



Devonfield Enterprises Inc

Working Title: A Ton of Pennies

A History of Devonfield

‘Never tell the staff here or a person with disabilities that it can’t be done because it’s like a red rag to a bull.’ Steve Daley 8 August, 2001 The Advocate.



(Picture on front cover? Or last chapter on modern times.)

Karen Beattie and Dianne Kennedy.

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FOREWORD

Many years ago in the days when political correctness was not what it is today, one of the organisations that raised funds to support handicapped people was called the Retarded Children's Welfare Association or, to save people losing their breath, RCWA.

This organisation was controlled by a state-wide body consisting of delegates from branches throughout Tasmania. Each branch raised money to support homes set up around the state to accommodate the mentally handicapped. These homes were primarily wonderfully run places with caring and dedicated people in charge who had to deal with many difficult situations daily.

The RCWA was set up by dedicated volunteers who gave freely of their time to raise funds and support the needs of the people who so desperately required it.

I became involved initially via a small committee set up to run a pre-school for both handicapped and non-handicapped children. This experiment proved to be a roaring success, with the young handicapped ones developing far beyond the expectations originally hoped for. Soon I was appointed Chairman of the Devonport branch of RCWA, a position I occupied for eight years, the last four of which I was also the representative to the Devonfield Board of Management. Sadly, I was the last Chairman of the Devonport branch of the RCWA as numbers had declined due to a variety of reasons.

I found that the people whom this organisation supported were the happiest and most contented people one would ever meet. To do a walk-through tour of any of the homes and see the smiling, happy faces of those living there was a joy to behold. They went about their daily lives seemingly without a care in the world, all the time being overseen and guided by some of the most dedicated and patient carers one could ever wish to meet.

People from all walks of life gave of themselves to help raise funds to assist and retain the homes which were vital to those in need. Volunteers and fundraisers ranged from millionaires to the destitute, all ages, whether family members of the clients or not, they gave for the pleasure and difference they could make to those less fortunate.

Jim Ritchie
2015

Just Because Some Are

Just because some are badly handicapped

it doesn't mean that they can't adapt.

Help them to find relief,

to cast away their sorrows

and their painful grief.

Dry the tears that run down their face

accept them in their rightful place.

Break down the walls that keep them apart,

give them a chance to make a new start.

They need to be the same,

they need to be with a friend,

someone they can depend on.

We wish that it would come

where we live all together as one.

© *Trevor Jones*

A Ton of Pennies

Dad and his mates thought it was pretty poor that the parents of the children with mental disabilities didn't have anywhere to take them or anywhere to seek help. They took it upon themselves to do something.¹

On 23 March 1954, the North-West Tasmanian newspaper, *The Advocate*, reported that the District Nurse, Sister P Shaw, was calling for meetings in Devonport and Sheffield to discuss forming branches of the Retarded Children's Welfare Association (RCWA). The meeting was to be attended by Miss L Martin, Senior Psychologist for the Department of Health. During the week that these were set up, Miss Martin was also the guest speaker at similar meetings in Burnie, Ulverstone and Penguin. As a result of the Devonport meeting, a sub-committee was formed.

That same year, on 26 April, *The Advocate* (p.8) announced that a public meeting was 'to be held to form a branch of the Association for the Welfare of Retarded Children. The acting chairman (Dr. F. T. Rose) has invited all interested to attend.' Dr Rose's involvement was the driving force behind what was to develop into the vast Devonfield complex which exists today.

Up until the early forties, children with a disability were kept hidden at home or sent to facilities such as Willow Court and Lachlan Park at New Norfolk, near Hobart, neither of which could be considered ideal today, especially for children suffering from mental disorders who, today, would be supported in the school system. In the 1940s, Mr H E Gigney and his wife, whose son had a mental disability, had been on an auxiliary committee raising funds and lobbying the State Government for a child care centre and kindergarten in Moonah, Hobart. In 1947, the Minister for Health had already taken steps to acquire a site for a child welfare centre. Talire Child Centre, Hopkins Street, Moonah, was established to help children who were 'retarded' and celebrated its first Christmas in December 1950. The Talire School Centre moved to 112 Risdon Road, New Town, in early 1951. Up until then, there had been a distinct lack of quality facilities state-wide available for these children.

In 1952, Mr Gigney and supporters set up the RCWA initially for the Hobart region, with a view to increasing membership state-wide to cater for children in rural areas. In 1953, Burnie

had formed the first North-West branch of RCWA and had already approached the State Education Department to provide a school for children in their area.

By June 1954, the State Government recognised the need for a hostel in the Northern regions similar to Talire in Hobart, which would house twelve to twenty children in ‘... a homely atmosphere rather than an institutional one.’² This need was echoed strongly and constantly by Devonport GP, Dr Rose, and the North-West parents whose RCWA branch intended to obtain a residential hostel and later establish a school for children locally. Thus began the story of a monumental effort by a few dedicated people supported by an enormous amount of community spirit.

Fundraising began immediately. The JAYCEEs (Junior Chamber of Commerce) organised a coin drive as part of their JAYCEE Week activities in June 1954. They achieved their aim to collect ‘a ton of pennies’ to support the RCWA. Armed with buckets and posters stating, ‘Don’t Wait, Aim Straight’³, they encouraged shoppers and local schoolchildren to donate small coins. The result of this and a few other activities was the raising of £100 – a substantial amount back then.

The Devonport branch of RCWA had written to the Devonport Council requesting land of at least two acres, near bus routes, on which a school could be built. The Government would subsequently acquire the land. A psychological survey of the Devonport area was conducted and expected to show that there were fifty ‘retarded’ children in need. Dr Rose was quoted as saying, ‘It is essential that a welfare school be a fine building in ideal surroundings fully equipped and provided with every amenity. It must be a school the town will be proud to support.’⁴ On 8 July, the Education Department had confirmed the need to establish schools in Burnie, Devonport and Launceston. By the end of July, four sites for the Devonport school had been proposed for investigation by the Education Department which would choose the most suitable.

In mid-August, the Devonport financial membership had risen to two hundred, halfway to their target of four hundred, and a site had been recommended for building to commence that year. A state-wide meeting, however, voted to support the Hobart Hostel as there were apparently only nine uneducable children in the Devonport area. It was, therefore, proposed to build and maintain a unit in Hobart. Fundraising became a state-wide effort with an Art Union organised to raise money for the Hobart facility. Mr H E Gigney now voiced concerns that, upon reaching twelve years of age, rural boys could be assimilated onto farms but city

boys did not have the same options. He recommended that training be extended beyond age twelve as many of the boys were just starting to show the benefit of training and had improved greatly.

Dr Rose canvassed tirelessly by attending meetings of Parents and Friends Associations, Soroptimists Clubs, The Young Contingent of Victoria League and the Liberal Party in Devonport, as well as throughout the outlying communities. His commitment was based on his firm belief that the 'community is judged on the care it gives its weakest members. These children have an inalienable right to live full and happy lives.'⁵ He must have been a very motivational speaker because people responded with an enormous amount of support on many levels. Even though the Devonport branch had said they would assist the RCWA Head Office with fundraising for a unit in Hobart to accommodate children, they continued to push for a school in their local area. The Government, however, did not move as fast and by the end of 1954, no suitable building site been found.

The RCWA was growing in strength in Tasmania and numerous small branches were dotted throughout the North-West coast, at Smithton, Wynyard, Ulverstone, Queenstown and in the Kentish area. During the 1950s, society became more aware that there were many reasons for 'retarded' children. Autism, dyslexia and Downs Syndrome were just a few of the disabilities identified and a number of teachers and psychologists became very busy working to find new ways of helping these children. The University of Tasmania was approached to include special courses for teachers of retarded children and a campaign of public awareness was launched where people were invited to special meetings by psychologists to learn about ways to assist children in their own homes.

By late 1956, the Government still had been unable to commence building a facility for the children in the Devonport area. No land had been deemed suitable by the Devonport Council. Mr Geoff Littler, who owned a farm at the end of Middle Road, came to the rescue. He donated four and a half acres of this property to the RCWA on the condition that they have the building completed within two years and that he not be publicly acknowledged.

A Ladies Auxiliary Group was formed and started fundraising; in nine months they raised £203 to go towards furnishing the building upon completion. By January 1957, the Devonport branch of the RCWA was discussing plans for the proposed centre. In his 1956/57 annual report, Dr Rose had nothing but praise for the hard work done so far in starting the building project. Devonport records show that they had already raised in excess of £4000

through donations and fundraising, nearly halfway to the £10,000 it was estimated the building would cost. The Devonport centre was a new concept, having a day school and residential facility in one building. This had not been done before in Australia. The building sub-committee had some problems clarifying the picture on paper; however, this was expected to be resolved when a clearer idea of the funds and resources available was forthcoming.

Already members of the Devonport branch of Toc H had offered voluntary labour and building materials and so began the long association of Mr Mac Wright, a member of that organisation, with what was to become the Devonfield complex. Available funds were expected to reach £5500 by the end of the year due, in part, to the formation of the Kentish branch.

The committee of the Kentish RCWA was originally formed in 1955/56 with Mr A Lillico as President and Mrs R Hewett (sister of Mac and Syd Wright) as Secretary. The earliest records available show that CWA groups from Railton, West Kentish and Wilmot all had delegates on the Kentish Committee. Mrs Alf Sellars began the Sellars family's long commitment to the RCWA in 1957, with Alf, her husband, joining the Committee the following year. Alf was associated with the Kentish RCWA from this date until well into the 90s. By May 1958, Kentish had already raised £1000.

While the Education Department had not committed to providing a school in Devonport, they had intimated that they would staff day schools if there were six or more children to attend. According to the RCWA Devonport branch records, there were already parents of at least eight children anxious for somewhere to send them.

In 1957, a 'Day School' commenced operating in Devonport for half a day each week day. From 6 February 1958, this progressed to full days with five students attending. The 'school' was originally run in a hall opposite the Salvation Army Citadel on William Street, Devonport. The teacher was Mrs Amber Girdlestone who, with no formal qualifications, provided care and understanding to children suffering from conditions such as Downs Syndrome and Autism. She often took them to her home in her own car, a Morris Minor, to let them see the orchards. She would assign each child a special task: one to open her door, another, the passenger door, but the favourite job for the children was releasing the handbrake as they drove away! To prevent arguments, Mrs Girdlestone rotated the tasks so that every one of her charges had a turn at letting off the handbrake. When the First Junior Hostel was

completed at Devonfield, the little school moved into the lounge room. Mrs Girdlestone also spent time canvassing support from many local groups. It was she who addressed the Devonport chapter of Toc H and, as recollected by Eileen Barnett, wife of the late Rex Barnett, she became 'the heroine and the battle cry of the Devonport branch and they were joined quickly by other branches along the North-West.'⁶ In fact, many of the men involved in the initial clearing of the land were from Toc H, including Rex Barnett and Len Barrett, who both joined the RCWA.

1958 was a very busy year. With land now available and plans drawn up, building began in earnest. Local firm, Gordon Ibbott, had the foundations dug and poured by 13 February 1958 and another construction company, Wilkins, Grey and Dowling, started on the framework the following weekend. The man in charge of the whole project was Mac Wright.

Both Kentish and Devonport branches of RCWA worked hard to raise extra funds for fitting out the interior of the building after its completion. As work progressed, thoughts turned to what they would call the new hostel. Originally 'Ocean View' was considered, but after a competition run by Kentish in August, the name chosen was Devonfield – a combination of Devonport and Sheffield, the two groups with the highest input into fundraising, volunteer labour, machinery and building supplies.

A total of two hundred and thirty-four volunteers working over three thousand, seven hundred man hours completed the building and on 26 May 1959, the school was officially transferred to Devonfield. For a while the RCWA ran the Devonfield site until 15 October 1959, when they decided to form a separate Board of Management to focus entirely on running and improving the Hostel. The inaugural meeting of the Board took place on 23 November 1959. The original members were Dr Rose, Messrs Edward Parsons (Chairman), Laurence, Shrosbee, Potter, Coates, and Mesdames Shackloth, Peake and Collins. At this time, Dr Rose was also President of the Devonport RCWA, Vice-President of the State RCWA and the doctor responsible for the health of the boarders at Devonfield and for the admission of children.

On 18 January 1960, Mr and Mrs Oetterli, both trained psychiatric nurses, were employed as house parents to look after the three girls and two boys initially accepted on a permanent basis; another boy was accepted for a short term stay. For the first few years of running the Hostel, the Board of Management concentrated mainly on sourcing basic requirements (food, clothing, bedding etc.) for the boarders, although a small daily fee was charged to the

children's parents. Many of the weekly food items were provided by donations from local businesses and supplemented by cash donations directly to Devonfield, to the extent that a notebook was provided for the Oetterli's to list the names of donors so letters of thanks could be sent. While at the Hostel, all the children's requirements were met by Devonfield; Dr Rose saw to their medical needs, a dentist looked after dental hygiene, and clothing and haircuts were provided. Monthly inspections by varying members of the Board made suggestions for improvements and repairs as they were perceived. In April 1962, the Board had received a Government subsidy of £2000 and decided to investigate the whole position of registering Devonfield officially as a Hostel to enable further subsidies.

Negotiations between the RCWA and the Education Department continued in the early sixties with both parties working closely to achieve a separate school. This resulted in Devonfield Special School (later called St Paul's) opening on 30 January 1963, on land adjacent to and donated by Devonfield.

Once the boarders had left at the end of the school year in 1962, Mac Wright began work to convert the playroom into extra dormitories, an office into a staff lounge room and one of the toilets into a sick room. As the number of boarders had increased, arrangements were also made to employ an assistant house parent.

1. Jim Rose, cited by John Rose in personal email, May 2014.
2. *The Mercury*, 5 June 1954, p. 13.
3. *The Advocate*, 23 July 1954, p. 10.
4. *The Advocate*, 2 July 1954, p. 4.
5. *The Advocate*, 25 October 1954, p. 2.
6. Eileen Barnett, interview 14 February, 2015.

School Years

At this time handicapped children were viewed with sympathy, but many were not expected to live very long so the general attitude was one of either avoidance or pity. But I only knew a lively group of kids who had the capacity to be very happy, sad or mischievous. They liked to play and sing and avoid schoolwork just the same as other children.¹

In 1959, Amber Girdlestone and her five students moved to the new schoolroom in the playroom of Devonfield Hostel. Her daughter, Aileen, remembers a few stories that her mother told her. Ahead of her time, Amber believed that a child should be taught what ‘to do’, not ‘what not to do’. One of the students liked to take her shoes off and put her feet on the window. The response from Amber was always, ‘Put your feet on the floor, please,’ rather than, ‘Take your feet off the window.’ It worked. One day, when a visiting psychologist told her that she needed to put a naughty boy in the corner, Amber replied, ‘He doesn’t know he is doing wrong – we have to think of a way to stop him and teach him the right thing to do.’ When the Education Department employed a trained teacher, Amber continued to support Devonfield through fundraising events and as a committee member of the RCWA for many years.

At a Board of Management meeting in July 1960, when it was recognised that a separate school was urgently needed, the process of negotiations with the Education Department began in earnest. The reasons recorded in the minutes were:

In order that the more severely retarded type of child could be admitted, it is necessary that,

1. The school should be moved from Devonfield so that additional accommodation could be permitted to allow:
 - a) greater segregation of the sexes
 - b) partial segregation of disturbing children,
 - c) a larger intake so that additional staff would be required thereby allowing rostering of night staff.
2. Additional security in the nature of fences and dividing doors be provided, and
3. It is realised that the admission of severely retarded children at this stage may

necessitate the un-economical employment of night-staff.³

By October 1960, the Devonport RCWA was discussing the details of the new school and where it would be located. In 1961, the Education Department provided a trained teacher for the Devonfield School. Margaret Lyne, a 20 year old, took on the role of teaching with the help of one assistant, Judy Pollock. There were six children from country areas boarding at the Hostel and a further twelve children from the Devonport area attending as day students. Not only did Miss Lyne plan and implement educational programs for ‘... a group of children who had many complex needs’,³ the Retarded Children’s Welfare Association also wanted her to be an advocate and publicist for them, because fundraising was still essential to further develop Devonfield and to finance a separate school building. Margaret was a tireless worker and implemented a large number of innovative ideas at Devonfield.

To begin with, she and volunteers would take the children for walks around the neighbourhood. Things were different back then and, to keep the children safe and under observation, a rope was used! With one adult at the front, the children would line up behind and hold onto the rope, with extra adults along the line and one at the end. There were trips out into the wider community: to the fire station, the library and other places of interest, all made easier when a bus was purchased to transport them. In cooperation with Mr George Russell, Lions Club and National Fitness Club member, Margaret accompanied four children to a five day stay at the National Fitness Camp at Port Sorell. There they played games, went on walks and to the beach, sang campfire songs, and helped with the chores.

Mr Russell recalls this first camp attended by Devonfield children. He had established youth camps at Port Sorell and had trained Tony Andronicus to manage them. It was the first camp Tony had run solo. There was one boy who would not walk on sand, nor swim as he was scared of water. By the end of the camp, he not only walked on the beach, but could swim a little at the nearby Country Club Resort swimming pool; he had overcome his fear of water. The camp was so successful it became an annual event over the ensuing years.

By mid-1961, plans had been drafted for the new school and were being discussed by RCWA groups, the Board of Management and the Education Department. These plans divided the building process into three phases and initially it was agreed that the Education Department and the RCWA would fund the school on a pound for pound basis. After further discussions, this arrangement changed and the Department stated that they would pay for the entire first

phase of the building and the RCWA would be responsible for any subsequent needs. By this time, the RCWA had purchased several blocks of land bordering that which had been donated. The new school building was erected at its present location on some of this land, which was given to the Education Department by the RCWA. It consisted of three classrooms, a kitchen, toilets and a staffroom.

On 16 November 1962, it was reported in *The Advocate* that ‘the new school built at Devonfield by the Education Department has now been completed and the children began classes last Monday’. There were thirty-three children enrolled and an official opening was planned for the following year. While much work was still to be completed, it greatly improved the situation from that where all the students occupied the playroom and the dining room at the Junior Hostel. Once the children moved into the new school, Mac Wright commenced altering the class/playroom into much needed dormitory space and this was completed by mid-December, ready for the new intake on 30 January 1963. After some discussion at meetings it was decided to keep the name of Devonfield Special School, a name which was recognised by the public. To avoid confusion, two signs were erected at the end of the entrance road, one for the Hostel and one for the School. Margaret Lyne was transferred to Lachlan Park as Head Teacher in 1963, where she continued to put in place ideas to better the lives of children at that facility. By 1964, there were three full-time teachers and three part-time teachers at Devonfield Special School.

Over the next five years, the Education Department and RCWA continued to work together to improve the grounds around the school and the play area. Playgrounds, toilet blocks, showers and more classrooms were constructed. The service clubs, which still supported the Hostel, contributed also to the RCWA work at the school. In 1965, the Lions Club, as part of their enormous support of the RCWA and Devonfield, erected playground equipment at the school. The Junior Hostel and the school shared ownership of a piano which, according to documentation, regularly was moved from school to the hostel and back, as playing music had a soothing and influential effect on students and residents. The Premier, Eric Reece, officially opened the first extensions to Devonfield School on 11 February 1966, and the final extensions to the school on 4 April 1968.

From that time, the RCWA was involved in the school in only a minor way. Several bequests had been made which provided funding for both the School and the Hostel, and the RCWA held these funds in a separate account. Mr Neill, the school principal, was mentioned quite a

few times as having requested funding for items such as a lawn-mower and televisions for the school. In July 1972 there was a request from the NW Regional Committee for additional land for a play area for the school and the Board initially agreed to lease the land to the Department; however, after talks the land was purchased by the Department for \$2000. On 23 August 1972, the final extension to the school grounds was agreed to. The RCWA then officially requested the Education Department to re-name the school. It became known as St Paul's Special School, thus ending any involvement by the RCWA. Mr Neill, however, became a member of the Devonfield Board of Management during 1973 and 1974. In late 1973, the subject of the area between Hostel and School being bare and muddy was brought up at a Board of Management meeting and Mr Neill advised that the school would donate the shrubs and plant them. The tree planting was filmed, a copy of which was given to Devonfield.

While the school was developing, the RCWA put forward a proposal at the 7 December 1967 meeting to purchase a suitable property for the Day Care Centre for pre-school age children. At that time this was being held in a church hall near where Nixon Street Primary School is today.

A house at 38 Oldaker Street, Devonport, was purchased at the end of 1969 and on 1 April 1970, the Day Centre moved in after major renovations had been completed. Eileen Barnett recalls that one night her husband, Rex, and Len Barrett borrowed a truck from Wilkins, Grey and Dowling, went to the Oldaker Street house and worked through the night to remove the fireplaces, loading them into the truck and taking them away.

It was decided to accept all children, not just those with disabilities, as they believed that the handicapped children would learn more from having interaction with more 'able' children. The hours of the Day Training Centre were the same as the school. Mrs Ella Barber worked at the Centre for seven years. She saw the 'disabled' children improve in many ways. One child with Downs Syndrome would not climb any ladders or go on the play equipment at all until she saw other children doing it. She copied them and it was not long before she was just as competent. Many of the children developed physical and social skills through this interaction. The numbers of children increased for a while but stabilised when the original enrolled children grew older and were accepted into local schools.

In the early seventies, RCWA and Devonfield centres were experiencing difficulty in finding new volunteers, partly because of the large number of other organisations now providing

services for the disabled. While the Devonport High School community services group helped prepare the children's lunches every day and the Red Cross transported the children to and from the Day Centre, more assistance was needed in actual fundraising. The Day Centre and the Women's Auxiliary amalgamated in May 1973, and this centralised the fundraising activities for a while, but it was not enough. They were employing two women as 'teachers' and while fundraising, donations and a small subsidy from State RCWA went towards their wages, the Day Training Centre still ran at a loss. At the end of December 1978, the numbers of children had decreased to fifteen and discussions commenced regarding the viability of keeping the Centre open. By mid-1979, a decision was made to close it at the end of the year.

The Devonport branch then decided to sell 38 Oldaker Street and the funds from the sale were to be given to the Board of Management for use at the Devonfield complex. However, an influx of enrolments resulted in a special meeting being called and the Centre remained open until the end of 1980. By March 4 1981, the books of the Centre were being finalised, the furniture and other items sold, and the building was listed with real estate agents.

1. Reynolds, Margaret 2007, *Discovering Politics*, UQP, St Lucia, p.14.
2. Board of Management Devonfield minutes, 18 July 1960.
3. Reynolds, Margaret 2007, *Discovering Politics*, UQP, St Lucia, p.13.

Junior Hostel

Outstanding work was done by Devonport Branch in completing a building of 35 squares to the stage where it could be occupied as a school in May last. That the whole project will be completed by voluntary labour and at a minimum cost for materials entirely without Government support is indicative of the Community spirit of Devonport citizens and the esteem with which our branch and its work is regarded by the citizens of the North-West Coast. Congratulations Dr. Rose and your willing helpers.¹

The Devonport Branch of the RCWA decided that they needed a separate Board of Management to run the Hostel they had built: the inaugural meeting of this Board was held on 23 November 1959. Arrangements were made at that meeting to interview people for the position of House Parents and Mr and Mrs Oetterli, both psychiatric nurses, were employed. The Board also arranged a roster of members to inspect the Hostel fortnightly to ascertain any problems which may arise. Issues, such as the need for fly-screens on the windows to deter the large number of mosquitoes, or for repairs to damage were resolved through the committee. From 1959 to 1963, many improvements were made to the Hostel. Devonport Technical College students built and supplied beds, drawer units and even a wardrobe. Individuals, local organisations and businesses, such as Clements and Marshall Pty Ltd, regularly donated staples including fruit and vegetables; Alf Sellars provided honey, and Johnstone and Wilmot (Coastal) Pty Ltd provided groceries at wholesale prices to reduce costs. The Burnie RCWA helped stock the larder and paid for a garage-workshop to be built to house the Hostel's car, and the Wynyard and Ulverstone branches assisted financially. Kentish RCWA also continued to raise much needed cash with the assistance of the many small support groups in their area. Regular fundraising enterprises included egg drives which were conducted by schools and organisations, particularly the CWA, all along the coast and in rural areas. Details of further activities carried out by many groups to raise money for the RCWA are discussed in Chapter 8: *Bread and Jam*.

Animals played an important ongoing role at the Hostel, providing companionship to the residents up to the present day. The first resident children were treated to rides in a cart which was harnessed to a goat! Max Maynard has kept the original little goat cart in which the children rode in. Over the years there have been resident dogs, including a Samoyed and an

ex-Guide dog called Sophie, who was much loved. Trevor Jones wrote the following poem about her:

Sophie is a Labrador and something else as well
She likes to live at Devonfield using her sight
and sense of smell
Sophie is a dog that likes to bark and play
Chase vehicles up and down the street in the night
and in the day
She likes to play with a ball and have lots of fun
Or being very lazy just lying in the sun.
Sophie is part Labrador and something else as well
She likes to live at Devonfield using her sight
and sense of smell.

© *Trevor Jones*

Another dog, which was named Patrick, simply arrived at Devonfield one day and stayed for quite a few years before moving on to a new home with an employee when she left the area. More recently, The Wright Centre had a white cockatoo who chatted to anyone who would listen – its name was Odette. There have also been numerous cats and, at present, the resident pet is a small, black feline called Cinders which has the run of the complex; in fact, she attends Board meetings and training sessions. At one training session she took over the trainer's chair every time he stood up! She is often seen as a paperweight on any desk, curled up in document trays or in the sunniest spots and, just once, was dressed up as an elf at Christmas!

As the school grew and the number of resident children increased, an arrangement was made between Miss Lyne, the then teacher, and Mr and Mrs Oetterli to take turns supervising the children in the middle of the day, thus enabling them all to have a lunch break. To alleviate the problem of the Oetterli's having very little time away from the children, the committee successfully approached the Don branch of the CWA to provide babysitters two nights a week, giving the house parents a much needed break. A number of local service clubs, including Apex, Lions and Soroptimists, continued to provide volunteer labour and

equipment to undertake necessary work such as clearing the grounds, constructing paths and adding the finishing touches to projects already commenced.

In September 1960, plans were being made to have the first Open Day in March the following year. Though no record was kept of the various activities, the event was a great success, raising both funds and community awareness.

Open Days, later renamed Garden Fetes or Fairs, continued as an annual event well into the seventies and were held on a less regular basis over the following years until 2009. To further advertise and maintain community interest, reports on Devonfield were included in a regular programme called *The Hospital Session* run by the local radio station.

The increase in boarders and students saw Devonfield Special School built in collaboration with the Education Department by the end of 1962. The schoolroom at the Hostel was then transformed into a boys' dormitory and a playroom. This helped alleviate crowding as there were now fourteen children resident long-term and two for short respite stays. The end of 1962 saw a change in employees, with Miss Lyne being transferred to Lachlan Park and Mr and Mrs Oetterli resigning. Their replacement at the Junior Hostel was Matron Golding, who was assisted for a while by a sub-matron, Miss Ridgeway. Matron Golding was much loved by the children and many people have said that she was like a parent to all the residents.

In late 1963, Devonfield was registered as a Private Medical Establishment and by February 1964, they were a certified Children's Home and, as such, could apply for a Commonwealth subsidy to help with the costs of running the Hostel. A new room, added during the May 1964 holidays, was to be used as a dormitory, providing extra space for the fifteen resident children; staffroom facilities were attached to it.

The goodwill of the Devonport community continued. One hundred and two year old Mrs Tucker made toys for the children; the Devonport Girl Guides visited the Hostel every Saturday and helped out in the Junior Hostel with chores and keeping the children busy. This continued through the years until at least 1970. Stephanie Cole, daughter of Ron Cole who was a member and Chairman of the RCWA at this time, helped at Devonfield when she was about nine or ten. She remembers one of the teenage boys taking a liking to her, picking her up to cuddle her, then just dropping her on to the floor. She was also one of the entrants in the Pre-Teena Quest in 1969 and won Miss Personality. One of the things she did to raise money was to 'make everyone buy socks!' Eileen Barnett also recalled the occasion when

they purchased a supply of cheap socks. They went door to door around Devonport selling them; customers were greeted with the Goldie Hawn catch-phrase from *Laugh-In*: 'Sock it to me!' The Devonport Rotary Club arranged picnics for the residents, and the *Princess of Tasmania* Social Committee donated food, money and many other items over the years, continuing to do so through the changes of ships up to the *Abel Tasman*.

Dr Rose remained very active in support of Devonfield and, once the building and school were established, he continued researching information on the various conditions of children accepted into the school and Hostel, and how they could best be helped; in 1965 his focus was on autism.

The children were becoming more independent and involved in outside activities. One girl left the residence when she could cope with catching the bus to school, another joined the Girl Guides. The original children accepted into the residence were growing older and concerns were now being raised about their behaviour. An over-sixteen Hostel was proposed, together with a Workshop to keep them occupied and to teach them work skills. The latter began operation in the old farmhouse on the original four and a half acres. During 1966, the RCWA reviewed the situation and concluded that they would need more accommodation for the residents as they grew older, and also for the more 'severely retarded' children in the district. By 1968, the Board was discussing the need to have a Hostel for boys aged twelve to sixteen up and running within two years, resulting in a request to the North-West Regional Committee of RCWA for another sixteen beds, in addition to the Junior Hostel, to accommodate older boys.

The Hostel continued to be fully occupied with children from outside the Devonport area and more outings were arranged for them. This necessitated the purchase of a bus and, by early 1969, this was bought using a donation from the Ulverstone Cork Club and, the then manager of the Senior Hostel, Mr Appledorf's Project Account; the bus was to be used by all sections of Devonfield.

Matron Golding resigned in 1970 after eight years of service. She kept in touch with many at Devonfield and also came back to visit a few times.

In 1972, Devonfield gained approval as an organisation under the Handicapped Children (Assistance) Act guidelines, thus attracting further subsidies/funding to help with capital works. It was decided that from the 1971/72 year, the Junior Hostel would start taking short

term boarders during the shorter school holidays as well as term time, and that the hostels would be closed for four weeks only over the long Christmas break to bring their employees in line with State Awards.

A new Junior Hostel building was under consideration with the possibility of the Day Care Centre being moved into the old building. This did not eventuate, however, due partly to declining numbers of resident children as many were being cared for in their own homes now that more was understood about their conditions. A decision was made to accommodate the remaining children in a supervised house in the community; this would provide respite care also. At a meeting on 17 September 1981, the Chairman, Margaret Walker, reported that the Junior Hostel had closed due to insufficient numbers. Many options for the use of Mac Wright House, as the Hostel was called, were considered by the Board and the RCWA; they even offered it for sale to the Education Department as extra classroom/kitchen space for St Paul's School. This offer was not taken up and eventually it was used to provide accommodation and training in independent living skills for adults wishing to move out into the community homes.

By late 1983, the Department of Education approached Devonfield for assistance in providing respite/residential care for children with disabilities due to a number of reasons, including the disruption to schooling through excessive travel time and the dislocation of family units. As a result, Devonfield introduced a supervised Junior Service in Community Houses for under-sixteens and, in 1985, they received approval for two group homes, each to accommodate five children permanently, plus one respite bed in each. One home opened immediately and the second was in the planning process. The emphasis in these homes was on providing a family atmosphere, including performing household chores, education and community involvement. They employed three full-time people (house parents) and two part-time assistants in each house, with relief for weekends and holidays. By 1988, discussions had begun concerning the re-housing of children from Willow Court. This did not eventuate as they were gradually transferred to homes and families around the State; however, eight adults were relocated back to Devonport over the next few years and became clients attending the NW Day Services classes to assist with assimilation back into the community.

In 1987, Devonport was without a Youth Hostel and, seeing the chance to further extend their ability to provide ongoing training and employment opportunities for clients, the management

of Devonfield successfully negotiated an agreement with Youth Hostels of Australia's Tasmanian branch to open a Youth Hostel at Mac Wright House.

The Mac Wright Youth Hostel was officially opened on 26 June 1988, by Senator Michael Tate. It was the first instance of a form of 'reverse integration' as people with intellectual disabilities helped run and manage the Hostel with minimal supervision from Devonfield management. The YHA at the time said that they were not aware of any similar Hostel in the world. Senator Tate recommended the Devonfield Board of Management for its 'forward policy of integrating people with intellectual disabilities into the general and working community.' In 1990, the World Rowing Championships were held at Lake Barrington and the YHA accommodated thirty-five members of teams from Uruguay, Paraguay, Romania and Chile. In 1998, after a survey of YHA backpackers, Mac Wright House was rated fourth best hostel nationally. Over the next four years occupancy fluctuated, peaking in 2000 when a mainland tour company negotiated a special rate for overnight accommodation for their groups on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights. Marion and Peter Simonds, caretakers of the YHA, retired early in 2002 and were noted in the Annual Report for that year as 'proud ambassadors of Devonfield'. Troy Muir filled the position until they found another caretaker. However, when that caretaker left, Troy asked for the job as he had enjoyed doing it before. He ran the YHA successfully for another five years, implementing changes when needed. He reduced the number of dormitories when the need for double rooms increased and this improved occupancy. Having the phone at the YHA diverted to his phone when he wasn't in the office also resulted in increased bookings. When the numbers of backpackers decreased due to an increase in similar accommodation in Devonport, a suggestion was made to tap into the market for seasonal pickers' accommodation. This source of income kept the Hostel running for a few more years until, early in 2010, a decision was made to close the YHA. Mac Wright House was renovated and Youth Services relocated into the original 'Junior Hostel'; it is still in use as this service today.

1. Retarded Children's Welfare Association of Tasmanian Annual Report, 31 July 1959.

Senior Hostel

A unique situation in the R.C.W.A. exists at Devonfield whereby the same Board of Management is responsible for the functioning of a junior hostel, a senior hostel and a sheltered workshop. The boarders of the junior hostel attend the adjacent Education Departments special school St. Paul's, and most of the boarders at the senior hostel are employed at the workshop.¹

The children who had been originally accepted at the Junior Hostel were growing older and the need for an over sixteen Hostel was noted and discussed at both RCWA and Devonfield Board of Management meetings in early 1963. The RCWA had purchased a block of land adjacent to the Junior Hostel in 1962, followed by the purchase of two blocks (five acres and nine acres) along Old Coast Road (now Stoney Rise Road) in 1964. Plans for the new Hostel were drawn up and on 24 September 1963, these were approved. However, it was not until 1966 that tenders were called for, and by late 1966 the Senior Hostel (now Fred Rose House) was completed.

Early in 1967, house parents Mr and Mrs Gillam were employed to look after the four residents; Mr and Mrs Peter Appledorf took over later that year. The Board of Management was in control of the Senior Hostel at the invitation of the Regional Committee and a supervisory sub-committee was formed. The Hostel was officially opened on 23 November 1968. In the 1968/69 AGM Report, it was noted that Mr and Mrs Appledorf 'applied themselves with vigour and astute management to the administration of the Senior Hostel.'² In addition to the care of the residents and their needs, Mr Appledorf also looked after the grounds and building to a level that was in excess of that required of him and this was often noted in the minutes of meetings.

Looking ahead, Dr Rose advised of the need for a Hostel or accommodation for twelve to sixteen year old boys within two years. A request for urgent consideration for the provision of a further sixteen beds as an addition to the Junior Hostel, to provide separate accommodation for older boys, was made to the Regional Committee of RCWA in October 1968. By 1969, the Senior Hostel housed eight boys and eight girls, of whom fourteen attended the Workshop. At this time plans were being considered for a separate residential area for the house parents; however, by the end of 1970, this had not been provided. With the assistance

of a monetary donation by Toc H in April 1971, the house-parents' residence was completed in 1972. The Appledorfs moved early in March and this made available space for seven additional beds for residents, though it did not fully alleviate the overcrowding. Community involvement continued with many people assisted at the Hostel and in the grounds; volunteers came from local service clubs, the Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, CWA and local schools groups.

When, in the early seventies, the Lions Club built a swimming pool at Devonfield, Peter Appledorf, in addition to his other duties, took over the running and maintenance of this facility and organised the rostering of the groups that wished to use it, including the St Paul's School.

A special North-West Regional Committee meeting was called to discuss accommodation requirements. The Board wanted a new Junior Hostel and cottage accommodation for the Senior Hostel due to the large number of Junior Hostel residents approaching the age of sixteen. It was recommended that the patio at the back of the Senior Hostel be enclosed to allow accommodation for one extra adult as a stop-gap measure and they requested further funding from the State RCWA.

By June 1974, the first cottage was nearing completion and three more were planned within the next five years. Plans were also being mooted for accommodation for those clients whose parents were no longer able to care for them, or whose parents were deceased and, even back then, the thought of geriatric care for the clients was being appraised.

The Senior Hostel and first cottage were full to capacity by March 1977, with thirty-three boarders, several of whom had to sleep in the corridors due to lack of space, and the Devonport RCWA finally received a funding allocation for the second cottage. Plans were drawn up by May that year; however, building the second cottage did not commence until February 1978. Mr and Mrs Appledorf continued to work tirelessly regardless of the high turnover of support staff at the Senior Hostel.

On 13 April 1977, the Dell Luck Recreation Area was officially opened by Dr Rose. Prior to this, the obvious need for activities for the older children and adults during leisure time resulted in Mr and Mrs Luck donating the land on which the oval is situated today. Dell Luck continued her association with Devonfield by raising the money to have a sports oval

completed on the land. The Appledorfs and Devonfield hosted many games of football and cricket with teams from the local area.

During their years at Devonfield, the Appledorfs were the instigators of many innovative ideas to assimilate the residents into the community more. Not only did they encourage the older children and adults to join in and play hockey, football and team sports in which they competed against local school teams on the Dell Luck Oval, there were swimming lessons in their indoor pool and trips around the local area, including day trips for picnics at Hawley Beach and Port Sorrell. They took the football team and girls' hockey team to Rosebery to compete against teams there. For a while monthly socials were organised in the Workshop canteen, which enabled residents to have a 'night out'. For several years running, the Appledorfs accompanied groups to Hobart for a few days of shopping and sight-seeing. The group stayed at the Beltana Hotel at nights and went on bus trips, shopped in the city and ate out. A trip to Cradle Mountain was organised one year; another year they even took a group of residents to Adelaide for a holiday.

By the end of the seventies the Appledorfs had moved interstate and Tom Perkins became the manager of the Senior Hostel. It was also a time of major change with accommodation services.

Dr Rose and Syd Wright began planning to help residents who were capable of and wished to live independently out in the community. The plan was to house these clients in group homes. To this end, Syd Wright's daughter, Lesley McLaren, took leave of absence from the Education Department for a year to teach six of the men to cook, clean, shop, budget and generally look after themselves in one of the Devonfield cottages. At the end of the year they moved into a house in Devonport. Whilst the staff at Devonfield was always available to provide support should it be needed, the men coped very well with minimal supervision. The following year, after Lesley returned to work, the exercise was repeated with six of the women, and they too made the transition into their own house. This also alleviated the overcrowding problem at the Hostel.

The Independent Living Programme was progressing well in the early eighties with a high success rate and the Board now considered having some units built in a nearby street, though this never eventuated. The vacated Junior Hostel building was used to train the clients wishing to become independent and also to accommodate them until there was an 'external' house available for them.

On 26 October 1982, the RCWA took over the title to a house in Hawley which was then transformed into respite and holiday accommodation. Hawley Cottage was available to RCWA members, employees, special schools and charitable organisations from around the state and could accommodate up to twelve people. When RCWA split into three separate entities, Devonfield took over the title to this property. Following the death of long-standing Board member and supporter, Gib Hanson, Hawley Cottage was renamed Hanson's Retreat in April 2008. It is still in use today.

The Burnie branch decided in 1992 that they wished to leave a legacy in the Burnie area. They purchased a house in Somerset and transformed it into a respite home similar to Hawley Cottage. This was officially opened on 20 February 1993, and named Teronica. The name comprised the first two letters of the surnames of four very valuable members: Mrs Phyl Tevelin, Mrs Win Roberts, Mrs Wanda Nicholls and Mrs June Campbell, all foundation members of Burnie RCWA, each having given thirty to thirty-five years of dedicated hard work. On 3 March 2005, the Burnie committee, which had folded, handed Teronica House and a substantial amount of money over to Devonfield. Like Hanson's Retreat, Teronica is available to people for respite and also as a venue for conferences.

Over the years, the Devonfield Board of Management has often expressed concern over what to do as clients aged. Most wish to stay in their own homes as they get older. In 1997, training of staff commenced to assist them in dealing with a range of age related problems such as dementia. Their concern has resulted in the adapting of the cottages and Fred Rose House as required, installing new kitchens, bathrooms, a new roof and, in 2000, a ramp at the rear of Fred Rose House for easier access. Much of this work was done by Work for the Dole groups, as was the maintenance work at Hanson's Retreat at Hawley Beach.

Many long-term clients still reside in group homes in Devonport and surrounding communities. The ongoing support, covering a wide range of planning and commitment by staff, has often been acknowledged by the Board:

*Staff, so much is asked of you, and more is given – thank you.*³

*It never ceases to amaze me and I am always impressed with the achievements of this excellent organisation and its capacity to adapt to the ever-changing needs of people with disabilities.*⁴

Devonfield has a history of providing care and support, and experience when needed.

In the north of the State, the RCWA had built St George's School in 1953/54, (on land owned by St Giles, which they purchased at a later date), Ellison House and Orana Hostel. They also had a Self Help Workshop; however, after this was moved to Youngtown numbers dwindled as the people working there could no longer walk to work. As St Giles expanded, Self Help numbers dropped to thirteen and the facility was going to close; however, the Government and community organisations took over the management and it continues to be a thriving organisation today, still at the original premises in Youngtown. It is the largest employer of people with a disability in the Launceston area and currently employs over fifty people. As time passed, too many organisations were being set up to assist those with diverse disabilities, and facilities established by RCWA in the Launceston area gradually were being taken over by other groups, or simply closed down. The RCWA built St Andrews School and the Education Department provided teachers. In the 1980s, the RCWA had also bought several houses for community living. Eventually, from November 1995, Residential Services for the Intellectually Disabled (R.S.I.D.) relinquished company status and became incorporated, whilst also registering the name 'Retarded Citizens Welfare Association' to establish from where they had originated. At first, they kept financially afloat with bequests from estates and some Government grants; however, by 2004/5 R.S.I.D. was struggling financially. After low-key talks with another disability organisation in the Launceston area failed, Devonfield was approached and the Executive Director, Steve Daly, attended meetings in Launceston to see how the organisation was being run and to offer advice and assistance.

On 17 August 2006, a meeting of the Board of Directors of R.S.I.D. formed a resolution to '...have further discussions with the Executive Director of Devonfield Enterprises to progress proceedings necessary to bring R.S.I.D. Inc under the umbrella of Devonfield Enterprises.'⁵ If the Board of Devonfield Enterprises supported the merge, then a motion was to be made at the Annual General Meeting of R.S.I.D. Inc. for 'winding up' R.S.I.D. and all properties to be transferred to Devonfield Enterprises.

At the R.S.I.D. Annual General Meeting held on 21 October 2006, the Board and stakeholders voted unanimously to commence the process of transferring all their services to Devonfield Enterprises, these being Ellison House, two units and one house. This decision was confirmed at the Devonfield Annual General Meeting on 25 October 2006, when they took over the running of RSID services, while preserving its separate identity. At the 19 September 2013, meeting there were no nominations for Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Secretary. A motion was put forward 'That the R.S.I.D. Advisory Committee goes into recess

for an indefinite period.’⁶ This motion was carried and Devonfield have continued to manage R.S.I.D to the present day.

1. Retarded Children’s Welfare Association of Tasmania, Devonfield Board of Management Annual Report 1976/77.
2. Devonfield Board of Management, Annual Report, June 1969.
3. Margaret Walker RCWA Devonfield Board of Management Annual General Report 1986/87.
4. Libby Campbell, Chairman’s Report 2012.
5. Minutes of the Board Meeting of R.S.I.D. Inc., 17 August, 2006
6. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the R.S.I.D. Advisory Committee, 19 September, 2013.

The Workshop

We never knocked back anything we thought we could do.¹

You're always doing something different and you can see something you've achieved and take pride in your job.²

In July 1965, it was recognised that the older children needed to be provided with training opportunities which would enhance their ability to become employable. Money was set aside to upgrade the old farmhouse on the original land donated by the Littler family and to buy equipment. The number of trainees learning work skills was twelve and the building was named Devonfield Occupational Centre. Mr G Morgan was appointed manager and travelled to Oakdale in Hobart and Oakleigh in Victoria for training.

By November 1965, the Board of Management was looking into leasing the land next to the workshop as the need for larger, more modern accommodation for the workshop was evident. These investigations led to the purchase of thirty-three acres surrounding the Hostel and Occupational Centre.

At that stage the Government did not subsidise Sheltered Workshops and so the RCWA continued fundraising; in 1966, the veranda at the old farmhouse was enclosed to create more space. Initially the trainees were employed making cell-pack cartons for apples (at one stage up to thirty cartons a week). Wire coat-hangers were later made for several local dry-cleaners. While the trainees did not work long hours, they worked well and learnt new skills and at the same time enjoyed the experience. In December 1967, Mr Morgan left as supervisor and was replaced by Mr Batchelor; an assistant was employed to help him as the number of trainees had grown. The workload increased when the Workshop began making potato bins for local farmers. The girls were employed ironing handkerchiefs and sheets for a local factory, Tootals. With the increase in work and the need to purchase new machinery, the necessity for improved, larger premises soon became more evident.

The Devonport RCWA submitted plans to the State body, via the Regional Committee, for a Sheltered Workshop but this took quite some time to eventuate. Rex Barnett was a guest speaker at a meeting and explained the requirements for Commonwealth subsidies for

Sheltered Workshops and the Board followed up on these recommendations; but it would be another two years before the Workshop, as it appears today, commenced.

In the meantime, twenty-eight trainees (twelve girls and sixteen boys), Mr Batchelor and two assistants operated the Workshop under extremely difficult conditions in the old three roomed farmhouse. However, they were looking forward to working in better conditions in the new Workshop, which was intended to start operating at the beginning of 1970. A Declaration of Premises as Providing Sheltered Employment was before the appropriate Department in Canberra and, once this was approved, an application for a subsidy would follow. Finally in September 1969, tenders for the construction of the new Workshop were being reviewed. A sub-committee of three people was formed by the Board of Management to administer the Workshop. They were to report and be responsible to the Board; this recommendation was forwarded to the North-West Regional Committee for approval by the RCWA. On 31 March, 1970, the first section of the Workshop was completed and Mr W C Wentworth, MHR, officially opened it on 18 April, 1970. Ken Allen was appointed Workshop Manager, with Mr Batchelor assisting as Supervisor.

The number of trainees working at the Workshop fluctuated for a while, but stabilised at twenty-seven. All trainees were employed packaging cell-packs for fruit; however, the new building offered more space for machinery and equipment and additional jobs were slowly introduced. Some of the smaller tasks involved bagging of screws and nails, and packing small bags of Ovaltine™ Ovalteenies into larger packs. The construction of potato bins continued and wooden pallets for cement blocks were being made for Chep; this growth and improvement continued over the next year. Jim Crowden had been employed as Foreman and supervised the trainees in the making of these pallets. When Jim first started, all the workers used handsaws, claw hammers and nail bags. Money was always tight and Jim remembers that getting good hardwood and Burnie Board was difficult. It would come from as far away as Smithton or Launceston. At one point they used rejected pieces from the Trudek™ factory. They would have to rip the Trudek™ into sections, stack and glue three pieces together and then put a groove in it. A normal saw was used to do this and, as a result they had to sharpen the saw three times a day! Over the next few years as income increased, drop-saws and nail-guns were purchased and selected trainees taught how to use them properly.

With the new workshop came space for a sewing area, and Sue King started work there in April 1970. Working at the Workshop was fun, according to Sue. Back then the conditions were more relaxed: work started between 9 and 10 am with a break for lunch (and sometimes a game of cricket) and they often finished by 2:30 or 3 pm because the Ulverstone people had to catch the bus home. There was a lunch-room but it was a while before it was furnished and, until then, they would sit on the floor to eat!

In 1971, approval was sought for Workshop extensions and plans were being made to dismantle the original workshop while consideration was also being given to new machinery and equipment. In the AGM Report, May 1971, it was reported that twenty-nine males and sixteen female trainees were employed, although earlier in the year the number employed had reached as high as fifty-one. Mr Allen was commended for ‘... the outstanding results he has achieved in this comparatively short period.’³ At the time of Mr Allen’s appointment the Workshop was little more than an occupational centre. Within a few months he had turned it into a fully operational Sheltered Workshop with an increase in turnover of 400%. He introduced and maintained harmonious working relationships with all his employees.

In November 1971, the extensions were finally approved by the State body. Work increased within the complex and in 1972, Ken had increased receipts by a further 100%, resulting in a profit for the year, which was unusual for a Sheltered Workshop, and the efficiency of the Devonfield Workshop was comparable to any in the Commonwealth. The trainees were also employed within the Junior and Senior Hostels as domestics, while others tended the garden at the complex, including the vegetable gardens. The Workshop also tendered for larger jobs around Devonfield, including painting the buildings, and eventually took over the general maintenance of both Junior and Senior Hostels. A gardener employed by the Workshop to maintain the market garden was ‘hired out’ to other sections at extra dollar per hour! Other trainees were employed by external employers, including Besser Bricks and Holiday Coast Laundry. There were fifty-nine trainees employed by July 1972, and plans for new seating in the dining room would cater for up to eighty people. Uleen McCall supervised in the sewing room for a while when Ken Allen was Workshop Manager and said that he could ‘talk anyone into anything!’

In August 1972, approval was given by the State RCWA and the Devonport Council for the space between the two workshop buildings to be covered in. A retail shop was also suggested where the products from the Workshop could be viewed and sold resulting, hopefully, in

more work. As Devonfield's reputation for carpentry and joinery steadily built, orders increased. Six desks were made to order for the Wrest Point Casino and four were made for Tascot Templeton Carpets.

An apprentice carpenter and joiner was employed in 1973 and in mid-1974, the committee decided that work had increased so much that a separate joinery factory was needed. One trainee, Vern Cox, commenced work at Devonfield in 1968, when the Workshop was in the old farmhouse, and retired forty years later in 2008. He was involved in cabinet making and, at first, alternated between making pallets, when the demand was high, and constructing furniture. Eventually though, as his expertise increased, he worked full time in the joinery section.

The Board of Management now looked into a change of name to 'Devonfield Industries' and a complete overhaul of wages and conditions commenced. The 10 May 1973, RCWA minutes state that plans were approved by the Regional Committee for extensions to the Workshop to enable it to accommodate eighty people. These were completed by June 1974, and a bus was purchased to transporting employees and trainees to and from areas beyond Devonport.

The Workshop housed pallet and potato box making at the rear of the building, the covered space in area became the cabinetry and welding area, and the front of the building became the main administration block. This front section included the lunch room/activity centre, Board Room, office and staff room, and the switchboard.

The switchboard was situated in a tiny room and was the domain of blind switch-board operator, Merran Thurley, and her guide dog. Merran began work in July 1971 after completing a Commercial Course at the Technical College (now TAFE). Many people recall how amazing Merran was. Not only did she operate the switchboard unerringly but, according to Sherrill Sheehan, the supervisor at the time, she could knit or crochet any pattern read out to her, and often made items for staff and the craft tables. Over the next eight years, Merran and other office staff also had the job of doing the monthly mail-outs for Tascot Templeton. This involved typing names and addresses on envelopes for accounts, invoices and letters. Merran would thread the envelope carefully into the large old typewriter and type the information read out to her by another worker, all the time hoping she had the information correct and straight! All work in the Workshop was carried out in an atmosphere of fun and no stress and these years were a developmental time for both management and clients alike.

During this era, the front section of the Workshop was rearranged and a showroom to display the furniture was located there. Gradually, as the trainees' skills improved, many items were made and sold, including coffee tables, plant stands, desks for schools and also student desks with maps under glass on top. For a while, these items were sold from the front office of *The Advocate* in the town centre. Over the next ten years, the furniture section gained a reputation for excellence and items such as dressers, bedheads and TV units were also made to order.

By March 1977, Ken Allen had resigned due to long-term ill health, and Peter Lancaster was employed at the Workshop to replace him. An auction was conducted to clear all surplus items and there was a great improvement in the building generally. The total staff employed at the complex consisted of fifteen office and supervisory staff, and fifty-seven people employed as a labour force.

There were now in place facilities for pre-school, school and Workshop clients, but there was still a need for those who were not, and would never be capable of working in the workshop; thus it was deemed necessary to build an Occupational Therapy Centre. A complete survey of the overall operation of Devonfield Industries was made and reported to the Board of Management at a special meeting in December 1976. An independent professional consultant also did a survey and both reports were used to provide a very sound practical extension plan with future guidelines, which was submitted to the Department of Social Security for subsidy approval.

The Activity Centre also operated in the Workshop area and this was supervised by three permanent staff. Twenty people attended the Activity Centre which was located in the canteen. Materials for activities, such as making mosaic tile ashtrays, lamp stands and platters, latch-hook rugs and knitting, would have to be cleared up every morning for lunch and put back out afterwards, unless, as many people stated, there was a game of cricket after lunch!

In the 1976/77 Annual General Report it was recorded that the annual turnover that year for Devonfield Industries was \$277 046.00, making it one of the 'above average' industries in the Devonport community.

Gary Bourke was employed as General Manager of the complex for the next few years. At that time each section of Devonfield was autonomous. Peter Lancaster's expert knowledge of bureaucracy, including which Department to approach for funding and Gary Burke's

excellent management skills, resulted in the Devonfield complex continuing to expand and improve.

A sewing section was opened after the Activity Centre moved into its own building and the girls employed there made handkerchiefs and pillowcases. As their reputation grew, they made sheets and body bags for the hospital and sample bags for the mines; they also sewed clothing for themselves and for sale.

In June 1984, it was reported in *Tingowun* (p.19) that the 'program at Devonfield is based on a needs assessment programme. As needs of handicapped people are ascertained and assessed so programmes are implemented. Devonfield did not conform to the traditional method where handicapped people were required to fit to existing programmes.' This was achieved by first determining with the client their interests and needs, and then making training a priority. This came in many forms: skills acquisition, social training, personal development, education training and human relations training. This resulted in a marked increase in skills acquisition by trainees; their enthusiasm, motivation and job satisfaction also increased and, as a result, the amount of supervisory input decreased. Each program included recreation, education and relaxation; sport and education were part of the normal work day. This flowed over to the Activity Centre as a needs-based program through social awareness, living/domestic skills, recreational and vocational activities. The training program also complemented the Independent Living Program which Devonfield had been actively encouraging for more than five years.

Devonfield Industries extended their employment opportunities over the next few years. They held a major contract with Chep Pallets and, as a result of this, in 1985 the pallet making section moved from the Workshop to a Port of Devonport property and on October 16 1987, Pallet Industries at Quoiba opened. It was not a sheltered workshop and employed eight people, three of whom had intellectual disabilities. They were responsible for the repair of approximately 250,000 pallets a year for Chep Pooling Systems (Aust.) Pty. Ltd.

The vacated area in the Workshop was converted into a training bay to implement the workers' ongoing training as their skills increased. While the APPM (Wesley Vale) and Burnie Timber contracts were the mainstay of the Workshop and provided valuable experience, the furniture section was being re-vitalised. In the quiet times, Vern Cox told us, he and others had made furniture for themselves. He was by now working fulltime as a cabinet maker; the furniture section used blackwood for much of the household furniture.

This section also was kept busy making toys, step ladders and mining supplies. One part of the Workshop was allocated as a welding area. Col Corbett was the welder in charge and his workers were employed in the construction of metal frames for some of the desks, and making or repairing truck trays. It was Col who convinced the Board of Management to pay Vern a Tool Allowance on top of his wage, the same as the cabinet maker.

The Sewing section needed further extensions and new equipment in order to cope with increased work sewing food industry uniforms, as well as the Supply and Tender contracts for sheets, pillowcases and napkins for the hospital. An advertisement in *Tingowun*, March-April 1988, advised that they also made dust coats and mining supplies, the latter being bags in which core samples were stored.

The staff canteen provided training programs which gave trainees experience in kitchen activities, food handling, setting and waiting tables and grooming. Many service clubs used Devonfield as a monthly meeting venue, providing real and valuable hands-on experience for the trainees.

While Devonfield continued to expand and embrace new work experiences for their clients the RCWA was undergoing change very slowly. The executive of the head office in Hobart, with assistance from Margaret Walker and a committee, were investigating ways to move forward and keep up with progress. A new set of regulations was being formulated and the acting State President, S G Chapple, stated:

... unless this Association can somehow grasp the nettle and evolve a forward looking policy based on a businesslike approach designed for the times in which we live now, and in the immediate future, and operate under its direction through efficient and professional staff to replace the voluntary effort which we once possessed, we will not only continue to stand at the cross roads looking back into history but we will be history sooner than some of us think.⁶

Gradually, over the next few years, the head office pushed through changes to their constitution, bringing the organisation up to date and running more efficiently. Devonfield also continued to make changes as needed.

In 1988, a CIG Pyrethrum project employed several Devonfield trainees to help with splitting the pyrethrum plants in the paddocks. CIG was so impressed with the standard of the employees and their work ethics, they wrote: 'Despite the fact that this type of work was a totally new experience for all your people they approached the task with dedication and a high degree of skill, being able to maintain the high standard required. Also, and this is probably the most important point, there was an obvious sense of enjoyment and good humour apparent.'⁷ It was also noted that they demonstrated the ability to fit in with a large group of people. The company followed this with a recommendation to other employers.

The Devonfield Forestry crew had held a pruning contract with the Forestry Commission for four years, working on more than one hundred hectares of commercial pine forest in the Mersey-Forth district. Mr Barry Graue, the crew's supervisor, stated: 'I've been involved in forestry for twenty years and these blokes are as good a crew as you'd want.'⁸ They must have been, as the crew continued to win the annual contract for many years to come and, as the face of Forestry management changed, gained other employment such as fertilising and re-planting trees.

Over the next two years, Devonfield continued to expand its range of activities. Some trainees gained work experience in the newly begun Tasmanian Rural Marketing. This was an innovative project for distribution of advertising material to rural and urban areas and provided employment for some of the clients affected by the drastic reduction in orders from APPM and Burnie Timber. They also won the contract for all three stages of the Mornington Core Library (Mineral Resources Tasmania) which extended the life of the welding section. The sewing section gained contracts to make adult sized windcheaters, polo tops and work jumpers.

When the RCWA finalised its restructure on May 1 1992, it was split into four new separate member companies: Oak Enterprises, Devonfield Enterprises, RSID (Residential Services for Intellectually Disabled) and Oakdale Lodge Yalambee. These companies continued to be members of the RCWA while still maintaining their autonomy. As a result they became more able to respond quickly to the needs of their own clients.

1. Jim Crowden, interview 25 March, 2015.
2. Vern Cox, 17 October, 2001, *The Advocate*.
3. Devonfield Board of Management AGM Report, 1970/71.
4. *ibid*.
6. *Tingowun*, June 1986, Vol. 3 No. 4, p.5.

7. Letter, The Commonwealth Industrial Gases Limited, Pyrethrum Project Tasmania, Moonah, 2 June, 1988.
8. *Tingowun*, Dec 1989, Vol. 6 No. 3, p18.

The Workshop 1992 to Present Day.

For 33 years we have been a division of RCWA and, finally on the 1 May 1992 the umbilical cord was cut – allowing for much sought-after independence.¹

In the State President's Report, RCWA 1991/2, Garth Murphy states that 'Devonfield Enterprises' aim is to provide opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to reach their full potential. To achieve this aim Devonfield Enterprises provides access to the following services:

Occupational, Training and Support Services
Employment
Supported Accommodation
Respite.'

The employment services continued as normal. Clients became involved in a new venture at the Workshop in 1995. The Employment Skills Development Pilot Program was begun to provide appropriate training and support for clients. Funded by the Department of Human Services and Health, the project was based on case-management and support for clients and used main-stream training courses.

Vern Cox is one of the many examples of how the system at Devonfield works exceptionally well. After all the practical experience gained from working alongside the Cabinet Maker employed there, he enthusiastically pursued the new program and went on to gain many Certificates in Furniture Production, culminating in a Furniture Production Trainee of the Year Award in 1999. In 2001, he also was awarded the TASTA Certificate of Recognition Cabinet Making. At that stage Vern had been working and learning at Devonfield since 1968 and remained there until May 2008, when he retired after forty years' service. Devonfield recognised his achievements and service by presenting him with an engraved watch on his retirement.

Early in 1997, many clients and employees indicated an interest in men's health, particularly sexual health. Karin Febey enlisted the aid of Sexual Health Educator, Glen Curran, to run an eight week workshop covering a variety of subjects. At the end of this course, the men involved were keen to continue sharing and learning more about men's health. A number of clients formed a committee with several supervisors and the resultant group put forward the

idea to run a Men's Health Forum called *Men in Focus*. Funding was obtained from Disability Services, North West Men's Health Action Group, Johnson Mead Products, and others. After much hard work, this very successful event was held on 24 and 25 July, 1998, at the Ulverstone Civic Centre. There were many displays, talks, and Phil O'Neill performed a play, *Might and Power and Images of Men*. In a report on the Forum written by Karin Febey after the event, she said, 'I am proud to say that our members with an intellectual disability worked extremely well and coped with whatever demands were placed on them.'

Meanwhile, the contract with Chep Pallets was terminated in 1997, resulting in the closure of the Quoiba plant. The workshop at Devonfield continued to provide employment for workers by making laminated pallets for Starwood. To do this, they had to put in a hoist in the roof to enable them to turn the pallets as they were 4.3m x 2.9m. In 2002, Starwood was bought out by Carter Holt who continued to utilise the services of Devonfield and asked them to make bearers as well. Devonfield made 24 – 30 packs of bearers and 900 sheets of panelling a week. Unfortunately this contract ceased when the factory in Georgetown burned down in July 2007 and Carter Holt decided not to rebuild. Other opportunities continued to be sought and some clients gained paid employment splitting pyrethrum and picking Brussels sprouts and onions.

The Board continued to seek new avenues of employment for their clients. In 1996, Healthy Snacks was formed and catered for meetings and other events on site at Devonfield. The kitchen/canteen at Devonfield became a fully operational commercial kitchen. The following year, Healthy Snacks won the contract to run the canteen at the Community Health Centre in the former Luck & Haines building on Steele Street, Devonport. They continued to run this until 2012, when sales decreased due to a reduction in the number of Government services at the site. Since 1999, Healthy Snacks (now Healthy Cuisine) has tendered for and won many contracts to run canteens at businesses such as Australian Paper at Wesley Vale (1999 – 2010), Simplot, and various schools including The Don College Campus, Nixon Street Primary, East Ulverstone Primary and, in 2016, St Brendan-Shaw College. They also catered for Webster/Vecon during the onion picking season for seven days a week from 7 am to 3 am, until Vecon began employing backpackers who preferred to cook their own meals.

Another service provided by Healthy Cuisine is a Meals on Wheels style service for elderly/disadvantaged people. They deliver to Devonport, Port Sorell and Latrobe areas four days a week. For those requiring meals seven days a week, they provide extra, freshly cooked

soups, meals and desserts which can be frozen. All the components of the meals are cooked daily at Devonfield.

In 1997, a new initiative by Devon Industries began. Gardening Services provided an in-house grounds maintenance service; it then expanded to include the wider community and has slowly built up a client base in the Devonport area, including a small contract with the Devonport City Council. It is still operational today.

NW Forestry Services contracts were extended and increased to include the fertilisation and pruning of Forestry plantations. This resulted in the formation of two more crews; however, with the downturn in Forestry activities, there is now only one crew which currently is occupied replanting native trees.

The Sewing Room continued to be active and soon upgraded the equipment. A small group of machinists were making adult size windcheaters, polo shirts and work jumpers. It became known as the CAS room (Collating, Assembly and Sewing). They secured the contract to make laundry bags for the public hospitals on the NW Coast and the Launceston General Hospital. While they lost the Launceston contract when it was out-sourced off-shore to Bangladesh, they still make up to 80,000 bags a year of soluble cotton. For a while they had the contract to assemble the boxes used by Anvers to package their truffles and currently they assemble the packaging for Rhuby Delights and Out Loud Rocky Road, local confectionary businesses. This section of Devonfield Industries also helps with packaging cement products for Goliath.

In December 1999, Devonfield won the Work Safe Tasmania Award: Best Return to Work Program; other courses on offer at both the Devonfield complex and TAFE in conjunction with Devonfield, included WELL (Workplace English, Literacy and Language) and accredited courses applicable to the employment areas of clients, e.g., Forestry Growing and Management, Catering Operations and others. In 2003, funding was obtained from Disability Services under the Post Schools Program and, with further support from Connect Credit Union, the pilot of The Doorways Program, *Openings to Employment Opportunities*, evolved. This was the first in the State and ran over twelve weeks, providing young students with disabilities the opportunity to gain first-hand work skills, training and knowledge in a workshop. Successful participants gained certificates and were placed directly into employment or were considering their options. The following year further funding was received and the Doorways Program continued. In 2007, Devonfield Enterprises was working

through the process to become a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). They had already placed six employees in open employment on a part-time basis in the Devonport community. Devonfield provided five back-to-back mainstream programs for long-term unemployed jobseekers through their Doorways Program. This resulted in partnerships being formed with Job Services Australia and a network of employers extending down to Strahan on the West Coast. Over 90% of participants received some employment outcome.

In 2009, Devonfield achieved their goal of becoming an RTO and became a community training provider for accredited training in Certificates III and IV in Disability; the Doorways program, which provided employability skills was renamed *Breaking Barriers, Changing Lives*, which incorporated the Doorways program with other training to 'break down their barriers and changing their lives through creating employment.'²

Karin Febey, the Manager of Devon Training and Employment Service, presented the Doorways Program at the 2010 worldwide Workability International Conference, incorporating the Workability Europe Conference 2010 in Dublin, Ireland.

Since then, our State Government has asked Devonfield to adapt the program to be run for long-term indigenous jobseekers in Devonport, Burnie and the West Coast. Karin has continued to update and present this program at the request of various employers.

In July 2010, a recycling business run by the Glee Club Inc. in Latrobe, was purchased by Devonfield Board and transferred to the Middle Road Workshop, using the space left vacant after the demise of the APPM contract. It services Devonport and Latrobe business communities through the collection and recycling of glass, paper and aluminium products. The Glee Club employees all transferred to Devonfield operations through the encouragement and support of staff throughout the process. Work for this group increased with the City of Devonport Lions Club's employment of Devonfield clients to manage the recycling services and environmental management at the Devonport Food and Wine Festival.

1. Garth Murphy, Devonfield Enterprises, First Annual Report, 30 April 1993, p.1.
2. Karin Febey, interview, 14 July, 2016.

The Wright Centre

The Devonfield A.T.C. is a very good program. Under the guidance of the Director (Ms Jan Adams) the program has developed to the stage where a great many of the needs of the handicapped persons are being met. The needs-based aspect of this program is its greatest commendation.¹

In the 1970s the Workshop opened and while most of the clients were employed in the making of cell packs for fruit, some found this task difficult. A space was allocated for these in the dining room and a supervisor instructed them in mosaic tile work. They decorated ashtrays, platters and even a few lamp-stands. By 1974, these trainees were learning new skills and Ken Allen's daughter, Sherrill, was the supervisor of the group. Some still made tiled items but others had learned to knit or use hooks to make rugs. Amid chattering, many drew, coloured in or did jigsaw puzzles. Sometimes their job was to straighten the bent nails using a hammer, for the furniture manufacturing area. Each day they would have to put all their equipment away to make space for people to eat their lunch; afterwards, it would be taken out again to enable the continuation of work until the bus took the non-residents home around 2:30. Many of the craft items made were sold at the annual fairs or on the trade tables at coffee mornings.

As the trainees' skills improved, they began assisting with the making and serving of morning and afternoon teas. By 1976, an assistant was also working in the room and some of the girls started learning how to cook and helped in the kitchen under the guidance of the cook, Mrs Gladys (Cookie) Clifford. They made sandwiches, hot dogs, pies and pasties for the small canteen in the lunch-room, and also learnt how to make other items such as relish and old-fashioned cauliflower pickles.

At this time, the occupants of the canteen would take over the room to hand wash 2 gallon wine flagons for Maui Brothers, Spreyton; they also had the job of mixing and diluting concentrated dishwashing solution and disinfectant. This was done in a huge vat before it was poured into separate containers and returned to Maui Bros. The latter job was a messy one as many had fun 'making bubbles' – it made for a very slippery floor and lots of laughter. The numbers of trainees in this group increased and the Board decided to build them their own area.

The Activity Training Centre (ATC) was built next to Dell Luck Oval over 1978/79 and the first phase was officially opened on 7 February 1980 by Ray Groom M.H.R. On 30 July 1981, the second phase, funded by the Commonwealth Government and the Wynyard R.C.W.A., was officially opened by Mr H J Wilson. It continued to cater for trainees who were unable to be employed in the workshop. By this stage there were quite a few people – employees and volunteers – assisting with these clients. In 1980, plans were being made to extend the Devonport ATC. The State RCWA had approached the Government to fund the two ATC's: Devonfield in Devonport and Oakdale-Walkabout in Hobart, due to their inability to fund themselves, otherwise they would have to be closed. The report, however, did not recommend closure; in fact, it showed that the main financial problems came from within other areas of the RCWA. It praised the ATC programs and advised that the 'Devonfield professionalism should be promoted to the South Region of the R.C.W.A. as a model to be emulated.'² Over the next year the extensions were approved and built and further programs were introduced. A vegetable garden provided food for lunches prepared by the trainees, and the excess was sold. Weekly visits to local Aged Care Homes were made and some helped with Meals on Wheels. Individual personal training programs were being developed for each trainee and were implemented and adjusted annually as needed. In the ATC the clients had input into what training programs were offered and implemented. To facilitate this, community based options were being accessed as well as centre-based training. This resulted in many trainees showing increased skill levels and confidence. By 1985 there were thirty-nine trainees, with five staff members looking after them.

In 1988, Devonfield had been approached to possibly re-house children from Willow Court. The children were re-housed in other locations; however, within a year the Board of Management entered into an agreement to provide Day Training for eight former Willow Court residents who were relocating to the Devonport area, and these participated in activities at the ATC and, later, in the Day Support houses in Devonport and Ulverstone. The ATC was now re-named the Occupational, Training and Support Services, or OTASS.

On 26 April 1995, the North-West Day Support Services (NWDSS) commenced in Devonport and Ulverstone to provide programs for Community Integration Project clients on the North-West Coast. Both places used rented premises while they searched for suitable permanent accommodation. Ten staff, full-time and casual, were employed to run both centres. Many programs were provided, including recreation and leisure activities, which

would aid community integration of clients in ‘a challenging, yet non-stressful way.’ The houses were set up as drop-in centres and provided many resources. Activities included horse-riding, swimming, literacy, road safety and personal hygiene.

OTASS clients continued to make craft items, including using dried flower arrangements to create wall hangings in half terracotta pots, or mixing health crystals and sweet dried herbs in beautiful bottles. These were then sold under the name OCCA (OTASS Craft Creating Ability) to help raise money for the centre.

On 10 March 1999, the Australian Governor-General, Sir William Deane, officially opened the OTASS building as ‘The Wright Centre’ in honour of the late Syd Wright, who had been a Director and stalwart of the Board for over forty years. Over the ensuing years, OTASS fostered community relationships with RSPCA, Lifeline, the Tasmanian Arboretum; they also assisted with rubbish removal on the Moorlands Track as well as visiting Latrobe Chat and Choose.

NWDSS and OTASS Services had combined into one section for management purposes. However, securing permanent accommodation for the Devonport and Ulverstone Services was proving difficult. It wasn’t until 2004/5 that Devonport succeeded in acquiring a permanent home in Stewart Street; many improvements were required, including sealing the carpark and renovations to cater to individual needs, but eventually it was officially opened on 30 March 2005.

Ulverstone clients continued their community-based activities and enjoyment of the arts – including a display of their artwork at Devonport and Ulverstone libraries – for several more years, until in September 2008, after thirteen years in rented accommodation, they secured premises in Gollan Street, Ulverstone. Significant renovations were made both internally and externally before it could be used by clients later that year.

Both NWDSS houses promote leisure/developmental activities with a strong focus on social participation to increase independence and informal support networks. Activities have included a day trip on the Young Endeavour sailing ship, live concerts with interactive performances by Covenant Players and Aboriginal dancers, a visit from The Snake Man, and participation in various sports days. Community involvement is still high, with participants helping at Lifeline, the Dogs Home and Don Railway. Staff and clients also conduct

fundraisers for Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Red Cross Appeal, a Cambodian Orphanage, the Red-Nose Appeal and others.

The Musical Therapy program was highly popular and had a waiting list of clients keen to participate. A public performance was held for family and friends. It was filmed and copied onto DVDs much to the delight of the performers. There have been a wide range of activities over the years these centres have been open, and they have been enthusiastically embraced by the clients attending.

Programs at all three services are in high demand and run to full capacity at all times, with staff continually reviewing and delivering the clients' individual programs.

Sport has always been an important part of the clients' development, and over the years many people have become involved in coaching, encouraging and travelling with various sports teams which have developed since Dell Luck Oval was opened. A Government grant from the Division of Sport and Recreation in 2000 saw the employment of a Development Officer for twelve months. The purpose of this position was to prepare and publish a comprehensive list of recreational and leisure pursuits in the North West for people with a disability. They also were to identify any lack of opportunities or barriers and work with organisations to facilitate people with disabilities participating in their organisation should they desire to do so.

In 1976, Special Olympics Australia, a not-for-profit organisation, had been set up to provide sporting competitions catering specifically for intellectually disabled people of all ages. Eventually branches were established Australia wide and, in 1990, Bob Rodman and his wife started a branch in Devonport and used Dell Luck Oval for training on Friday nights. Special Olympics arranged for the City of Devonport Lions Club to assist with many projects to improve the sporting facilities at Devonfield, including sealing the road to Dell Luck Oval, a parking area, lighting and seating outside and concrete footpaths to the clubrooms. At that stage, the complex was used by the Devils Cricket Club in summer and the Saints Football Club in winter and was run by the Devonport Workers Club. The Special Olympics' equipment was originally stored in Bob Rodman's garage; however, soon there was a need for extra storage space. After negotiations with Devonfield, Special Olympics took over responsibility of Dell Luck Oval, clubrooms, tennis courts, and practice cricket wicket areas. Extensive renovations were completed by Max Maynard. Once the new floor coverings, counter, kitchen fittings, additional lighting and window seating for storage were completed the

clubrooms reopened. Special Olympics had been associated with the Ulverstone Athletics Club and when that group folded in 2005/6, they donated funds to the Special Olympics to be used for a specific project. The money was used to install bocce pitches on the practice cricket wickets. Currently Special Olympics hold weekly athletics training, cricket (in summer) and bocce at the facilities at Devonfield.

Over the years many clients and residents of Devonfield have competed in the Special Olympics internationally as well as State and Australia wide sporting competitions. Many parents and friends have assisted with the sporting groups over the years. Max Maynard has travelled all over Tasmania and Australia with the various sporting groups from Devonfield, including basketball, and the Special Olympics teams to USA and NZ.

Devonfield's approach to their clients is an holistic one. Not only do they provide programs which stimulate mental and physical development, they actively encourage the clients to become less reliant and more independent through participation in an extensive range of activities both at the Centre and out in the community.

1. The RCWA of Tasmania report by Sessional Consultants, L. N. Bennetts and M. R. Bickford. p.14, 1981.
2. *ibid.*, p.16.

Bread and Jam!

Have you visited a workshop, or an Adult Training Centre, or a Residential? Wouldn't you like to see firsthand how we use your money, experience the warmth and understanding that goes into running a hostel or a workshop but most importantly learn what may be achieved behind the gates you pass and meet the people you support and who will become your personal interest. Support our Awards Entrants – their efforts put the jam on the bread. Your support is vital.¹

When it comes to major fundraising for Devonfield and the RCWA, people may remember the Art Union Raffles and the Miss Tasmania Quest (part of the Miss Australia Quest), in which all the branches were involved. Some branches provided entrants and these, with their committees, worked extremely hard over many years, although in 1973 the RCWA decided to conduct its own quest, naming it 'Woman of the Year'. Later, the competitions were renamed 'Mrs Tasmania' and 'Miss Teena/Miss RCWA'. These continued to run until 1988. The events raised millions of dollars state-wide to help the RCWA keep afloat. Entrants held dinners, raffles, sock or egg drives, trade tables and sold buttons to raise as much money as possible. Together with their committees, the entrants were driven to Hobart in style for the final dinner and the big night was televised by TNT.

One RCWA Woman of the Year entrant, Kath Braid (nee Cash), represented Kentish RCWA in 1986. She recalls the Mock Miss RCWA ball they ran as a fundraiser. Kath's brother, Rowan Sherriff, decided that he would dress up in Kath's best frock and makeup. When he arrived at the ball, their Uncle Bruce asked him for a dance, thinking he was Kath; it was not until he was told later that he realised his mistake! Kentish appears to have had entrants in the Quests for every year they were held. Mrs Lois Bird (1980) and Mrs Jenny Duff (1984) both won the Woman of the Year title, while Sheryne Hughes in 1987 won the Mrs Tasmania Highest Achiever award, raising close to \$30,000 of the \$142,000 raised statewide.

The small local branches continued fundraising at all times, not just for their quest entrants. They were very ably assisted by local CWA groups, women's auxiliaries, schools and service clubs, which came up with a huge variety of fundraising ideas.

Each RCWA branch initiated new and novel ways to raise much needed finances. Kentish had a 'beard growing' competition, the prize for which was a donated shaver! 'Mock Quests'

had their turn; 'Grandma' and 'Grandpa', and 'Nippathon' quests were fun and profitable. Kentish RCWA also catered for formal dinners and weddings throughout the locality at various venues including the RSL. In the early years, a dinner was organised to follow the annual women's football game. Mrs Rachael (Locke) Hewett organised these matches and the dinners. Mrs Hewett was the sister of Mac and Syd Wright and an original member of the Kentish RCWA. During the early years she was very involved with the branch, before moving interstate in 1964. Profits made from the larger dinners, catered for companies such as UMT and Goliath, often raised \$1200 to \$1400 – a substantial amount of money in the sixties.

Ladies on the committee would go to the venue on Friday night to clean and peel vegetables and set tables. The next day they returned at about 12 o'clock to put the meat on to cook and come back again at 4 to take the meat out and put the vegetables on. They would then rush home to get changed before heading back to the venue to serve the food, clean and wash up. Often they did not get home till midnight. All the labour was voluntary and most produce (milk, vegetables, fruit, honey and sometimes meat) was also donated. Individual ladies would often be responsible for one particular type of food. Elizabeth Piper became involved with the Devonport RCWA in 1966 when her daughter, Evelyn, entered the Miss Tasmania Quest and was crowned Miss Tasmania Charity, 1967. Whenever a dinner was being organised, Elizabeth was always asked to do the potato salad. Easy, you would say? Not back then. All was prepared by hand, even the dressing. She made it up in the huge dishes used to skim the cream off milk. Almost as fast as she dished it up, the servers would return with an empty bowl to be re-filled! Elizabeth still supports Devonfield when she can by attending coffee mornings. She was one of many who gave tirelessly of their time to help.

Food was a major item used in fundraising. Suppers were provided at balls and dances; progressive dinners were popular in the 1970s; morning and afternoon teas had trade tables selling home-grown produce or cooked items. Raffles with food as prizes were regularly included at many of the functions. Max Maynard and his wife, both long-time members of RCWA, hosted one such event at their home, the raffle's first prize being an uncooked dinner. Imagine the surprise on the winner's face when, along with the fresh vegetables, a cage containing a live rooster was presented! 'Well,' said Max, 'it was definitely uncooked!' If fundraisers were not cooking or selling their home-baked goodies and fresh produce, they were compiling their favourite recipes and selling recipe books.

Often the committees had several fundraisers on the go at once. From 1968 to the mid-1970s, Kentish RCWA organised Walk-about (Walk-a-thons) and also had a Mountain Climb in 1987 which resulted in a record 175 people on the summit of Mt Roland in one day; it raised approximately \$3000. While events were being planned and run, branches would also be holding raffles, selling buttons, selling photos from dances and balls, or presenting a film or slide evening when people returned from overseas trips. Through the efforts of the tiny Kentish branch during the thirty-five years from 1956 to 1991, in excess of \$180,000 was raised.

Devonport RCWA held their own quests, the most prominent being 'Miss Teena' and 'Woman of The Year' (and 'Woman of the Month' for a while). There was the annual 'RCWA Queen Quest' and several well-known artists performed at the final evenings. In 1980, Norman Yemm was asked to perform at the final ceremony after several other entertainers had declined. Jim Ritchie, Chairman of the RCWA at the time, recalls: 'I asked him what form of entertainment he would provide as up until then no one was really aware of what he could do. In that beautiful actor's voice he informed us he was a singer. He was a trained opera singer having forged a career, before going into television, with the Australian Opera. I had visions of our crowd getting up and leaving that night at our Queen Quest final.' Jim remembers the moment when the spotlight focused on Norm as he walked onto the stage. 'He was astounding. There was not a hint of opera. Norm's banter between the songs had the gathering laughing and just eating out of his hand.' The highlight for Jim came later that evening when Norm asked if anyone in the audience was named Jean. One of the audience was: a well-known, long-standing volunteer, a widow in her eighties. Norm left the stage and commenced singing. 'We could have heard a pin drop if it hadn't been for that beautiful baritone voice singing the first verse of *Jean* and wandering through the tables to stop beside this beautiful lady. At the end of the song Norm embraced the lady and, after a few moments of silence, the crowd erupted.'

Devonport RCWA annually held Garden Fairs, Fetes or Open Days from 1961 to well into the seventies at Devonfield. These were day-long events where members of the public were welcomed to tour the facilities. The day was often opened by visiting parliamentary dignitaries. The first Open Day, held in March 1961, raised £250. Fairs continued regularly over the next decades, though on a smaller scale, until recently. They were organised by the Devonfield Parents and Friends committee and held over an afternoon or evening.

On 5 September 1968, an Information Centre was established in an upstairs office above the Master Builders Office in the old Star Theatre in Stewart Street, Devonport. This office housed both the Welfare Officer, Lesley Cobbett, who oversaw the welfare of the children at the Junior Hostel and Day Care Centre, and Uleen McCall, who managed the office. Her duties involved answering the phone, typing and duplicating documents for the RCWA, Board of Management Devonfield, and outside clients, including the monthly magazine for the Lions Club. They also printed recipes to bind into books which they sold to raise money. Many of the dinner dances, fairs, sock-selling and walkathons were organised from this office. Uleen also arranged functions for each year's Miss Tasmania Quest. She remembers one year when they raised over \$56,000. All profits from fundraising activities went towards the purchase of 38 Oldaker Street. By the time the Information Centre closed on 28 March 1973, the fundraising had paid for the Day Care Centre accommodation in full and Uleen continued her hard work on the Committee at the Devonfield complex; she also worked as a supervisor in the Sewing Room. While there, Uleen lived on site for a short period. One night she was woken by the Fire Brigade asking where the fire was. She denied all knowledge of a fire; however, the officers said that the alarm had definitely been from Devonfield. After some investigation, several young residents were discovered standing under a fire alarm. They were lighting some matches they had found and holding them under it. It seemed they liked to see the fire engine with its lights flashing!

Sometimes people would walk in off the street and donate items or volunteer to help at Devonfield. One evening in November 1972, in the middle of a meeting, Kerry Beattie, an ultra-marathon runner, came in and said he wanted to help raise money for Devonfield. He offered to run from Lake St Clair to Cradle Mountain and people could sponsor him to do this. In February the following year, Max Maynard and three others drove Kerry to Lake St Clair to the start of the Overland Track. Early that Saturday morning, Kerry ate a huge breakfast before setting off. He ran the fifty-three miles in eleven hours and thirty-three minutes and may have even broken the record had he not become stuck in some deep mud when trying to jump a bog-hole. It took him an hour and a half to get out of that bog.

Other running events were held, including the annual train races held in the 1990s. The Don River Railway's steam engine would race contestants from the railway yard to Coles Beach and back. In June 1993, Viv Woodward beat the train by three minutes. *The Advocate's* report on this competition quoted Mr Steve Daley, Executive Director of Devonfield

Enterprises, as saying ‘... the event provided a great opportunity to promote the Don River Railway and a healthy life while raising funds for Devonfield Accommodation Services.’

When the RCWA restructured in 1992 and Devonfield began operating under the name ‘Devonfield Enterprises’, Ulverstone RCWA committee also underwent a name change to ‘Ulverstone Friends of Devonfield Enterprises Committee.’ Groups of people from Circular Head, Burnie and Kentish also became ‘Friends of Devonfield’. Their main function was to raise funds for Devonfield and although they took the name, they were not the only ‘friends’ Devonfield has had over the years. Many groups contributed, as did numerous individuals and while it is not possible to name them all, as there are no available records for some of the years, it is possible to give credit to many.

Toc H (Talbot House) was an organisation set up by the Talbot family, originally in Belgium, after they lost their son in France during WW1. Originally established as a quiet, peaceful retreat, it became a brotherhood of men and was one of the first Service Clubs in many towns throughout the Empire which helped the families left alone after the war. During the 1950s, in Devonport, the men belonging to this club would meet weekly to discuss who in the community needed help and how they, Toc H, could assist. They would organise rosters defining who would do which job. This involved tasks such as cutting firewood, gardening, donating firewood, food or other items to those in need and generally helping the poor, widowed, sick or elderly in the Devonport area. They often had guest speakers and Amber Girdlestone spoke at one meeting about Devonfield, after which they saw the need to help the families with disabled children.

They were a major part of the volunteer labour force which initially cleared the land. Their members also helped to form and run the RCWA for many years: Mac Wright, Rex Barnett and Len Barratt soon became heavily involved with Devonfield. In 1971, Toc H donated a sum of money which was used to build a staff residence at the Senior Hostel.

The first meeting of the Kentish RCWA was held on 24 September 1956, and they were originally a sub-branch of Devonport RCWA. In 1958, Kentish branch held a competition for the name of the Hostel and this resulted in ‘Devonfield’ being chosen, a tribute to the Devonport and Sheffield communities which had contributed most of the funds for the development of the site.

Kentish RCWA was one of the first non-Devonport groups to commence fundraising and continued to do so from 1956 to 1992, raising more than \$180, 000 during that time. They continued raising money for the next five years or so, bringing the total to more than \$200,000 before the branch finally folded, though a Friends of Devonfield group from Kentish was still being mentioned in the in-house newsletters at Devonfield until recently.

Over the years they were operational, the Kentish branch were given strong support from small groups in the area, who worked with an amazing amount of enthusiasm, energy and imagination. They raised money from catering for dinners, functions and weddings in the surrounding towns and even catered for a few weddings in Devonport, one at Devonfield. They were not afraid of hard work and one time earned \$200 just to wash up after a football dinner in Latrobe! Many of the fundraising efforts have already been covered however the very first Walk-about is worth mentioning. Bill Braid's first involvement with the RCWA was when they held the first walkathon. His job was to drive the front car with a sign 'Walkathon Behind'. His brother, Ian Braid, remembered it also. That was the year Kentish raised about \$10,000. The Kentish people really became involved. Not only the children walked and were sponsored, local identities made a day of it too. Bill Maddox, who ran the hotel, took four to five hours to walk it whilst reading a newspaper every step of the way! He had men bringing him newspapers and once he had finished one, would swap them. Another walker successfully completing the Sheffield to Gowrie Park and back was seventy-six year old Lucy Pease.

Over the years many committee members were also regular visitors to the complex and were well known, and loved, by the clients.

Dell Luck became involved when there was a need for sporting grounds for the clients' sports teams, and later their Special Olympics teams. The profits from the sale of her properties always went to Devonfield and are the reason they have a large football oval where the resident children played football regularly against local clubs and school teams. The Special Olympics team members have trained there since the 1990s. Dell Luck also supported Devonfield and the clients at balls and other fundraising events

The Lions Club was one of the mainstays of the volunteer corp. Over the lifetime of the Devonfield complex they have cleared ground, helped build the Junior Hostel, fenced, planted gardens, constructed roads throughout the whole complex, donated money towards purchase of motor vehicles, built barbecues and installed power poles along the road; they

won a National Australia Bank award for one section of work they completed. They offered to build a pool in July 1971, and this offer was accepted. It was completed that year, and then was also covered in by the Lions Club the following year. When the Lions Club took over the running of the Dahlia Festival, the RCWA became one of the major recipients of the proceeds.

The Apex and Rotary Clubs were major contributors to the volunteer work, being involved in clearing grounds, fencing, building playgrounds, completing gardens and providing plants for the complex.

Then there is the Devonfield Parents and Friends Association. Many committees such as Ladies Auxiliaries and Parents and Friends groups have been associated over the years with the various branches at the complex. The main focus of all of them has to raise funds as well as providing much needed volunteer assistance in the Hostels and Workshop. Available records show that from 1985 to 2006, when the Association was wound up for the first time, they had raised \$133,187 cash, in addition to providing many items, such as curtains, towels, small furniture, kitchenware, haircuts for the children, even toothbrushes, which were needed for the day-to-day running of the facilities.

They reformed as a smaller group in a less formal manner, running Melbourne Cup afternoons, trade-tables, raffles and were still organising coffee mornings in 2014 with a committee of four or five people, one of whom, Elizabeth Piper, at the age of 96, had been involved since the 1965!

The Ulverstone RCWA branch began in 1955, the first meeting being held on 25 July, 1955. It operated continuously date until mid-1990. Every year they had an entrant in the various RCWA quests. As there were no hostels or other facilities in Ulverstone, all money raised was given in support of either Devonfield in Devonport or Miranbeena in Burnie, until the latter was sold to the Education Department. Joyce McCulloch (nee Sharman) was elected President in 1969 and was still there in 1992 when the Ulverstone branch had renamed itself 'Friends of Devonfield'. Mrs McCulloch had previously been awarded Life Membership of both the Branch RCWA and the State RCWA and was awarded 'Apex Citizen of the Year' by the Ulverstone Apex Club branch in 1989.

Over the last few decades, a small but declining loyal group of volunteers has run trade-tables, coffee mornings, mini fairs and Melbourne Cup luncheons, continuing the tradition set

by volunteers right from the beginning: to raise funds to help those at Devonfield. The major fundraising event in 2015 was a giant Garage Sale.

1. Margaret L Walker, State-President RCWA, *Tingowun* Vol 4. No 4. November 1987, p 3.

Tributes

'Service to others is the rent we pay for our place on Earth.'
One of Toc H compass points.

*'Nothing's impossible so long as you have the vision and put
in the hard work.'*

George Russell, interview August 8 2014.

Devonfield may never have come to exist were it not for the kind-heartedness and determination of a very special group of people. No history of Devonfield would be complete without providing an insight into the lives of some of those who, from its inception to the current day, have given so freely of their talents and time. Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate all of those involved in the establishment and continuing support of the complex. Much of this information is based on contributions forwarded by families and from personal recollections. In some cases, this has been supported by minutes of meetings, photos and interviews with those directly involved with Devonfield, including staff, current and former Board members, service clubs and clients.

Frederick Thomas Rose AM



(17/2/1917 – 26/6/1997)

Born in Launceston, Fred Rose studied medicine in Melbourne. At the boarding-house where he was staying, he met Agnes Mary Houlahan (Ness) whom he married in 1942, following his graduation. During the Second World War, Dr Rose served in the Middle East and New Guinea. In 1949, he and Ness settled in Devonport where he established a medical practice.

Within a few years, Fred became very involved with the RCWA. It is conceivable that this stemmed from his contact with parents of children with mental disabilities and the hopeless situation in which they found themselves.

John Rose recalls that in 1959, their father, Dr Fred Rose, and friends had hand-cleared land in Middle Road which had been donated by Geoff Littler.

In an email, May 2014, John recalled, 'being given, on one very hot day, my first taste of beer by my Dad while clearing the Devonfield block with him and like-minded friends of bracken and small trees. I'm pretty sure my younger brother Dave (then 12) was with me. I remember the day well as it was unique – firstly, to be invited to drink alcohol by our strait-laced father was a complete surprise to the extent that I have never forgotten, and secondly because I cannot ever recall our Dad encouraging any of his children (7 boys and 3 girls) to drink anything alcoholic from that day forward.'

Dr Rose convened the inaugural meeting of the Devonfield Board of Management in 1959 and, at that meeting, he was appointed honorary medical adviser to the staff and trainees of the workshop – a position he retained for thirty years. On 3 November 1960, he was made a Life Member of the RCWA of Tasmania, a Life Member of RCWA Devonport in 1976, and a Life Member of Devonfield in 1980. In honour of his work with the organisation, one of the residences at Devonfield was named, and still bears the title: Fred Rose House. He was also involved with organising the Dahlia Festival run by the Devonport Lions Club from 1961 to 1977, which supported the RCWA and raised funds for Devonfield.

Dr Rose was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) on January 26 1977.

Special acknowledgement must be given to the Rose family, especially Sue and John, for their valuable contribution of information

Sister Helen P Shaw OAM

(27/12/1921 – 13/9/2001.)

Sister Shaw was the District Nurse for Devonport. Many Devonport people would remember her as the 'school nurse' who travelled to schools checking every child for any problems. She also visited the parents of children she believed needed extra assistance, be it speech therapy, glasses or other health problems. As such, she saw the need for extra assistance for those unable to attend mainstream schooling. She was involved in the establishing of Devonfield from the beginning and called the original meetings in 1954 for people to form an RCWA branch in the Devonport and surrounding areas. She was a member of the original Committee

and remained on that Committee, assisting with fundraising until well into the 1980s. She served on the Executive for a while as Secretary and North-West Regional Committee delegate and was on the RCWA Board of Management for the Day Training Centre from September 1973 to 1974 (as secretary for part of that time). She was made a Life Member of both the local and State RCWA.

Sister Shaw, along with Dr Rose, kept an eye on the health of all the boarders and students at Devonfield Hostel and often requested small items, such as toothbrushes to encourage oral hygiene amongst the children, to be paid for by the RCWA. She received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on 11 June 1979, for service to nursing and child welfare.

Winifred Margaret Scott

(14/3/1923 – 29/12/2011)

Like Dr Rose, Winifred Scott, a primary school teacher, saw a significant need for assistance for children with disabilities and their families in the Devonport area. She discussed it with him one day and the result was the original meeting that created the Devonport branch of the RCWA. Win was the Secretary of the Devonport branch from 1954 to 1958, and again in 1970/71. Her name appears in RCWA records and fundraising committees from 1954 right through until her death in 2011, at which time she was still President of the Parents & Friends committee for Devonfield. An excellent fundraiser she had organised everything from chook raffles to Grand Balls and Fairs. In 1997, as a founding member of Devonfield, Win had the honour of opening the new kitchen at Fred Rose House. The Parents and Friends of Devonfield Committee folded at the 2006 AGM, but then reformed in a less formal manner due to declining numbers and the age of the members. Win was well-loved by all who knew her and was very popular with staff, clients and supporters of Devonfield.

Malcolm Reginald (Mac) Wright



(27/10/1912 – 1998)

Born in Ulverstone, Mac Wright began a carpentry and joinery apprenticeship at 14, joined Toc H at age 16, and The Society for Crippled Children at 23. He became a member of the Sheffield Masonic Lodge when he was 35. In 1939 Mac set up his own building company before joining the RAAF in 1940 as a Flight Sergeant. He married Shirley May Deacon in 1941 in Toorak while undergoing training. He returned to building following the war and became a founding member of the North West branch of the Master Builders Association and The Society for the Care of Crippled Children in 1939. As a member of Toc H, a service organisation, he learnt about the RCWA and their plans for what was to become Devonfield. From the beginning, in the late 1950s, he was there to help clear the donated land and supervise the building of Devonfield. He also travelled round to the many new RCWA groups in the region to canvass support and keep them informed. He was Vice-President of Board of Management 1961, Chairman of the Board of Management of Devonfield from 1962 to 1963, and 1965 to 1968, and Secretary in 1964, resigning in 1969. He re-joined the Board of Management in the mid-1970s. Mac was made a Life Member of the Board of Management on June, 1978. The RCWA of Tasmania made him a Life Member on 12 December, 1960, and Devonport RCWA did the same on 19 January, 1968.

One of nature's gentlemen, he saw a job that needed doing and did it. His daughter, Susan, recalled staying with her friend, Debbie Appledorf, at Devonfield and she was amazed at how the children there loved her father and called him 'Uncle Mac'. Whenever he arrived they always ran to him, calling out and cuddling him. She says that he was 'always up there doing something'. The original Junior Hostel is called 'Mac Wright House' in his honour.

An avid bushman he went bushwalking or fishing whenever he could, sometimes in the company of his close friend, Dr Fred Rose. At his house, Mac had a workshop out the back and a vegetable garden which never had weeds. Often in his 'spare time' at night, people would come and he would draft house plans for them. He was a member of Rotary and the Lions Club, being awarded the City of Devonport Lions Club of the Year Award in 1986.

Sydney Galvin (Syd) Wright

(23/8/1919 – 2/6/1998)

The brother of Mac Wright, Syd became involved with Devonfield through his membership of the Lions Club and worked on many of the original Lions Club projects, both at the Junior Hostel and the School, later enhancing the surrounds at the Senior Hostel. He was Chairman of the Board of Management Devonfield from 1974 to 1977, Vice-Chairman in 1978 and was made life-member in July 1991. In March 1999, the Devonfield Occupational Training and Support Services Building was re-named The Wright Centre in honour of the 'Late Mr Syd Wright, a Director and stalwart for in excess of 30 years.' He and Dr Fred Rose were instrumental in setting up the group homes, providing independent living houses in the Devonport community. Understanding that the trainees would not be able to move straight out into the Group Homes, they arranged for them to move from the Senior Hostel into one of the cottages to learn how to look after themselves.

Alfred (Alf) Sellars



(7/8/1914 – 25/3/2002)

Born in 1914 in Sheffield, Alf married Dorothy (Dot) Morphett in Launceston in 1939 before joining the Australian Army in WW2. He worked for Slaters in Sheffield prior to running his

own Henry Street corner shop. He also had beehives. For a while, he sold petrol which, back then, was delivered in 44 gallon drums.

Alf was a member of the Kentish RCWA from the early 1960s until 1991, and was Chairman from 1964 to 1967. He was also the Kentish representative on the Devonfield Board of Management from mid-1962 to May 1984, and North-West Regional representative for Kentish in 1990.

A Life member of Kentish RCWA, Alf donated honey and many other items to Devonfield hostels, helped at all Kentish fundraisers in some way and always visited the hostels and workshops when at the Devonfield complex. Several past employees remember him making a point of talking to all employees and residents, especially those from the Kentish area. He was made a Life Member of Devonfield Board of Management in 1981.

Alf has been described by all as a quiet, gentle, caring man who was always keen to help.

Margaret Leitch Walker AM



(1.5.1925 – unknown).

A strong-minded Scotswoman, Margaret Walker immigrated with her husband, George, to Australia in November 1955. They moved to Tasmania in the 1960s and became involved in the RCWA and Devonfield management in the early 1970s. Margaret soon became deeply involved, being the RCWA Devonport delegate to Board of Management, 1974 and 1976–1983, Secretary to Board of Management 1975 to 1980, while, at the same time, being Chairman of the Junior Hostel Committee, and Board of Management Chairman 1982–1987. She was also the Devonport RCWA delegate to the NWRC during most of the 70s and NWRC representative to State Council 1983 to 1985, and 1990 to 1992; she was elected Chairman of RCWA Tasmania late 1986 but was unable to assume this position until 1987 due to illness. She was Chairman until 1989, during which time she also served on the National Disability Council.

Margaret was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) AM (CIVIL DIVISION) on Australia Day 1976 and became a life-member of Devonfield Board of Management in July 1987. She continued to be on committees at the Devonfield complex for some years after this, whilst also being Vice-President of NCID in 1988/89. In 1991, Margaret was recognised on a national level for her services to the intellectually disabled by being made a Life Fellow of the National Council for Intellectual Disability. Whilst serving at Devonfield, Margaret was a Chairman of the State body Home and Community Care Advisory Committee and a member of Disability Services Advisory Committee. She had a strong sense of community and family.

Mike Lizotte recalls that at one point, while he and his wife were house parents of the Junior Service, he was out of work. When Margaret heard of this, her immediate response was to request her husband to see what he could find for him. George found Mike some work with the Marine Board for which Mike was very grateful.

Rex Gordon Barnett

(10/6/1924 – 25/4/1973)

Rex was at Teachers College when he met and married Eileen Howell, a trainee teacher. He was a member of Toc H, a service organisation, and through them, began his association with the RCWA and Devonfield. In 1962 Rex was a State RCWA Vice-Chairman. He became the delegate to Board of Management, 1960–1963, was Chairman of the Devonport branch of RCWA 1964–1967, and again in 1971–1973 and was State President in 1968. Rex was one of the original volunteers to clear the land donated by Geoff Littler, and helped with any labour that he could.

From the 1973 AGM Report, after Rex's passing, the new President stated: 'His dedication to this organisation will be spoken of for years and rightly so because there would not be another man who gave so much volunteer effort and time to people less fortunate than himself. To put into this report all that Rex has done for the RCWA, would take far too long.'

Representing the RCWA, Rex attended the National Disability conferences on the mainland and on his return from one of them organised the first Walkabout for Devonport RCWA. Eileen and he mapped the walk and measured it, taking paths with less traffic as quite a few of the Devonfield residents were also participating. He started the original renovations to the

Day Training Centre at 38 Oldaker Street. A plaque in honour of his work was mounted in one of the rooms at the Centre. After his death in 1973, his wife Eileen, who had fully supported his involvement, continued as a member of RCWA until at least 1979.

Gilbert (Gib) Hanson

(10/1/1926 – 30/1/2008)

Gib Hanson was born in Smithton and at an early age became interested in Scouting, becoming a Scout Master and then District Commissioner for many years. He was one of the original Smithton group to set up a Day Care Centre for children with disabilities when the RCWA was expanding in the 1960s.

Gib worked in the timber industry in Smithton and had a good knowledge of machinery. This knowledge was very useful and he often worked behind the scenes at Devonfield, in the Workshop and on the grounds; he also helped with provision of timber at lower costs whenever he could. He was a member of the Smithton branch of RCWA, President of Circular Head RCWA 1983–1988, North West Regional Committee representative to the state body, 1985–1987 and 1991–1994, Vice-President State RCWA 1987–1989, President NW Regional Committee 1986–1991, Devonfield Enterprises representative to RCWA State 1992–1994 and Board of Management member mid-late 1990s until his death in 2008. He was also a member of the Tasmanian Council of Intellectual Disabilities.

Gib was the driving force which set up Wyndarra, a one-stop shop for all community needs in the old Government Buildings in Smithton in 1982. He served as Chairman of Wyndarra for twelve years and was still a board member in 2000. He and his wife, were made Life Members of that organisation in 1993. At that time he was also a volunteer client transport co-ordinator for the Red Cross, organising rosters, taking bookings, looking after the vehicle and driving patients to and from medical appointments as far away as Hobart should there be no other driver available.

After his passing in 2008, the Devonfield house at Hawley was named Hanson's Retreat, the dedication reading: 'Gilbert (Gib) Hanson, a tireless worker for people with disabilities and Director of Devonfield Enterprises for in excess of thirty years'. The printed dedication at the house continues: 'Gib was a beacon to others – a leader, a doer, a mentor, a provider of wise council and a loyal supporter. His untiring work as an advocate for the disadvantaged and for

people with disabilities has without doubt made a huge contribution towards the development of services to meet the needs of our clients.’

Uleen Corbett (McCall)

Uleen joined the RCWA around 1967 when her friend, Barbara Ward, asked her to join the fundraising committee for her daughter who was an entrant in the Miss Tasmania Quest. When that finished, Uleen stayed on the committee.

Uleen, together with the Welfare Officer, Lesley Cobbett, worked in the Information Centre which was established upstairs in the Master Builders office in the old Star Theatre, Stewart St. Many fundraising activities were organised from this office. When the Information Centre closed in 1973 Uleen commenced work in the Workshop, helping in the sewing room until 1992 when she left. Whilst working there, she also continued with fundraising, recruiting girls to be Quest entrants and ensuring their committees ran well, organised the Finals nights and dinner-dances and many other activities.

Around 1996, Uleen again became involved and, with a group of friends, provided Christmas lunches for all the Workshop employees. Uleen was Secretary of the Devonport branch from 1968–1978, and Secretary and Treasurer from 1983–1994, Treasurer of the NW Regional RCWA 1983–1991. She was also a representative at State meetings for many years and, with Margaret Walker, they formed a formidable team. She is a Life member of State RCWA and Devonport RCWA.

Frederick William (Bill) Braid

4/6/1928 – 16/7/2015

Bill joined Kentish RCWA in 1967 when his brother, Ian, was Chairman and they held their first Walkabout; he drove the front car with the sign ‘Walkabout behind’. After that he helped out whenever asked. He was Chairman/President of the Kentish RCWA branch from 1974–1978, in 1983/84 and again 1988/89. He was Treasurer 1985–1987. He was the representative to the Board of Management from 1985 until Kentish RCWA closed. He was made a Life

Member of the Kentish branch in 1987. He remained a member of the Board when he moved to Ulverstone and on 7 May, 2003 he received a Certificate of Appreciation and an armchair 'In recognition of in excess of 45 years dedicated commitment and service to people with disabilities.' He was a North-West Regional representative to the State meetings from 1980 to 1990 and from 1992 to 1994.

Reginald (Joe) Clifford Harris



(26/5/1932 – 6/6/2010)

Joe was a member of Rotary and became involved at Devonfield through them. A fellow member worked at Devonfield and asked him if he wanted to become part of the Committee. He was Chairman from 1978–1980 and remained a member on the Board, serving as Treasurer 2004/5 and Company Secretary 2007/8 and member until his death in 2010.

Currently, the managers at Devonfield have over 129 (plus John Carr's) years service between them.

Devonfield's management team consists of:

- Personal Assistant/Co-ordinator – Rosemarie Webb (retired, 2016)
- Manager, Business Services – Tanya Kingshott
- Manager, Devon Training & Employment Services – Karin Febey
- Manager, OH&S – John Carr
- Manager, Accommodation Services – Lyndee Gross
- Manager, Tenancy Support Services – Andrew Moore
- Manager, Day Support Services – Steve Daley

Afterword

For us the journey began over two years ago as a simple project to document the history of Devonfield. We expected to plough through an enormous amount of documents, scrapbooks and photos; interview many people and collate the information and then hand the finished product over.

How wrong we were! When you walk through the door, the warmth and caring of all staff is evident. From that first interview (aided by a huge afternoon tea provided by Healthy Cuisine) it struck us that here was something different: this would not be just about facts, this story would be about an extended family spanning several generations and communities along the North-West and, more recently, the North of the State.

Many of the current management staff have been there for twenty-five years or more and, when talking to them it became evident that this was not just a job, this was a vocation: the clients, and the running of Devonfield, to best suit those clients, is a major part of their lives.

Originally, the Board members were major unpaid contributors to the building and running of Devonfield. Very few of the staff were paid a wage until there was a need for a matron, house parents and teachers, the last until these were paid by the Education Department. Once the Workshop was established, the supervisors also received a wage. However, most of the money used to establish the various stages of the complex was raised by an army of volunteers and local service clubs. Since then, many volunteers have contributed to the

support of Devonfield and its clients. As funding was also made available from Government sources, more staff could be employed to further assist them.

Devonfield is a multicultural and an Equal Opportunity organisation and over the last fifty-seven years has employed people from many different backgrounds. Not only do they employ people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, employees and volunteers have come from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, Philippine, Nepalese, Pacific Islander, Fijian, and a Chilean.

Each of the staff is unique, but we noticed they all have one thing in common: their empathy for and intense desire to help clients reach their full potential. The friendly relationships between staff and clients continue even after staff members leave. Lyndee Grosse, Manager, Accommodation Services, commented that ‘the clients never forget anyone who shows them friendship.’

As the complex developed and the children grew up, parents’ and volunteers’ involvement slowly transformed from committees and fundraising to accompanying people on camps, and on Australian and overseas sports trips such as the Special Olympics. This still occurs today.

We met many of the volunteers during our information gathering, all extremely dedicated and willing to share their many fond memories, but the one that stays in our minds is Elizabeth Piper. Imagine supporting an organisation from 1965 until 2014, when, at 96 she was still attending coffee mornings helping to raise money! This epitomises the overwhelming sense of family.

The minute you walk in the door, it hits you – the empathy, happiness and the inspirational commitment to encourage everyone – staff, clients and visitors, to be part of their community

and for us it was an honour and unforgettable experience to have been included in the Devonfield family.

We sincerely endorse the comment made by Margaret Walker:

“Devonfield” – the field of Devon – as the farmer tills and sows, so we of Devonfield over the years have ploughed and planted. No-one, neither you nor I, nor the public out there, could look at our harvest and say “Poor return”. The return for work well done is shown in our Independent Living Programmes, Workshop, A.T.C., Residentials etc., and more importantly, in the accomplishment of our “so-called” disabled employees. Not just this year, but for a fair few years, I have been given outstanding support from Board Members, Committees, Staff, Employees, Government Departments etc. May I take this opportunity to thank you. We have not always agreed – how dull it would have been had we – but, most certainly we have, and will go on reaching out, challenging and achieving.’

Margaret Walker, RCWA Devonfield Board of Management Annual General Report 8/7/1987.

Karen and Dianne

Appendices

Devonport RCWA Executive

Year	Chairmen,	Secretary,	Delegate to Board
1954	Dr F T Rose	Win Scott	No Board
1955/56	Dr F T Rose	Win Scott	
1956/57	Dr F T Rose	Win Scott	
1957/58	Dr F T Rose	Win Scott	
1958/59	Dr F T Rose	E A McNeill	
		A G Edwards	
1959/60	Dr F T Rose	A G Edwards	
1960/61	W Weldon	A G Edwards	R Barnett
1961/62	Len Barrett	A G Edwards	R Barnett
1962/63	Len Barrett	A G Edwards	R Barnett
1963/64	Len Barrett	R Shearer	W Weldon
1964/65	Rex Barnett	R Shearer	W Weldon
1965/66	Rex Barnett	R Shearer	W Weldon
1966/67	Rex Barnett	R Shearer	
1967/68	W Weldon	S Shearer	
1968/69	D Harris	L Walker	W Weldon
		U McCall	
1969/70	D Harris	U McCall	W Weldon
1970/71	R Cole	L Monk	W Weldon
		U McCall	
		W Scott	
1971/72	Rex Barnett	U McCall	W Weldon
1972/73	Rex Barnett	Sr P Shaw	W Weldon
1973/74	Noreen Batchelor	Sr P Shaw U McCall	M Walker

1974/75	G Brown	U McCall	M Maynard
1975/76	G Brown	U McCall	M Maynard
1976/77	M Maynard	U McCall	M Walker
1977/78	M Maynard	U McCall	M Walker
1978/79	M Maynard	U McCall	M Walker
1979/80	Jim Ritchie		M Walker
1980/81	Jim Ritchie		M Walker
1981/82	Jim Ritchie		M Walker
1982/83	Jim Ritchie		M Walker
1983/84	Jim Ritchie		Jim Ritchie
1984/85	Jim Ritchie		Jim Ritchie
1985/86	Jim Ritchie		Jim Ritchie
1986	Jim Ritchie		Jim Ritchie
1987 – 1994 Chairman Garth Murphy, U Corbett Secretary and Treasurer.			

Life Members: Devonport RCWA

H P Shaw

W Weldon

Dr F T Rose

K & A Loone

U McCall

Devonfield Board of Management Chairmen

Year	Name
Nov 1959 to June 1961	Jim Parsons
June 1961 to June 1962	L Jackson
June 1962 to June 1964	M Wright
June 1964 to June 1965	Dr Frederick T Rose
June 1965 to June 1968	M Wright
July 1968 to June 1972	R Imlach
July 1972 to June 1974	M Weldon
July 1974 to June 1978	Sydney Wright
July 1978 to June 1980	Reginald (Joe) C Harris
July 1980 to June 1982	John Blyth
July 1982 to June 1987	Mrs Margaret Walker
July 1987 to June 1992	Garth Murphy

Devonfield Board of Directors Chairmen

July 1992 to June 1994	Garth Murphy
July 1994 to June 2000	Neil Wilkinson
July 2000 to June 2005	John Blyth
July 2005 to June 2016	Elizabeth Campbell

Life Members: Board of Management

June 1978	M (Mac) Wright
Feb 1980	Dr F T Rose
Dec 1981	A (Alf) Sellars
July 1987	Mrs M L Walker
July 1991	S Wright

Kentish R.C.W.A.

Year	Chairman	Secretary	BOM Delegate
1956 - 57	A E D Lillico	Mrs Hewett	
1957 - 58	C Rawson	Mrs Hewett	
1958 - 61	Don Ralph	Mrs A Hewett	Mrs Collins
1961 - 62	Don Ralph	Mrs Ralph	Don Ralph
1962 - 64	Don Ralph	Mrs J Collins	Alf Sellars
1964 - 66	Alf Sellars	Mrs J Collins	Alf Sellars
1966 - 67	Alf Sellars	Mrs Haberle	Alf Sellars
1967 - 72	Ian Braid	Mrs Haberle	Alf Sellars
1972 - 74	L Sherriff	Mrs Haberle	Alf Sellars
1974 - 84	F W (Bill) Braid	Mrs Haberle	Alf Sellars
1985 - 88	H Rockliffe	Mrs J Duff	Bill Braid
1988 - 90	Mrs J Duff	Mrs S Hughes	Bill Braid
1990 – Dec 1991	Mrs R Duff	Mrs S Hughes	Bill Braid
1991 -	Mrs R Duff	Kellie Braid	Bill Braid

Life Members: Kentish RCWA

Zillah Bramich

Patricia Haberle

Alf Sellars

Bill Braid