

# **A STORY OF THE HOMES OF THE COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION** **OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)**

- Lyric House, Murray Street, Perth – meeting place of the Provisional Committee
- AMP Building, St George's Terrace, Perth
- Padbury Buildings, Forrest Place, Perth
- Boans Ltd, Wellington Street, Perth
- "Kendenup", 1174 Hay Street, West Perth
- Boans Ltd, Wellington Street, Perth
- 1170 Hay Street, West Perth
- CWA House, 1174 Hay Street, West Perth
- CWA House, 1176 Hay Street, West Perth (previously numbered 1170 Hay Street; renumbered by City of Perth)



*The first Executive of the C.W.A.*

## **I. The first Executive Members of CWA of W.A. 1925.**

**(Front row, left to right) Mesdames Hope, Sweeting, Malloch (Hon. State Secretary), Craven-Griffiths (State President), Maley (State Treasurer), Angelo.**

**(Middle row) Mesdames Burns, Frances, Paterson, Sherrard, Rutherford**

**(Back row) Mesdames Fisher, Smith, Carter.**

From the formation of the Association in **1924**, there were various makeshift arrangements for the accommodation of the Association's Head Office.

For a period of time, conducting an employment agency was included in the duties of the State Secretary, Mrs Niblock, to help pay the rent of the office. Because this activity absorbed too much of the State Secretary's time, the agency was sold for £25, and after the sale CWA Headquarters was for a short time in the **AMP Building**.

Metropolitan Branch rented a room at **Padbury Buildings** to serve as a Rest Room for country visitors. This also met the Executive Committee's needs for a place to meet. It was furnished with the help of donations from some city firms. It was opened in August **1925** by Lady Forrest, her last public duty.



***Padbury Buildings, 1929 - on the east side of Forrest Place, south from Wellington Street, Perth.***

The Rest Room in Padbury Buildings was closed in **1932** because of theft and vandalism.

#### **Boans Ltd, Wellington Street, Perth.**

This period of uncertainty came to an end in October **1934**, when Boans Ltd generously offered the use of a large office free of cost. This would be the site of the State Headquarters until **1946**.



## Fundraising

Despite all the demands and work carried out by members during the war years, they continued building up funds for a CWA Club and Headquarters in Perth:

*"A very profitable source of income for the Association was "The Green Gate" at 95 St George's Terrace, Perth. These dining rooms in Perth were purchased in 1943 for £450, with the assistance of donations from branches, but the work of running this project was very demanding and the business was sold a year later for £3000. These funds, augmented by donations from branches amounting to £1066, were placed towards the purchase of a building for the CWA Club and Headquarters. It was hoped this could become a reality for the 21st anniversary of the Association in 1945." (Her Name is Woman, page 15).*

True to their record of generous giving for a worthy cause, within six months a total of £2,700 was promised by branches, and a regular flow of donations helped to finance this huge venture.

### **"Kendenup", 1174 Hay Street, West Perth.**

There was great disappointment that, at the 21st anniversary of the Association, the CWA Club was still a dream. There was a shortage of materials and other restrictions due to the war, which had prevented this occurring. Negotiations were made to purchase an old mansion in Hay Street, West Perth and on the 1st April **1946**, "Kendenup" was rented with an option to purchase. It was finally purchased in August **1948** for £11,000.



Kendenup



“Kendenup” had been built in 1902 as the town house of the Hassell family, and it had been designed for gracious living and for entertainment on a grand scale. The imposing door opened to show a fine entrance hall, from which a sweeping staircase led to numerous bedrooms. On the ground floor there was a drawing room and spacious ballroom.

This dignified old house was re-organised to suit the needs of CWA, and it was officially opened by the State President at a garden party in the grounds during State Conference in **1946**. Several branches offered to furnish bedrooms, and Dowerin and Collie Branches were the first to have their names on the doors of the rooms they had furnished. The rooms were large, and were partitioned.

“Kendenup” was in a wonderful location being situated close to the city and within walking distance to the Children’s Hospital. It was the answer to the worries of so many country women, when they had to come to Perth to receive hospital and medical treatment. The Association had decided that here was a problem calling for its immediate attention, and had set about solving it with utmost vigour.

However, the arrangements for the Head Office were unsuitable and after a year the Head Office returned to an office in Boans in the city. This arrangement continued from **1947 until 1953**.



Kendenup

In the early 1950's the Association was faced with the costly prospect of re-roofing "Kendenup". The State President appealed to branches and individual members to buy a tile for five shillings. In this way £800 of the £1,680 required was raised.

Unfortunately, Kendenup (also known as "the CWA Club") was in constant need of improvements and repair. The large family bedrooms often had empty beds, and the dormitory arrangement was unpopular. The front balcony was condemned as unsafe, and had to be removed. Structural damp and tree root invasion were increasing problems. Within 10 years, members were looking for long-term alternatives for the valuable 1174 Hay Street property.

Members familiar with CWA House at 1174 Hay Street may recall the little square building in the far corner of the parking area known as The Coach House. This was a remnant building of "Kendenup", which stood empty for many years. In the 1990's, it was renovated as an office and studio.

#### **1170 Hay Street, West Perth.**



***State Office at 1170 Hay Street***

Post World War II, branches increased by 50 and membership by several thousands. From the existing seven divisions, 19 were now created. By the 1950's, with the increased number of Divisional Presidents (17 Divisional Presidents, two Postal representatives, and five State Officers), it became apparent that improved facilities at CWA Headquarters and a State Council Room were required.

In addition there was a need to house the Drama library and stage property and the Choir music library. The Headquarters at Boans was literally bursting at the seams for lack of adequate office space, and the Handicraft Committee was clamouring for a storeroom and a shop to sell members' work.

A fund for the purpose was mounting, considerably augmented by a bequest of £2,400 from an elderly bachelor, Mr Thomas Martin who lived at Kelmscott. Mr Martin appreciated "the kindness, tea and hot soup" that he had received from members of the Association in the neighbourhood.

With insufficient money to include a Council Room at the Headquarters, a decision was made for the Beryl Fisher Fund to be liquidated and money from the Fund would be used to equip a room at for this purpose. This room was named in honour of Mrs Fisher – The Beryl Fisher Room. The accrued interest from the Fund was transferred to the Emergency Welfare Fund, which continued to operate from donations from branches.

The **foundation stone** of the Headquarters (1170 Hay Street) was laid by Mrs Susannah Honoria Wilson. The building was opened by Mrs Foxton, State President just before Conference **1953**, with the unveiling of a memorial plaque commemorating the benefactor, Mr Martin.

Mr Frank Boan presented the office equipment to the Association saying that it had earned the right of ownership from long use. In return he was presented with an illuminated address, designed and executed by Mrs Beatrice Gibbings of Coolup. (*Source: Her Name is Woman page 19*).

### **CWA House, 1174 Hay Street.**

In **1963**, the idea of an Overall Building Plan to provide for future requirements and to ensure that the best possible use would be made of this valuable property was approved.

After discussion at **State Conference in 1963**, action was taken to prepare an Overall Building Plan.

Branches were asked to send in their ideas, and some interesting and constructive suggestions were received, including one that caused dismay and shocked surprise: that the Club be demolished, and a more suitable modern one be built. (It was a long time before the wisdom of this suggestion was appreciated). A committee comprising Mesdames J Thomson, K Farrell, N Moore, J Halse, N Gawthorpe and I Barrett, was elected to formulate plans to incorporate as many of these suggestions as practicable.

At **Conference 1964**, three alternatives were submitted for discussion only:

1. Building on to Headquarters and additional bedrooms for the Club.
2. Complete demolition of the Club and rebuilding all requirements on the block.
3. Sale of Hay Street property, acquiring land elsewhere and building.



The discussions at Conference were very spirited and from the many suggestions resulting, it was finally agreed that the need was for a building containing a Club, Headquarters, Shop, Handicraft, Drama and Choir rooms, rentable space for office suites, and a hall to seat approximately 200.

In a truly democratic way, branches discussed these options again over the next several months, and the final **postal vote, taken in 1965**, favoured having a building containing all the amenities on the site at 1174 Hay Street, but deferring the building of a hall.

It was decided to conduct a Cookery Contest, open to all, to raise funds for the Overall Building Plan. The Farmers' Union offered to sponsor it and provide £300 for prizes. A contest was conducted at branch, division and State levels and raised a total of £769.

By **Conference 1966**, architects Hawkins, Sands and Aris had been commissioned to prepare plans to meet all the requirements. However, over \$350,000 was needed for the new building, an enormous sum in those days, and the Overall Building Fund was growing very, very slowly. The reality of a new building was seen to be very much in the future (*Source: Her Name is Woman page 31*).

A crisis arose later in **1966**, however, when major plumbing involving a very large sum of money became a necessity at the Club, and two of the bedrooms were unfit for use because of dampness. Although there was only a small fraction of the cost of building a new Headquarters/Club in the fund, the momentous decision was made to commence demolition and to build immediately.

The Commonwealth Bank was approached for a loan of more than half the \$350,000 needed, and agreed to this on the condition that the Association repaid \$26,000 a year for the next 15 years (*Source: Her Name is Woman p. 60*). The Overall Building Plan Fund was only at \$30,000, but income from the completed CWA House would be good. The target was set, and a campaign committee appointed to promote and co-ordinate CWA fundraising activities.

Mrs Marjorie Maughan, State President toured the length and breadth of the State dispelling the concerns of those who had considered the project too ambitious, unwarranted and beyond the Association's resources. Her quiet optimism did much to smooth the way in the initial stages, and members proved their willingness to accept the challenge in the same spirit as did the founders of the Association.

Various contests contributed to the fund raising - the Cookery contest, Apron contest, Nestles' Pie Contest, and then the Homemakers' Contest. Over the years the contests were held, the sum of nearly \$10,000.00 for the Overall Building Plan was raised from entry fees and sales of exhibits. At Headquarters, a barometer chart, stretching from floor to ceiling, indicated progress. This was copied into the monthly magazine. Within 2 years, the amount was reached and building work could begin.

When the time came for the demolition of “Kendenup”, members were saddened, but had to acknowledge that its passing led to greatly improved conditions. Mrs Maughan had the privilege of laying the **foundation stone** of the new “CWA Club” before she retired from office at the end of **1967**.

Mrs J A (Raigh) Roe JP was elected State President of CWA of WA in 1967 and was faced with the task of maintaining financial support, the completion of the building and selecting every item of the furnishing. The year **1968** was known as the **Year of the House**, and tremendous efforts were made to have all details complete by Conference of that year.



***Mrs J A (Raigh) Roe at the opening of the new CWA House, 1968***

**1969** became known as the **Year of the Quest** – with members fundraising in support of CWA House. *The Countrywoman of the Year Quest* was launched with 183 branches sponsoring entrants. This led to much fundraising, news coverage and business cooperation and culminated in a Ball, for which the Governor General Sir Paul Hasluck and Lady Hasluck made a special trip from Canberra to receive the finalists. In one year, members' combined efforts had raised \$54,000 towards paying off the Commonwealth Bank loan - but the publicising of the many facets of CWA activities ranked equally important to the fundraising.





***Mrs Francis Craig MBE speaking at the opening of the new CWA House, 1968.  
1174 Hay Street, West Perth.***



*CWA House 1174 Hay Street, West Perth.*



In the following years many quests were held in aid of fundraising for CWA House. Financing the project was a constant concern, and several branches and the Busselton Seaside Flats Committee loaned funds to the Overall Building Plan - \$1,200.00 in the form of an interest free loan was from funds accumulating for eventual rebuilding of the Busselton Seaside Flats. (*Source: Her Name is Woman p. 60*).

When Adamson House - Northam Girls Hostel was sold some of the funds from the sale were allocated to the Overall Building Plan (*Source: Her Name is Woman p. 71*). Other sources of funds were from commissions from the sale of goods from the CWA Shop (*Source: Her Name is Woman p. 84*), and the proceeds from the Metropolitan Branch Choir public concert were given to the Overall Building Fund.



***CWA House rear entrance and car park***

Not long after State Conference **1978** an important milestone was reached. Five years ahead of schedule the bank loan on CWA House was paid in full, effecting a great saving in interest. All that remained outstanding were several interest free loans, mostly to branches, some of which were later waived. State President, Mrs Pat Smeeton firmly believed this was an historic occasion truly deserving of being regarded as a milestone for the Association. It meant that members were no longer obliged to raise money for the House, enabling them to turn their attention in other directions.

Since its opening in 1968, members had raised \$500,000 to pay for it. Now they had full equity in a valuable asset. (*Source: A Continuing Story p. 26*).



### 1993 – CWA House Open Day:

*“Twenty five years had passed since the new building at 1174 Hay Street, West Perth had been opened. To celebrate the occasion, an Open Day was held. Long since paid for in full, the achievement could be recognised with pride, members enjoyed the day, reviewing displays, touring the building, chatting with acquaintances and consuming the delicious meals provided. This was the family home of CWA of WA, which country women had built for country women. They built it with love, faith, hope, vision and hard work; with funds raised from small and large endeavours. Catering played such a prominent part in fund raising that it became affectionately known as the 'cake and curry house'. On its Silver Anniversary, it was a symbol of what 'tea and bikkie' ladies could achieve” (Source: A Continuing Story p. 86).*



CWA House provided a home away from home for country people visiting Perth. In addition to the spaces dedicated for Association activities, administration and the Residential Club, it included tenancies for leasing. These provided a valuable source of income for many years. However, as time went on, needs and expectations changed. As a result of a glut of modern office space available and very inviting offers of rent being offered, it became difficult to lease tenancies in CWA House. The accommodation in the Residential Club was no longer comparable to what was available elsewhere. Although the Dining Room was well used for breakfasts, few guests booked an evening meal. The Residential was running at a loss, and became a drain on the State Project Fund.

The time was coming when the expenses incurred in maintaining and running the building on this large and valuable West Perth property were exceeding income. Once again hard decisions had to be made!

### **CWA House, 1176 (formerly 1170) Hay Street, West Perth.**

In **2001**, an Ad Hoc Assets Review Committee was formed to look at the many aspects of the Association and make recommendations to State Conference. One recommendation was that options be investigated regarding CWA House, 1174 Hay Street, West Perth.

In **2002**, State Council approved that a Planning Group be formed to specifically consider the options for the property in West Perth.

In **June 2003**, a Value Management Workshop was held to build on the work of previous groups.

State Conference agreed that the Planning Group continue with the investigation.

The Planning Group formulated the following options for presentation to the membership:

1. Subdivide the land, rebuild on a small portion and sell the balance.
2. Redevelop the whole site with a joint venture partner.
3. Sell the site and relocate to the suburbs in a purpose built facility.

At a Special Conference in Bunbury in **2005**, it was voted to subdivide the property at 1170-1174 Hay Street, West Perth, build a new CWA House on 1170 Hay Street (renumbered as 1176 Hay Street by City of Perth), and sell the large property of 1174 Hay Street.

During **2005-2006** the land was subdivided, and plans for marketing 1174 Hay Street were investigated.

On **21st April 2007** the contract of sale was signed. The proposed development would comprise a mix of retail, commercial and a flat for the State President. The final plans did not include the flat, as it was deemed unsuitable to have the State President accommodated in an otherwise empty building at night.

The demolition of the first purpose built CWA administration building took place early in **June 2007**.

The first precast panels for the upper levels of the new building were installed on **29th November 2007**.

On the **19th September 2008**, the Certificate of Classification from City of Perth and Certificate of Practical Completion from Woods Bagot were achieved.

The move from 1174 Hay Street to the new building took place on **26th September 2008**.

After six years of planning, the new building had been achieved to serve the requirements of the current membership.

The new CWA House project spanned the terms of three State Presidents:

Sue Dunne, Margaret Sullivan and Pamela Batten.



**Australia Day 2009** was a day for special celebration – it was the Official Opening of the new CWA House at 1176 Hay Street, West Perth. (Refer to *The Countrywoman of Western Australia – March/April 2009* pages 16-22 for a complete story of the planning and building).



**1174 Hay Street, 2009**

The three Foundation Stones referred to in this document were removed from their original settings, and have been retained in the Archives Room at CWA House.

At the time of compiling this history, **April 2017**, It is almost 12 years since once again members took the brave decision to demolish a building which had served them well and contained many happy memories. Despite the attachment to these “homes”, a sensible and practical decision was made.

In September 2017, the new CWA House will have been occupied for nine years and the thoughtful planning has lived up to what was hoped to provide – a modern administration building with a welcoming atmosphere.

#### *Sources of Information:*

- The Silver Years
- Her Name is Woman
- A Continuing Story
- Pictorial Record of Building CWA House, 1176 Hay Street – compiled by Pam Batten OAM
- [Trove](#)

*Compiled April 2017.*