

## Kelso Anglican Youth Centre

A fairly short-lived venture of the Anglican Church in northern Tasmania, Kelso Anglican Youth Centre began life in the late 1950s as a project supported by a joint committee of Launceston parishes.

Barry Easter, who as a young man had been involved in working bees to build the camp, recollected that Archdeacon Leonard Sutton, rector of St. John's Launceston at the time, had discovered that a block of land was held by the church at Sidmouth, on which a concrete foundation had already been laid. This was likely sold to acquire or develop the Kelso site. Barry thought it possible that land was donated by the Gardner family, who had strong St. John's connections. However, a letter to the diocese<sup>1</sup> in December 1973 noted that the church in northern Tasmania "was left a property at Kelso to be used by the church for youth purposes," and the Gardner family certainly had strong connections to the area (Gardners Rd at Greens Beach, for example), so perhaps this was not related to a Sidmouth property.

Plans were drawn up by architect Jim Hart, a member of St. John's choir. The builder responsible for the construction of St. Mark's Church, Sandhill, was also part of many working bees on the site. Among others, Trevor Cowell and John Stevenson were among the volunteers. Barry Easter also recalled the involvement of Peter Hoyle and Robin White.



*Kelso Anglican Youth Centre approaching completion – circa 1960*

The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Cranswick on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1958, and by February 1960, the building was sufficiently completed to allow a *Dedication and Opening of Main Hall Block*<sup>2</sup> by Bishop Barrett. A visitor book is held in the archives of All Saints Anglican Network, but entries were apparently sporadic, and final entries in that book are around the mid-1960s



*Foundation Stone laying – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1958. In left photo, Bishop Cranswick, Revd. Anthony MacDonald and Archdeacon Leonard Sutton*

The early enthusiasm that resulted in the frequent working bees mentioned by Barry Easter apparently dwindled once the camp was in operation, and there is evidence from correspondence that much-needed completion work had not been carried out. A report in preparation for a 1969 C.E.M.S. (Church of England Men's Society) Work Camp at Kelso, outlined some of the deficiencies, noting unpainted woodwork, paintwork in poor condition, leaky, unrepairable and contaminated water tanks, and the need for glass repairs.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1973, the vestry of St. John's Launceston wrote to the diocesan registrar<sup>4</sup> seeking clarification as to whether St. John's had any equity in the Kelso property, given that "for some years", St. John's had been repaying loan monies, insurance, maintenance etc on the property. Rents received by St. John's had never met the costs involved. A lease to the Scout movement was due for renewal, but scouts were "not certain of their future needs" (and see next paragraph about a list of requirements they had specified.) The inquiry to the diocese was made with a possible future sale in mind.

A further report<sup>5</sup> dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1973 and signed R. R. Goldsworthy, lists maintenance concerns including broken windows, toilets "that are a disgrace" and old and dirty mattresses. Scouts were intending to use the camp, but had listed some requirements that would need to be purchased. Other forward bookings included Masonic Masters Association, Scotch College and Kelso Youth Club. Only the Scotch booking was for an overnight camp.

Goldsworthy includes a recommendation as follows:

*The Camp is considered to be a liability that we should quit. This is difficult due to the fact that the land was donated and also building was built by voluntary labour and is owned by the Diocese of Tasmania. Therefore, suggest a committee be formed and given approval to examine the following:—*

- (a) *leasing to some organisation on a long term basis, say Scouts, Youth Hostels, C.E.B.S., or similar body.*
- (b) *The allowing of a caretakers cottage to be built to enable proper supervision over the camp.*

In May, 1974, vestry wrote to the diocese, reporting that the property had now been handed over to Launceston Church Grammar School, who could use and sub-let the property. Any rentals received would be remitted to the diocese towards repayment of the diocesan loan on the property. In the event of the property being sold, St. John's should be reimbursed for payments already made by St. Johns towards the loan reduction.<sup>6</sup>

A reply from diocesan registrar<sup>7</sup> dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 1974 clarified that there was presently no intention to sell the property, but confirming that Diocesan Council had received a resolution of representatives of the Archdeaconry of Launceston, that in the event of a sale, St. John's should be compensated for "all monies expended by the vestry... in insurance and repayment of loan monies as from October 1965". The registrar finished by asking for the amount involved.

At the time of writing, no further information has come to hand regarding the eventual sale of the site, which has long since passed into private hands, the building now reduced in size and apparently a private residence.



*Invitation to the dedication and opening of the main part of the building – 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1960*



*Foundation stone – laid 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1958*





*2023 - former Kelso Anglican Youth Centre – Google Maps image*

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1. Letter, 1973 Dec 18 *St. John's to Diocesan Registrar*
  2. Handbill, 1960 Feb 20 *Invitation to dedication of main hall Kelso*
  3. Letter, 1969 May 20 *Julian Carter to Archdeacon Jerrim – Subject C.E.M.S. Work-camp, Kelso*
  4. 1973 June 5 *St John's to Diocese regarding equity in Kelso property*
  5. 1973 Dec 2 *Report on condition of Kelso Centre.*
  6. 1974 May 9 *St John's to Diocesan Registrar re handover Kelso to Grammar*
  7. 1974 May 14 *Diocesan Registrar to St John's re Kelso*