the Salvation Army's social work. [434]

Some organisations, such as the Salvation Army at Dappeto, seek adaptation as a valid conservation method, modifying a place to suit a proposed compatible use. The Heritage Council of NSW notes in its publication 'New uses for heritage places; guideline for the adaptation of historic places and sites';

> 'The best way to conserve a heritage building, structure or site is to use it. Adaptation or adaptive reuse offers new uses for old places. The new use needs to be compatible with the building, retain its historic character and conserve significant fabric, but it can still introduce new services, as well as modifications and additions.'[435]

The Salvation Army has therefore been able to add to and modify the retirement village and offer new aged care services, without compromising the heritage value of Dappeto. The use of the site as a childrens home is in itself an early example of adaptation, long before the formal development of conservation theories and trendy terminology. Furthermore, development of the Macquarie Lodge retirement village is a clear extension of the purpose of the site in the provision of social services, which it has been doing at this location for 103 years, a much longer period than the 32 years it spent as a family home.

The new Independent Living Units are contemporary in design, with individual balconies, expansive windowpanes and a sleek look, contrasting with the older brick accommodation block in the rear

Independent Living Units at Macquarie Lodge extend to the property boundaries

Conclusion

Dappeto's history has been varied but, in all periods, it has been a place where the family and compassionate family values have been the focus of its function.

Firstly it exists as a fine example of gentleman's residence built in 1885, designed to show its owner's wealth and status but also to provide a warm family environment for Frederick Gibbins, his wife Catherine and their offspring. The children experienced the privileged luxury of the physical fabric of the building which their father's financial security provided, but also enjoyed happy hours playing in the vast gardens and participating in important family celebrations staged in the house and gardens.

Then in 1917 it was purchased by the Salvation Army as a place of ministry, dedicated to saving young girls who had fallen victims to family circumstances, crime and poverty. The Salvation Army Officers provided an alternate home for the children in residence there. They attempted to offer their young charges the warmth of a family home, coupled with an opportunity to be educated and to turn their lives around from the situation of despair which had brought them into the Salvation Army's sphere of influence.

The evidence suggests that Dappeto was a great home for the children. Even the name, The Nest, which was given to the mission from the earliest days, gives the impression that the Salvation Army was determined to make this a home, not just an Industrial School.

Finally in its maturity, Dappeto's residents have also matured, as the Salvation Army offers compassionate Christian care to vulnerable elderly people through a range of services from nursing home and dementia care, to the supportive environment of independent retirement village units.

Dappeto house has immense heritage status, not only as a fine example of Victorian architecture, but in all three stages it has functioned as a place of family life, that has continuously operated on the site for over a century. Both the building and its functions are protected by Heritage Conservation Orders and by the Salvation Army's ongoing commitment to social welfare and compassion for vulnerable and downtrodden members of the community.

Appendix

Matrons at The Nest

1 December 1917 The Nest, Arncliffe Industrial School, officially opens

1917 Horsley

1921 Ellen Norrie Merrifield

1928 Edith Mann

1929 Alma Baker

1935 Dulcie M. Rae

1937 Edith Rogers

1937 Cocking

1937 Lawrence

1937 Florence Arundell

1942 The Nest moves to Lyndon House, Canowindra

1942 Lizzie Clulow (Canowindra)

1943 Jean Geddes (Canowindra)

1945 The Nest returns to Arncliffe

1945 Lorna Curtis (Arncliffe)

1948 Olive Allitt

1950 Dora Grace Henry

1953 Florence Winstanley

1955 Constance Worley

[1956-1966 unknown]

1967 Phyllis Turner

1968 Thelma Entwistle

January 1969 The Nest, Arncliffe Girls Home, closes

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