



Crosslands sign

Photo courtesy of Bruce Hill.

Crosslands Youth and Convention Centre, Australia

DULCE FERGUSON

Dulce Ferguson (secretarial course, Avondale College) retired in 2016 as administrative assistant to administration at the Greater Sydney Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sydney, Australia. Ferguson has served the Church for 48 years in various administrative assistant roles. In retirement she is actively involved in her local church and school mission. She is married to Graham.

Crosslands Youth and Convention Centre is owned and operated by the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. It is located in the Berowra National Park, approximately 29 miles (46 kilometers) from the center of the city of Sydney, and provides a variety of accommodation options for families and groups to enjoy this unique pristine bushland environment. It is named acknowledging the first European settler in the area: Burton Crossland.

The first inhabitants of the area were a subgroup of the Dharug, the main Aboriginal group of the Hawkesbury region. They sheltered in caves and behind screens made of bark or branches. They found an abundance of food from the local vegetation and the plentiful fish, shellfish, and small animals of the area.

History of the Choice and Development of the Site

In 1946 the youth leader of the South New South Wales Conference, Albert White, saw wisdom in seeking a rural location in order to establish a youth camp. He discovered the Crosslands property was owned by F. Calderwood, and negotiations for its purchase began. The matter was taken to the conference executive committee, and an action was taken thus:

A report was given of a visit by Committee men and others to a property at Crossland in the Arcadia district for the purpose of inspecting its suitability for a Young Peoples' permanent Campground. The ground being of an attractive nature for the purpose, and available for a long-term lease, it was,

VOTED that authority be given for the drawing up of a lease between The Conference, and the owner of the said property, F. Calderwood, for a period of 15 years at a rental of 1 pound per week, covering the areas of approximately 35 acres, situate at Crosslands near Arcadia, such lease to embody clauses granting to the Conference the option of renewal of this lease should the property be available for leasing and first right of purchase of the property, outside of the owner's immediate relatives, should such property be offered for sale, and provision for compensation for buildings and improvements, should such property be sold other than to the Conference, and such other clauses as thought advisable by our Solicitors and acceptable to the owner, and FURTHER that we negotiate with the owner for a right of way giving access to the permanent water supply, which right of way to be protected by embodiment in the lease.¹

As a result of further negotiations with the owner, another executive committee was held one week later, and the action of one week earlier rescinded. A new action was taken to expand considerably the terms of the leasehold agreement as follows:

VOTED that we authorise the drawing up of a lease with F. Calderwood of Crosslands via Galston for an area of approximately 100 acres at Crosslands, for a period of 15 years at a rental of 350 pounds per year, such lease to include cottages and buildings therein, other than one small cottage reserved by Mr. Calderwood for his own use, clauses to be embodied granting to the Conference the option of renewal for a further period of up to 15 years on the whole property and the first right of purchase, should the property be offered for sale, of the 48-acre section and first right, outside of Mr. Calderwood's immediate family, of purchase of the balance of the property, provision also to be made for the removal or sale of such buildings as we might erect during the 15-year period, and such other matters as our Solicitors shall deem fit to include and

FURTHER that before the matter is brought to finality, an effort be made to secure the property on a reduced rental if possible.

VOTED that we purchase for the sum of 200 pounds (14) rowing boats from F. Calderwood of Crosslands via Galston such purchase to be subject to the completing of the foregoing lease.

VOTED that we pay to F. Calderwood of Crosslands via Galston the sum of 150 pounds as good will for his boating, camping, and store business at Crosslands, such payment to be subject to the finalising of the foregoing actions re the Young Peoples' Camp Site, and our endeavour to have him reduce the sum asked for good will.

VOTED that expenditure connected with the establishing of the proposed Young Peoples' Camp site at Crosslands be met by a loan submitted for study at a later meeting.²

Negotiations continued. By the time of the conference executive committee of October 13, 1946, a decision had been made to purchase property rather than lease property. The committee action read:

The Committee was advised of the willingness of Mr. F. Calderwood to now sell to us portion of his property at Crosslands in connection with which we have been negotiating for a Lease. For an area of 83 acres and buildings thereon he has asked 5,000 pounds.

VOTED that authority be given to negotiate with Mr. F. Calderwood for the purchase of 83 acres of his Crosslands property with buildings thereon for the sum of 5,000 pounds, the 83 acres to be made up of the water frontage 20 acres of the 40-acre block the adjoining 8 acres, the 35-acre block, and the 20-acre block across the creek and

FURTHER should such negotiations be brought to finality and approval granted, we withdraw the negotiations for the 15-year lease of the area of the 103 acres.³

A little more than a year later, the property had been purchased. It was "VOTED that we approve of the Conditions of Sale for the Crosslands property, as submitted by Mr. Calderwood's solicitor, subject to alterations as approved by Messrs. Allen, Allen & Hemsley."⁴

Since 1947 the original Crossland grant has been occupied by a Seventh-day Adventist youth camp. The area over the river is known as Crosslands Reserve and has been maintained by Hornsby Shire Council since 1921. In 1987 the reserve was incorporated into Berowra Valley National Park, forming 15 square miles (38 square kilometers) of bushland stretching from Pennant Hills to Berowra Waters.⁵

Under the guidance of the South New South Wales Conference, the Crosslands young people's camp site developed as documented in the executive minutes of the South New South Wales Conference. In 1949 the South New South Wales Conference was divided, and the Greater Sydney Conference took over the management and ownership of the Crosslands youth camp. The Greater Sydney Conference executive

committee minutes have subsequently recorded numerous changes in upgrading and modernizing the site. Many of these minutes record minor upgrades, but others record considerable financial investment.

Eric White, circa 1952, as a student minister, camped at Crosslands as part of his training as a Master Guide while studying ministry at Avondale College. White eventually became the youth director for the Greater Sydney Conference where Crosslands became a hub for Pathfinder and youth activities. His keen interest in nature drew him to spearhead further development of the site, and today a building bears his name.

In 1972 Eddie Long, a successful land developer and builder, submitted plans to make major developments at Crosslands. Eddie Long had spent many of his youthful days as a beneficiary of the camp's ministry to the young people of Sydney. In 1974 it was "VOTED: That we authorize a financial programme as detailed hereunder for the Crosslands re-development scheme"; \$170,000 was committed.⁶ And again in 1974 it was "VOTED: That we confirm the acceptance of the tender submitted by E. Long Industries Limited of \$158,854 for the Crosslands redevelopment project and as detailed in their letter dated October 8, [1974]."⁷

Crosslands Youth and Convention Centre

In 2020 Crosslands Youth and Convention Centre continues to serve the youth and the constituency of the Greater Sydney Conference. The many improvements over the years has made it an attractive center for school camps and church gatherings. Located alongside the Berowra Creek in the tranquil Galston gorge, Crosslands provides a range of accommodation options for large and small groups—from camping (with hot showers!) to en-suite cabins and self-contained cottages. It has many wide-open spaces, meeting rooms, a commercial kitchen—and a heated swimming pool.⁸

Known Supervisors and Caretakers

Mr. Wilesmith, G. James, R. Marsden, J. McKay, R. Tanner, R. Laughlin, Ken and Jill Hiscox, Peter and Robyn Butcher, Alwyn and Val Ferris, John and Margaret Ashton, Bruce and Maxine Hill.

SOURCES

"Crosslands Youth Camp and Convention Centre." Accessed January 31, 2020. <https://www.crosslands.org.au/>.

Greater Sydney Conference executive committee minutes. "Crosslands Youth Camp," October 30, 1974. Greater Sydney Conference Archives.

Greater Sydney Conference executive committee minutes. "Crosslands Youth Camp Development," September 25, 1974. Greater Sydney Conference Archives.

“Hornsby Council 2018.” Accessed January 30, 2020. <https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/lifestyle/sports-and-recreation/parks-and-playgrounds/crosslands-reserve>.

South New South Wales executive committee minutes. “Young People’s Camp,” August 7, 14, October 13, 1946; December 10, 1947. Greater Sydney Conference Archives.

NOTES

1. South New South Wales executive committee minutes, “Young People’s Camp,” August 7, 1946, Greater Sydney Conference Archives.
2. South New South Wales executive committee minutes, “Young People’s Camp,” August 14, 1946, Greater Sydney Conference Archives
3. South New South Wales executive committee minutes, “Young People’s Camp,” October 13, 1946, Greater Sydney Conference Archives
4. South New South Wales executive committee minutes, “Young People’s Camp,” December 10, 1947, Greater Sydney Conference Archives.
5. “Hornsby Council 2018,” accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/lifestyle/sports-and-recreation/parks-and-playgrounds/crosslands-reserve>.
6. Greater Sydney Conference executive committee minutes, “Crosslands Youth Camp Development,” September 25, 1974, Greater Sydney Conference Archives.
7. Greater Sydney Conference executive committee minutes, “Crosslands Youth Camp,” October 30, 1974, Greater Sydney Conference Archives.
8. “Crosslands Youth Camp and Convention Centre,” accessed January 31, 2020, <https://www.crosslands.org.au/>.

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