



THE MASONIC
VILLAGES TRUST

1960 – 2020

60 YEARS

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Contents

Message from the Grand Master	4
1960–1969	6
1970–1979	10
1980–1989	14
1990–1999	16
2000–2009	18
2010–2020	20

Left: Soon to open Wainuiomata Village

Front Cover: The Masonic Villages Trust came to fruition thanks to the support of many, like Mrs Ella Carter who donated \$100,000 towards the building of Woburn Village and was later thanked by MW Bro J Redwood, Grand Master, and the Minister of Health Hon Don McKay

Disclaimer: This document interchanges \$ and £ when referring to prices and financial amounts in pre-decimal currency years. We note this discrepancy but have adhered strictly to the use of \$ and £ as they appeared



Message from the Grand Master

Freemasons throughout the world have a long tradition of caring. When the Grand Lodge of New Zealand was formed in 1890, that principle was at its very heart.

Even in those early days, our forebears in New Zealand's Lodges recognised the need to provide care for the elderly, for widows and for those in local communities who were vulnerable and required ongoing health care. It was this vision that led those early Kiwi Freemasons to develop a range of affordable accommodation options for those who needed it.

Through their hard work, they built small villages or groups of flats that were available to those in need. They weren't earmarked just for Freemasons or those connected to Freemasonry, they were available to anyone and that principle still stands to this day.

In many locations, one or more Lodges pooled their resources to purchase suitable housing or they worked together to construct new buildings to meet specific needs. Through grants and local fundraising, and the hard work of many volunteers based on the tradition of "looking after people", groups of Masonic Villages started to appear around the country and soon became an integral part of each local community.

Our Masonic values have always been our cornerstone, and this can be seen around the world where Freemasons have established and supported hospitals and dedicated aged care accommodation, often also managing those facilities. But as times change, as they inevitably do, the overall governance and management of Masonic Villages was undertaken by Trusts, with professional staff ensuring compliance with legislation and quality health care.

The establishment of the Masonic Villages Trust by the Freemasons is a good example – it was formed some 60 years ago when local Lodges came together to establish the Woburn Masonic Village in Lower Hutt. Today, rather



MW Bro Graham J Wrigley





than help to build the villages, Lodge members tend to lend their expertise to village governance, working as members of the Trust Board, while still adhering to the principles of “Masonic caring”.

During the last 60 years, the Masonic Villages Trust has grown beyond the original Woburn Village. It now provides much-needed retirement living and care facilities throughout the lower North Island. And, with its merger with the Northland District Masonic Trust in 2019, it now also operates four villages in Dargaville, Whangarei and Wellsford.

In all cases, Freemasons are still engaged on a local level, ensuring our Masonic values and charitable concepts continue to underpin the operation of the Trust’s villages and care facilities.

Obviously, the provision of good governance is important to the Trust, and contributing those skill-sets into the future is how we can continue our active engagement with its facilities and support those who seek our help in their aging years.

The Masonic Villages Trust works hard to maintain the original vision of our pioneering Freemasons by ensuring there is affordable, quality and kindly care for the elderly in their local communities, and long may that continue.

It’s our focus on caring for those less fortunate than ourselves that sees us heavily involved in other health-related initiatives too, such as the annual Freemasons University Scholarships, our support for the Centre for Brain Research in Auckland, the

cancer research we fund at the Malaghan Institute in Wellington as well as the Child Health Fellowships at the University of Otago.

In this way, our Lodges continue to support local communities with projects that target health and welfare and community groups, thus continuing our tradition of caring.

Congratulations to the Masonic Villages Trust on achieving 60 years of commitment and caring, thereby upholding our true Masonic values.

MW Bro Graham J Wrigley
Grand Master
Freemasons New Zealand



• 1960–1969 •

The 'idea' of a charitable organisation like the Masonic Villages Trust – to provide unparalleled care for New Zealand's elderly – was in fact planted a few years before it became a reality in 1960.

Freemasonry's principles of integrity, goodwill and charity laid the foundations for something unheard of in New Zealand in the late 1950s.

As the Trust's founding members were – and continue to be – heavily involved in supporting charity and community service, there was a growing feeling among Brethren in the Wellington District that they should expand their charitable giving to a wider field than that catered for by the Fund of Benevolence.

Nearly 70 years before the Masonic Villages Trust came into being, the Benevolent Funds totalled £263 thanks to members' contributions. By 1957, this had topped £928,378 and the income from the Fund amounted to more than £1,640,000.

Enter Brother (Bro) F Page, who chaired a committee to "examine various forms of charity appropriate to Masonic promotion or support and to submit the recommendations of the committee to Grand Lodge in respect thereto".

Serious discussions began taking place about funding, developing and building an "old people's home".

By 1959 the Trust's earlier name had been adopted as the Wellington District Masonic Charity Association which had begun collecting its first donations from individual committee members "Bros Sergeant, Martin, Page, Pringle, Gibbons, Wells, Briscoe, Gibson, Hickson, Leech, Hassed and Kemp".

Approaches to the then Department of Health were made to ascertain whether there was a need for an old people's home in Wellington, and what subsidies would be available should such a project

come to pass.

The then Government's response was an emphatic yes, and if the Association were able to build and run such a home, it could expect a refund equivalent to the Government valuation of the land involved in the approved scheme, plus a subsidy on the building of \$4,800 per resident up to a maximum of \$240,000.

It was May 1, 1960 – a date described as a "red-letter day in the history of the Association" – when the possibility of a \$100,000 donation from Mrs Ella Carter meant the Association could get the ball rolling on an old people's home.

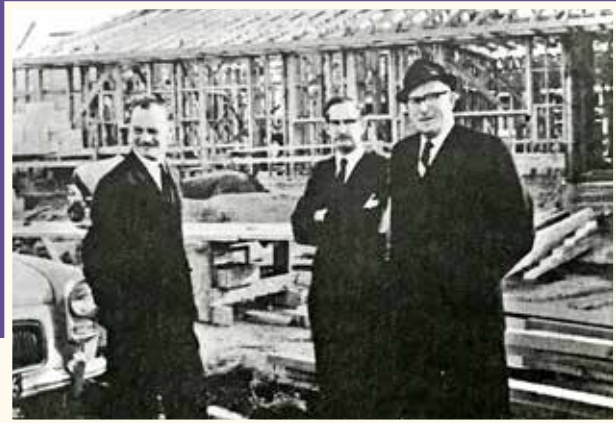
As luck would have it, former Woburn farmland was being developed by descendants of Daniel and Harriet Riddiford.

With a draft plan of the subdivisions in hand, and a plan to acquire three acres (1.2 hectares), the Association moved in haste to complete a \$50,000 grant proposal and agreed to:

1. Incorporate the Wellington Masonic Association.
2. Empower the Chairman and Bros K Gibson and L Hickson to consider negotiations with the donor, her solicitor and Rotary representatives to conclude the establishment of the Trust.
3. To appoint Bros J Martin, J Briscoe, F Pringle, F Page, R Hassed and A Wells as interim elected members.

"This was passed by a properly constituted general meeting of the members of the Wellington District on the 31st October 1960".





Clockwise from top:

First Pensioner Flats under Construction, Woburn, 1966

Bro J Harwood, Bro D Clout, Bro S Oldham on Site, 1966

The aforementioned donor was Mrs Ella Carter, who agreed to donate \$100,000 on the proviso that “all residents coming to the home would reside within 60 miles of the Wellington Post Office”.

Inspections of the Riddiford Estate due to be subdivided saw the Association make an offer of £25,000 for Blocks B and C and four sections adjacent to Block C for the property now on the boundary of then Wai-iti Crescent.

The Association’s original recordings – written to allow the present and future members of the Craft to follow the progress of the Association from youth to maturity and on to its riper years – made a significant effort to acknowledge the generous deed that was a catalyst for helping support many





Official Opening Pensioner Flats, Woburn 18/2/1967

people's healthy living arrangements.

"Before we progress too far it must be mentioned that at the meeting on 31st October 1960 it resolved that we place on record our deep appreciation of the gesture made by Mrs E Carter".

The vast amount of investigation and planning by willing bands of Brethren reached culmination with the incorporation under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957 of the Wellington Masonic Association on December 13, 1960.

"The Board of Trustees of the Wellington Masonic Association is dedicated to the care and accommodation of Elderly and Disabled Persons regardless of religion, nationality or masonic affiliation".

A 1962 Annual General Meeting saw plans and specifications drawn up for the "Woburn Home in readiness to present to the Health Department".

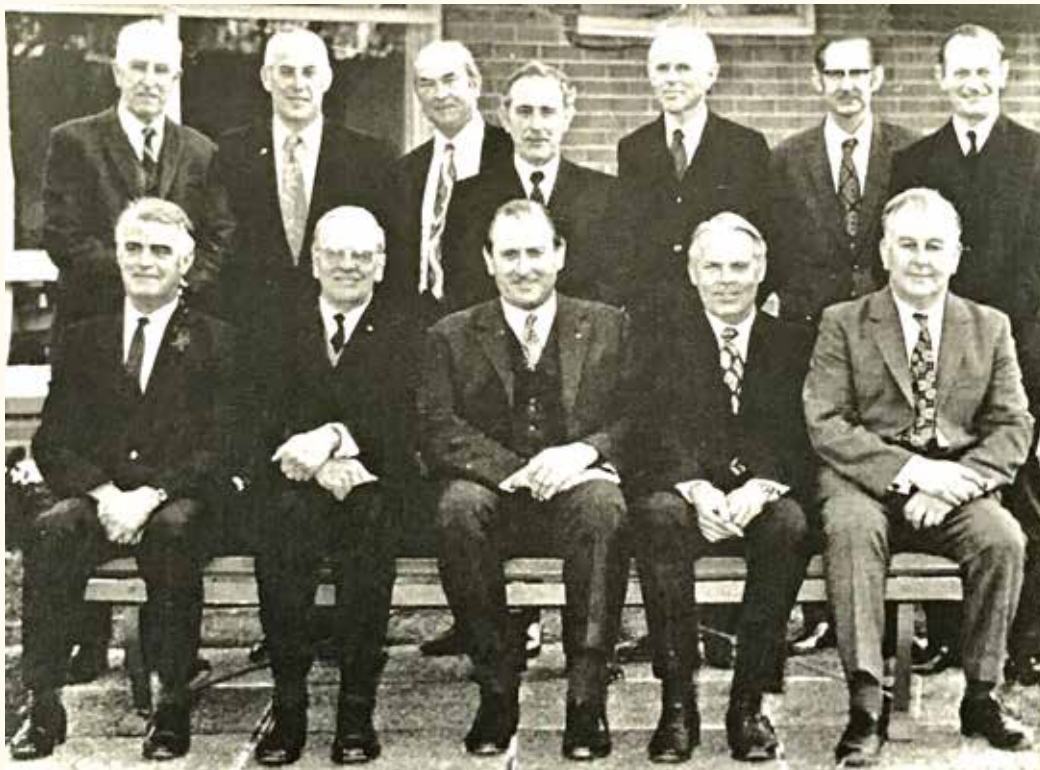
However, the Department of Health threw a spanner in the works, which the Association turned into another charitable opportunity. Pensioner Flats were to be included in plans on the perimeter of the Woburn property.

By 1965 plans to proceed with building seven blocks, each containing four Pensioner Flats, were agreed to – leaving space for the subsequent erection of an old people's home – and the development would hence be known as the Woburn Masonic Village.





Mrs E Carter, MW Bro J Redwood, Grand Master, and the Minister of Health Hon Don McKay



The Board of Trustees, 1970

Left to Right:

Front – R Hassed, S McLean, D Gilchrist (Chairman) H Girdlestone, (Deputy Chairman), B Odlin (Secretary/Treasurer)

Back – H Poole, D Hercock, J Connor, A Wells, W Olphert, D Clout, J Harwood



• 1970–1979 •

The building of the Woburn Masonic Village Home began in 1969 upon the tendered selection of R.O. Slacke Ltd.

During this period, a dedicated group were busy investigating what to furnish the Home with and who should staff it, and establishing a Selection Committee whose job was to see that applicants' forms were completed correctly.

Towards the end of the construction period, Brethren attended working bees that were held every weekend to ensure everything was spick and span for the opening.

In fact, so keen was the Brethrens' interest in the project's progress that it became necessary to impose a restriction on the number of people visiting during construction hours.

One of the finest moments of this decade was marked by Mrs Carter – "whose beneficence had been of such inestimable assistance in the establishment of the Association's projects" – becoming a resident of the Home in 1970.

The second greatest moment of the decade came later that year, on December 12, 1970, when RW Bro Sir Edwin Bate CBE, Grand Warden, Australian High Commissioner, opened the Home.

It was recommended at an Annual General Meeting that Bro R Hassed receive an Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his years of service to the Association.

1972 saw the then Governor-General, Sir (Edward) Denis Blundell, GCMG, GCVO, KBE, QSO, visit the Home to speak with residents and tour the premises.

And with the Woburn Masonic Village firmly established, the Association members' thoughts turned to a similar project in the Horowhenua area.

From experience, they knew that any Government financial assistance would be some years in coming, so planning proceeded without delay.

Bro Hassed presented a report at a Trustees' meeting in 1973, detailing the requirements for a 45-bed Home in Levin with a possible addition of a geriatric unit.

Driven by a desire to provide day-to-day management and care for the community's elderly, who had a wide range of interests, lifestyles and budgets, the Association purchased a nine-acre (3.5-hectare) block on the corner of Queen Street and Arapaepae Road for \$37,000.

A period of great activity followed, with the preparation of plans and various negotiations relative to the project.

The initial plans submitted to the Department of Health failed to meet the Department's requirements, but, after a meeting with departmental officers, revised plans were submitted and were approved.

The Chairman of the Trust, Bro Hugh Girdlestone, convened and chaired a meeting of representatives of the six West Coast Lodges, held in the Ōtaki Lodge rooms on September 25, 1973.

He envisaged that local details would be in the hands of a committee representative of all six West Coast Lodges, which would work under the general



Clockwise from top:

Flyer for Woburn Masonic Home Opening, 1970

Official Opening Woburn Home, 1970



direction of the Board of Trustees.

The committee would elect its own chairman who would, in due course, be appointed a member of the Board of Trustees.

At a 1974 meeting, all the West Coast Lodges and West Coast District Brethren were given details of the plans: "This was the most informative meeting and the Brethren decided to support us in our endeavours to have the Levin project completed".

Work quickly scaled up and it made quite an impressive showing when the foundation stone was laid by MW Bro A Shuttleworth, Grand Master, on October 30, 1976.

Barry Brill, M.P. for Kāpiti, Allan McCready, M.P. for Manawatū, Mr L Roberts, Mayor of Levin, and a large gathering of Grand Officers and Brethren attended, all of whom lent colour to the ceremony by parading in full regalia.

Chairman, Bro H Girdlestone and Bro D Hercok also took an official part in the ceremony.

From top to bottom:

An Early View of the Site, Horowhenua Masonic Village



Placed under the foundation stone was a casket containing the following items:

- A scroll prepared by Bro A Hunter.
- A mint set of coins.
- A set of current postage stamps.
- A pictorial book of Levin.
- A day's issues of newspapers circulating in the district.
- The last Installation programmes of the six Horowhenua District Lodges.
- A copy of the rules and constitution of the Association.
- A copy of the programme of the foundation-stone-laying ceremony.

In October 1977, Mrs E Grigor was appointed Matron of the Horowhenua Home. Association historical notes state that her duties were to commence on November 28, by which time it was anticipated her Flat would be ready for occupation.

The construction progress continued unabated, with Brethren confident that their new Home would be completed by Christmas and the flats by early in the new year of 1978.

"Yet another red-letter day was reached on 4 March 1978, when His Worship the Mayor of Levin, Mr L Roberts, at an impressive and well attended ceremony, declared the Horowhenua Masonic Village officially opened".

With the Home and flats completed, the way was open to proceed with Stage III, thanks to a considerable amount of preparatory work done in this field – the erection of own-your-own villas.

Meanwhile, the Woburn Masonic Village continued to be a success, thanks to voluntary assistance: "the Board is extremely grateful to all those Brethren who have helped so very much over the years of the formation of the Wellington Masonic Association and all who have worked for the District.

"It says a great deal for this help that affairs of the Association are in such good heart and that so much is still being done day by day for the Homes in the area".

• 1980–1989 •

In the last few months of 1979, with the Homes complete and residents happy in their Hutt Valley and Levin units, thoughts turned to the needs of those in the Wairarapa.

“We should now undertake doing something in the Wairarapa and this, of course, would complete the triangle of the Wellington District.

“The Wairarapa Brethren continued to be very active and had in mind the community welfare of the disabled people in their District and their idea was to provide some type of accommodation for this sort of person”.

All the while the Association didn’t rest on its laurels; it increased the number of Levin residents from 50 to 55 and donated \$2,000 to the Levin YMCA Community Use Project for a minivan that was used to transport elderly people to local shops and the hospital.

Additionally, a grant from a former resident helped build the Ben Enid Hall at the Horowhenua Complex in 1982, where indoor bowls and other activities were extremely popular for Brethren and residents.

Five of the 30 own-your-own villas were completed that same year in Levin, while annual fairs hosted at the two Homes became a staple.

Extensions of both Homes were also crucial components of the Association’s ongoing service to its residents and staff, as were upgrading staff accommodation and installing a nurses’ station.

The appearance of the Levin Home was also greatly enhanced by beautiful stone entrance gates, thanks to a donation from Mrs M Weggery, who was subsequently elected as an Honorary Life Member of the Association.

The Ladies Auxiliary was also formed in 1984, involving the wives of local Masonic members.

Rather than concentrate on yearly projects the Ladies Auxiliary held activities for the residents, with social afternoons each month, 100th birthday celebrations and wedding anniversaries of married couples, as well as two weddings.

“The keen interest shown by this group has been realised and appreciated by the Matron and residents”.

Later that decade, a 3,410-square-metre property in Masterton was purchased for \$48,413 to realise the dream of providing facilities for the district’s physically disabled.

“It is impossible to thank all those Brethren and people outside of our Masonic Fraternity who have been of such great assistance to the Association over the first period of our existence, namely the first 25 years.

“But I would like to say to them all wherever they are and whatever they are doing that the Board of Trustees and the Brethren of Wellington District are extremely grateful for everything that they have done”.





Carpenter Callum Johnston fits a porch post during construction of rental units at Wairarapa Masonic Village, 1986



Conservation Week at a Masonic Village, 1986



Horowhenua Masonic Village Day Hospital turns four, 1986



1986



The MW Bro R Richmond, Grand Master, Mrs Richmond, and Bro D Hercoc (Chairman)



W Bro Thom piloting the new mower at Woburn Masonic Home, 1981

• 1990–1999 •

1990 was an extremely busy year for the Association, with the opening of the Recreation Hall at the Wairarapa Masonic Village by MW Bro R Richmond, Grand Master, in March.

Twelve Pensioner Flats were constructed at the Wairarapa Masonic Village, taking the total to 28, while four own-your-own villas were also completed, bringing the total of own-your-own villas to seven with a further five under construction.

The Association's continued dedication to the care and accommodation of the elderly and disabled was second to none, as it approved tenders to build the John Muir wing extension (funded by the legacy of Bro J Muir) at the Woburn Masonic Village to provide 16 bedrooms, a recreation room, a spa pool and associated facilities.

The Wairarapa Masonic Village continued to grow with Bro Jack Hessel as the Project Supervisor and as Chairman of the Wairarapa Masonic Village Management Committee, assisted by Bro Bruce Keats as Secretary.

A large gathering of Masons and their wives, and many interested members of the public, was present at the official opening of the new hall by MW Bro Bob Richmond, Grand Master, and his wife Errol.

The Grand Master also marked the occasion by planting a tree adjacent to the newly completed Pensioner Flats.

The village was also fortunate to receive a loan of a full-sized billiard table by Mr Bernard Teahan, to the delight of the residents.

The 90s were also integral to the Association's resolve to develop and improve its systems and facilities: "Continual improvement is the vital ingredient of good customer service".

Major restructuring in 1997 saw all facilities appoint managers for Care and Support Services, who were supported by a real team effort by the facilities' staff.

This was also to address families' and residents' requests for a continuum of care in each facility, so residents requiring high levels of care would not have to move out.

Staff training was a large focus of this year, with regular in-service sessions held and many staff completing external certificated courses or attending health seminars.

The Woburn and Levin villages worked towards accreditation to meet the New Zealand Council of Healthcare Standards, a rigorous process that was concluded in 1998.

Masterton worked towards a Quality Base certification programme in 1998, a first for the Association's villages.

It is also during this period that Bro S Sherring believes the Association amended its name to Wellington Masonic Villages Trust.

The Continuing Care Wing in Levin received its first residents late in 1999, but due to long waiting lists, plans were developed to diversify the Levin and Woburn villages.

The General Manager responsible for the Association's retirement villages, Alison Hearn, said at the time that: "The year ahead will be exciting, bringing all services in line with our philosophy by focusing more on the identified needs of all our residents, and planning our care around this".





Images from the original newspaper clipping (Wairarapa Times-Age) celebrating seven years of the updated Wairarapa Masonic Village, Thursday March 10 1994



Constructing framework for the addition bedrooms of the John Muir wing



Bro D Crump, Deputy Chairman, speaking at the opening of the John Muir wing



Construction of the MacDonnell Chapel at the Horowhenua Village, funded by a donation from resident Mrs Phyllis MacDonnell

• 2000–2009 •

Forty years after the visionaries laid the foundation stones for the current successful three villages, the next decade held many challenges for the Trust to keep ahead of the game and provide the best facilities.

Thanks to continued support from Brethren and the community, Woburn Masonic Village underwent refurbishments, while the Trust introduced the country's first elderly rehabilitation scheme aimed at keeping people comfortable in their own homes for longer.

It was supported by the Ministry of Health, and was used as a pilot scheme to examine the future of elderly health in New Zealand.

The Wairarapa Masonic Village had 62 stand-alone villas and 29 rental flats and apartments, including a medical centre with a registered nurse on site.

Residents loved their ability to stay active, as evidenced by the popular double outdoor bowling green set in the 14 acres (6 hectares) of gardens, and the decision to not have a hospital or rest home on site.

Not to be outdone, the Horowhenua Masonic Village boasted 50 villas and 28 flats, but also included a 39-bed rest home and 25-bed continued care hospital.

Its two unique features – a specialised rehabilitation unit and a full-time general practitioner and medical practice – were the envy of many, especially with its awards for high levels of quality care and facilities.

The espresso coffee machine proved extremely popular with residents, while the leisure centre was a real gem for social activity.

In Lower Hutt, the Woburn Masonic Village provided a similar example of Freemasons New Zealand's commitment to reflecting the needs of the day. It boasted a 35-bed rest home and 22-bed continued care hospital with 28 rental flats and a rehabilitation unit, and also completed a renovation in 2003.

It is in 2007 that Bro S Sherring believes the Trust changed its name for the last time to the Masonic Villages Trust.

The villages' strengths were also on show nationally, after Village Manager John Litton was named New Zealand Manager of the Year by the Retirement Villages Association of New Zealand.

In 2009 the Masonic Villages Trust turned its plans for growth into reality as builders began work at both the Wairarapa and Horowhenua Masonic Villages.

A neighbouring property in Levin was acquired for two new villas, while the most significant investment was a \$9 million Masterton 48-bed care facility adjacent to the village, to replace the old Glenwood Hospital.

Chairman Bill Arcus acknowledged at the time the financial support received over the years from the community and freemasons.

"Such support has assisted us considerably in maintaining a high standard of care for our residents".





• 2010–2020 •

As ‘red-letter’ days go, the Glenwood Masonic Hospital opening in 2010 was a boon for the Masterton community, with New Zealand’s elderly population expected in 2011 to rise by 12,000 annually.

Additionally, two new operational entities were established in 2011 – Masonic Care Limited and Masonic Villages Limited – to support a greater focus on improving the Trust’s operational and financial performance.

The Woburn Masonic Villages Pensioner Flats were beginning to become unfit for purpose, so a plan to build 23 one-bedroom, 52 two-bedroom and 11 three-bedroom apartments was developed to ensure attractive retirement options well into the future.

Between 2014 and 2019, the Trust completed mergers with the Manawātū Masonic Association Trust, the Taranaki Masonic Trust, the Marton Edale Trust Board and the Northland Masonic Association Trust. These mergers extended the geographic reach for the Trust from New Plymouth, through Taranaki to Marton and into Palmerston North and Foxton as well as Wellsford, Dargaville and Whangarei. And with the completion of the final stage of Woburn Apartments in 2017, the Trust became one of the largest charitable retirement village operators and aged care providers in New Zealand.

While the Trust may be a charity, it is ‘financially hard-headed’ about making investment decisions.

This was, and continued to be, the discipline it followed in 2017 when exploring the opportunity to establish a new retirement village in the Lower Hutt suburb of Wainuiomata.

A public meeting to gauge the needs and preferences of potential residents was well supported.

Housing around 200 people, the first of 80 modern, single-story villas will be ready later this year (2020), and will include a rest home, hospital beds, care suites and serviced apartments.

It speaks to the Masonic Villages Trust’s history that 60 years ago the Wellington Masonic Association saw the opportunity “for you and me to make some contribution to assist in caring for the aged, irrespective of colour, class or creed”.

As RW Bro D Gilchrist put it at a 1967 meeting: “Many of our senior citizens, who come to the twilight of their lives, cannot enjoy the rest which should follow labour because they require some assistance ... [but] by virtue of our membership of the Craft ... we are prepared to help to solve the problem”.





His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Anand Satyanand and Warwick Dunn, Chief Executive of the Masonic Villages Trust (left) officially open Glenwood Masonic Hospital, 2010



• The past TO THE future •

The journey that started the Masonic Villages Trust 60 years ago was born from a simple philosophy – to care for the elderly.

Supplementing that philosophy was the desire to go that extra distance for those in need, meaning the Trust has gone from strength to strength.

No one knows that better than former Trustee and Chair, Bill Arcus.

Providing affordable, comfortable and compatible accommodation for the lower North Island's elderly was an idea ahead of its time, he remembers.

There weren't that many options available at the time, and due to low wages, many Kiwis found themselves in financially difficult positions in their twilight years.

Nevertheless, the Trust founded its success on prioritising people, its communities and Brethren.

"We weren't a money-making machine," Mr Arcus remembers.

"With a lot of good will, good management, good governance, and good people, we figured it out.

"Whilst I might have said good governance and management is crucial to any entities' success, I think our staff was where we had an edge over other entities like ours.

"Our staff were always willing to go the extra distance. Obviously, you have to have a good cash flow to continue in business but, nevertheless, our main priority was to look after the people."

That priority saw the Trust build and continue to develop a community spirit that would not have been achievable without the collective efforts of its Brethren and volunteers, he adds.

"It is rewarding to see how far the Trust has come over the decades, all the while staying true to its original purpose.

"Many within the organisation see the benefits of such a philosophy, too; they see it as a charitable entity and so they're prepared to give their time to what they deem is a good charitable cause.

"The whole premise of the Trust was to care for the elderly, and doing those little extra things and going the distance for them.

"It hasn't changed at all since its inception; in fact it's only become stronger with time."



