

# The irovilla story

David J Evans



THE  
SIROVILLA  
STORY

DAVID JEVANS

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## FOREWORD

**Dr Menzie Lipson**

**Founding Chief, CSIRO Division of Textile Industry**

With the passing of time, good works that have contributed to the development of a community can often be forgotten. The present book will ensure that this will not be the case with Sirovilla. It is a story, written by a scientist, of the perseverance and dedication of a far-seeing group determined to fulfil a need in their community.

The Social Club at CSIRO Division of Textile Industry was set up in 1962 with agreement that any fundraising would be mainly for charity and not for the benefit of members. From the outset, the club actively supported various charities and by 1971 reached the stage where members decided to establish their own project: 'Sirovilla Elderly People's Homes Society'.

This is a fascinating account of how staff at all levels of a CSIRO research division combined with some altruistic local citizens to establish a retirement village for the elderly that has functioned successfully for 27 years. In that time, over 111 elderly citizens have been provided with comfortable unit accommodation in congenial surroundings.

This is an outstanding example of voluntary community service, the reward being satisfaction from an achievement of lasting benefit to the Geelong community.

It dispels a view sometimes held that members of a scientific community are insular and do not relate to people around them. To use scientific terms this book might be described as a report of an experiment in a new field by a dedicated group that has produced a highly successful result.

## Acknowledgements

This story of Sirovilla has been written to record the past as we approach the new millennium.

The origin of 'The Sirovilla Story' was a set of notes compiled by Derek Forster. Derek had read all of the minutes from 1972 to 1985 and from this careful reading he wrote the notes that became the basis of 'The Sirovilla Story'. I would like to thank Derek for his valuable contribution to this work and for his help in reviewing the later drafts.

Other information came from interviews with past and present members of the committee, and through personal involvement with the day to day operation of Sirovilla.

Our thanks to all friends of Sirovilla for giving time to contribute their reminiscences and reading the early drafts of this history. In particular life member Geoffrey Watson provided a wealth of information.

Special thanks to Bernadette Lipson for graphic design, John Card for the fine photographs taken over the life of Sirovilla which have made such a valuable contribution to this work, and Pat Naughtin for his support and editorial assistance.

## CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	3
CONTENTS.....	5
1. BEGINNINGS.....	7
2. FUND RAISING .....	10
3. STAGE ONE .....	14
4. STAGES TWO & THREE.....	18
5. INCORPORATION.....	20
6. STAGE FOUR.....	21
7. SIROVILLA TODAY.....	25
8. WILLEM (BILL) VAN BARNEVELD .....	27
9. THE COMMITTEE .....	30
10. THE FUTURE.....	31
11. SIROVILLA OFFICE BEARERS (1972 – 1999) .....	33
12. LIFE MEMBERS .....	35
13. LIFE GOVERNORS.....	36
14. TRUST AND INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTORS (1972 – 1999).....	37
15. SIROVILLA RESIDENTS (1975 – 1999).....	38





### 3. Stage One

Early in 1975 the committee had accumulated reserves of \$18 000, and with land (and an overdraft facility) in hand the committee was ready to begin the task of building the first units.

The Committee commissioned local architect Neil Everist, of McGlashan and Everist, to prepare a design for the first units, and give a full site plan. Plans for eight units were prepared and displayed in the Division's canteen, and were well received by the committee and CSIRO staff.

The plans were then submitted to both the Social Security Department and the Hospital and Charities Commission for approval. In order to qualify for the Commonwealth Housing subsidy, the plan had to allow for a minimum of 30 units to the hectare with a maximum subsidy for each unit of \$9 000.

Following the calling of tenders, local builders L. Poulston Pty. Ltd. were awarded the contract for building eight units for a price of \$108 150.



*Stage One commences, May 1975.*

Another important source of funds to the Society was the sale of sheepskins. These were supplied at cost to Sirovilla by a grateful and generous CSIRO industrial partner and then sold throughout Australia to the staff of most CSIRO Divisions.

Belmont CSIRO Social Club members expended considerable labour and effort after their normal working hours. They dealt with handling and packing, together with the bookwork involved in written orders, invoicing and payments. Distribution was by commercial road transport, and thousands of skins were sold at a modest mark up. The volume was sufficient to make this effort the most effective single fundraiser for the Society.

Additional sources of funds included donations from Life Governors, local industries, and various philanthropic trusts. Life Governors were established under the by-laws of the Society, and each provided a significant contribution to Sirovilla's coffers, particularly during the early fund-raising days. Each Life Governor donated a minimum of \$100 and over the years they have contributed many thousands of dollars to Sirovilla.

This section on fund-raising would not be complete without mentioning the contributions, both monetary and in kind, made by the various service clubs and organisations from the Geelong region. The local branches of Rotary, Rotaract, Apex and Lions clubs were particularly active.

Finally, the most important and sustained contributors to Sirovilla were members of the CSIRO Social Club. Many staff of the Division made regular contributions from their salaries, and the Club made substantial annual donations to Sirovilla between the years 1972 to 1984.

In 1985 Sirovilla was accepted as a beneficiary of United Way, Geelong. This body is a community service organisation that raises funds for charities in the Geelong region. By mutual agreement, beneficiaries of United Way Geelong do not fund-raise individually but work as a team for the benefit of all. Beneficiaries receive an allocation of funds, according to their individual needs, through an annual review process. Contributions from United Way have been used to upgrade walking paths, build new letterboxes and improve the entrance.



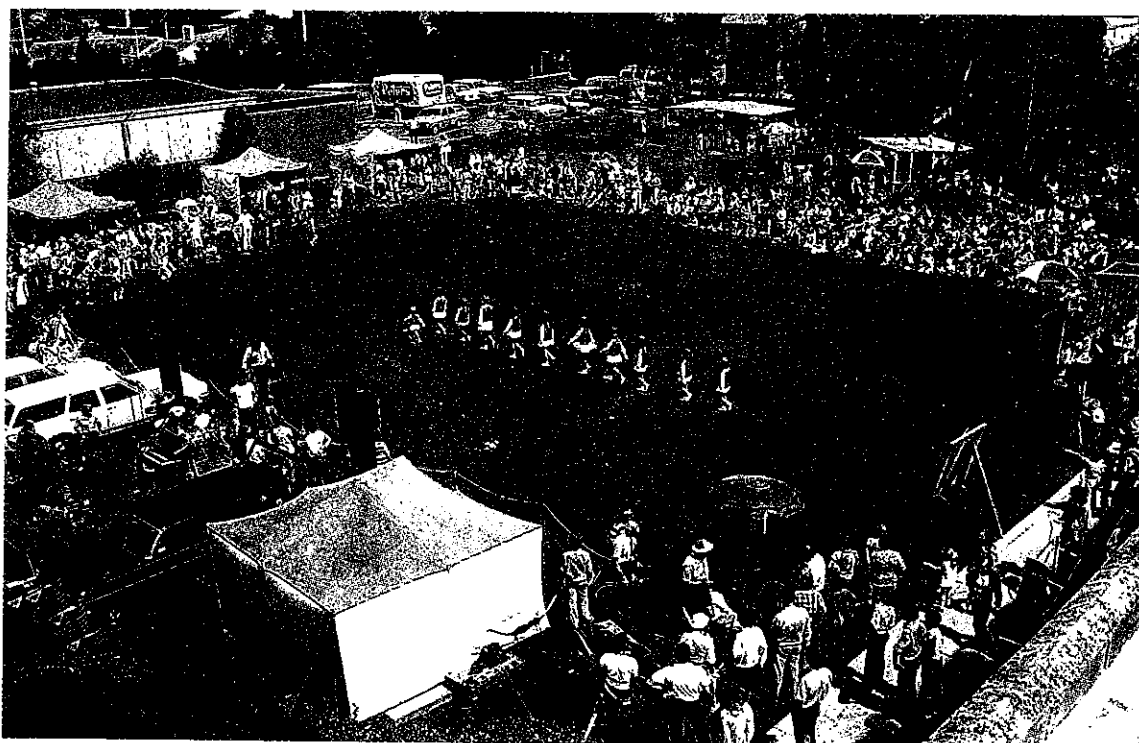
*Peter Torok, CSIRO Technical Officer,  
selling sheepskins and fabrics at Sirofair.*



*Dick Heighway, CSIRO Technical Officer (left),  
and Basil Ellis, CSIRO Research Scientist,  
manning the fairy-floss booth at Sirofair.*

Another regular fund-raiser was the annual gymkhana held in collaboration with the Geelong and District Riding Club and the Geelong Jumping Club. A melodrama performed by the Geelong Musical Comedy Company at the Tavern on the Green at Queens Park was a novel event, with all proceeds going to Sirovilla. Probably the most novel fund-raiser was the record-breaking snakes and ladders marathon conducted by the Corio Rotaract Club. The money raised from 600 continuous games was ultimately used to furnish one of the units.

By far the most memorable and popular of all the fund raising activities was 'Sirofair'. This giant event was held in the grounds of the Division on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1973 after six months of hard work by the Sirovilla and CSIRO Social Club Committees.



*Aerial view of 'Sirofair',  
held in the grounds of CSIRO on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1973.*

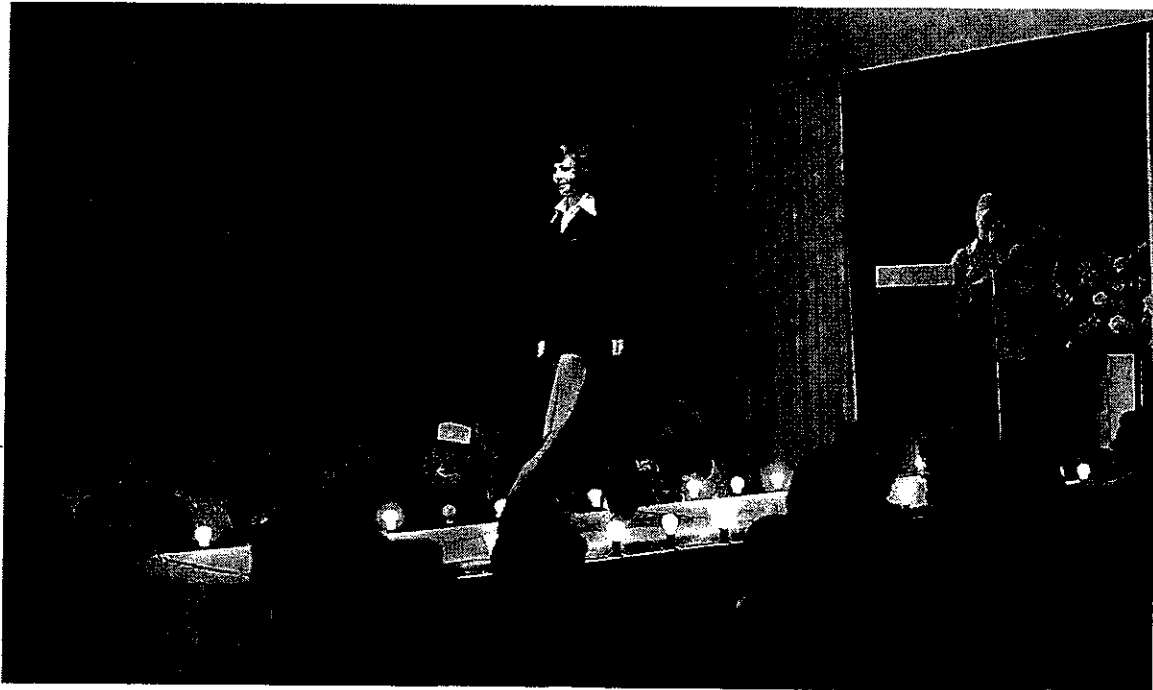
Dr Ron Hoskinson was convenor of the organising committee and undertook the herculean task of putting the fair together. An indication of the organisation that went into this event is revealed by the 600 items of correspondence relating to the fair held in the files, and the fact that 400 volunteers helped out on the day. Some 5 000 hand-bills were printed and delivered in the region. Other publicity was generously provided by 'The Geelong Advertiser' and radio station '3GL'.

Among the many activities were archery, judo displays, fashion parades, pony rides, golf, vintage cars, train rides, and many stalls. The fair was opened by Brian Naylor, who had earlier driven through Geelong in a 1903 Oldsmobile leading a cavalcade of veteran and vintage cars. The fair was a huge success with an estimated attendance of over 5 000 people and raised over \$3 000. It was a superb effort.

## 2. Fund raising

Fund raising for Sirovilla was a major activity for both the Sirovilla Committee and the Division's Social Club Committee from 1972 to 1984. CSIRO staff and others put in tens of thousands of hours of volunteer labour during this time, incorporating a wide diversity of skills and knowledge. The Sirovilla project could not have progressed as it has done without their enthusiasm and motivation.

The wide variety of fund raising activities undertaken in order to establish a financial base for the village included annual gymkhanas, art shows, fashion parades, film nights, fund raising dinners, musicals, and a giant fair. Among the most popular fund-raisers were the regular fashion parades conducted at CSIRO, with the help of the Australian Wool Corporation and the fashion department of the Gordon Institute of Technology; students of the college and members of CSIRO staff acted as models.



*Fashion parade held at CSIRO  
in collaboration with The Australian Wool Corporation  
and the Fashion Department of the Gordon Institute of Technology.*

The search continued for suitable land. The breakthrough came with the possibility of a land purchase from Glastonbury Child and Family Welfare Services (the former Glastonbury Orphanage) in Colac Road, Belmont. At a committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1973, Geoffrey Watson and Don Taylor reported on their discussions with the Glastonbury Committee of Management, and the Shire of South Barwon. Glastonbury was very supportive of Sirovilla's objectives and proposed to include an allocation of two hectares [one hectare equals 2.471 acres] to Sirovilla in their scheme of usage for their 'Premier' estate.

The committee resolved to pursue this further, and at the committee meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1973, Geoffrey Watson reported on further discussions with Chris Jolly, a member of the Glastonbury Committee of Management. Glastonbury had asked if Sirovilla would be interested in a triangular piece of land of one hectare, south of the Glastonbury entrance, with a frontage to Colac Road. The committee agreed to proceed, and Geoffrey Watson tabled the formal offer to Glastonbury of \$13 000 for this land at a committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1973. The motion to purchase was moved by Neil Davidson, seconded by Dr Peter Forster and passed unanimously. The generosity of Glastonbury in providing this land at a fraction of its true market value was critical in enabling Sirovilla to progress as it has done.

A rationalisation of land holdings took place between Glastonbury and the then City of South Barwon at a later date. A disused road reservation between Glastonbury and Sirovilla was ceded to Sirovilla for the 'peppercorn' amount of \$1.00 and later still a small anomalous triangle adjoining the Glastonbury entrance was also transferred to Sirovilla. These additions were to bring Sirovilla's land holding to 1.5 hectares.

A wide range of enquiries to statutory authorities ensured that there were no impediments to building the village on the land. Loans were negotiated with the State Bank of Victoria, and total payment for the land was made to the Glastonbury Committee by Sirovilla's solicitors Whyte, Just and Moore.

Neil Davidson, a member of the Sirovilla committee, acted as honorary solicitor for the Society in this transaction. The deeds to the land were entrusted to the Trustees, who remained custodians of all Sirovilla land holdings until Sirovilla became an Incorporated Body in 1986.

that body was required to attract the necessary Government funding. The volunteer committee had to move into unfamiliar areas and learn as they progressed, but the first three years saw substantial progress towards the goal.

During 1971 when planning was in the initial stages, the sub-committee of the Social Club was made aware that as a sub-committee it could not receive Government grants nor affiliate with the Hospital and Charities Commission. It had to become an organisation in its own right, and open the project to public participation both in terms of committee members and residents. A public meeting sponsored by the social club was therefore called through the following public notice placed in the Geelong Advertiser on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1972:

The CSIRO Geelong Social Club is holding a public meeting in the CSIRO Hall at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, 21st February, 1972 to form a provisional committee for an Elderly People's Home Society. Nominations will be called at the meeting and if these exceed 12 there will be an election by voting of those attending.

The inaugural meeting at which the Society came into existence appointed a committee of twelve people, including four from the wider Geelong community.

Dr Don Taylor was elected President and Geoff Watson, Honorary Secretary. Other office bearers of the founding committee were: Ray Bennett and Dr Hilbert Katz (Vice Presidents), and Ken Drayton (Honorary Treasurer). The 'outside' members of the committee were: Dr Peter Foster (General Practitioner), Neil Davidson (Solicitor), Ray Bennett (Business Manager) and Graeme Harvey (Wool Grower and representing the combined Rotary Clubs of Geelong).

The name 'Sirovilla Elderly People's Homes Society' was adopted at the subsequent committee meeting. Like many good CSIRO inventions it was given the 'Siro' prefix, but on this occasion it was for a bold social initiative, rather than the latest piece of technology.

Three Trustees appointed at the meeting and subsequently ratified by the Hospital and Charities Commission of Victoria were Dr Menzie Lipson (Chief of Division), Dr Gordon Walls (Assistant Chief) and Dr Jack Delmenico (Research Scientist).

The newly formed Sirovilla committee embarked on an incredible amount of work in public relations and fundraising over the next two years. It had to draw up a constitution, adopt model by-laws with the Hospital and Charities Commission, refine selection criteria for prospective residents, negotiate with the Taxation Department for tax deductible benefits, visit other retirement villages, prepare submissions for grants and list all statutory authorities who would eventually be involved in the project.

By June 1972, the group was officially registered as 'Sirovilla Elderly People's Homes Society'.

The hurdle to real progress however, was the inability of the committee to find suitable land on which to build a village. In May 1971 the CSIRO Head Office in Canberra was asked if CSIRO would sell a block of vacant land at the rear of the Division's site in Henry Street, Belmont. This matter was to involve considerable correspondence over a long period, and although the CSIRO Executive was well disposed towards the proposal the request was in the end rejected for legal reasons.

# 1. Beginnings

*To provide affordable and secure unit accommodation  
for senior citizens in a pleasant garden environment.*

The link between a retirement village and one of the largest Divisions of CSIRO is unusual, and the history behind this link reveals a unique social experiment with a fine record of achievement.

This story of Sirovilla, however, is not a story of unbounded successes, but one of hard work, dedication and good fortune by many people both from within CSIRO, and from the wider Geelong community. This is the story of the first twenty-seven years of commitment to affordable and secure accommodation for people in need.

The village is at the top of the hill on the Colac Road between Belmont and the Waurn Ponds shopping centre. The main gate from Broughton Drive gives entry to an avenue of trees and shrubs, guiding you to a village of 33 one-bedroom units with distinctive beehive roofs and attractive gardens.

It is ideally located close to a frequent bus route, the Belmont Bowling Club, and a major leisure centre with an indoor, heated swimming pool and gymnasium. The units are comfortable, imaginatively cosy and proudly reflect individual personalities. Residents speak with pride of their small, well cared for gardens.

The origins of Sirovilla are closely linked to the Social Club of the CSIRO Division of Textile Industry<sup>1</sup> in Belmont. The club, formed in 1962, had always been active in raising money for charitable purposes, and up to 1970 had raised and disbursed some \$4 500.

Early in 1971 some members of the social club suggested that a specific project could be possible. Geoff Watson, Administrative Secretary of the Division and Honorary Secretary of the Social Club, proposed creating a village of units for CSIRO retirees. He was aware that housing projects at that time could attract a '2 for 1' subsidy from the Commonwealth Government. His concept was visionary; employees of an industry providing accommodation for their former workmates in retirement.

It was also a dream. At that time the Social Club had only \$1000 in reserve and was unsure if this could be used for a retirement village. The members would need an incredible amount of motivation and dedication, not to mention hard work, to bring the dream to reality. Geoff Watson was instrumental in selecting and inspiring people with relevant skills, and encouraging others prepared to learn to join in the project.

A sub-committee of the Social Club was formed with a brief to conduct a feasibility study and undertake interim planning. The group sent a questionnaire to all members of the Social Club at the Division to see if they would be prepared to support and financially assist the proposed housing project. Over 90% of members responded in the affirmative. So the project began.

With Geoff Watson as interim Secretary, negotiations with the Department of Social Security on the availability of grants commenced. There were numerous meetings with the Hospital and Charities Commission and much correspondence, as affiliation with

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<sup>1</sup> The CSIRO Division of Textile Industry became the CSIRO Division of Wool Technology, and is now CSIRO Textile and Fibre Technology.

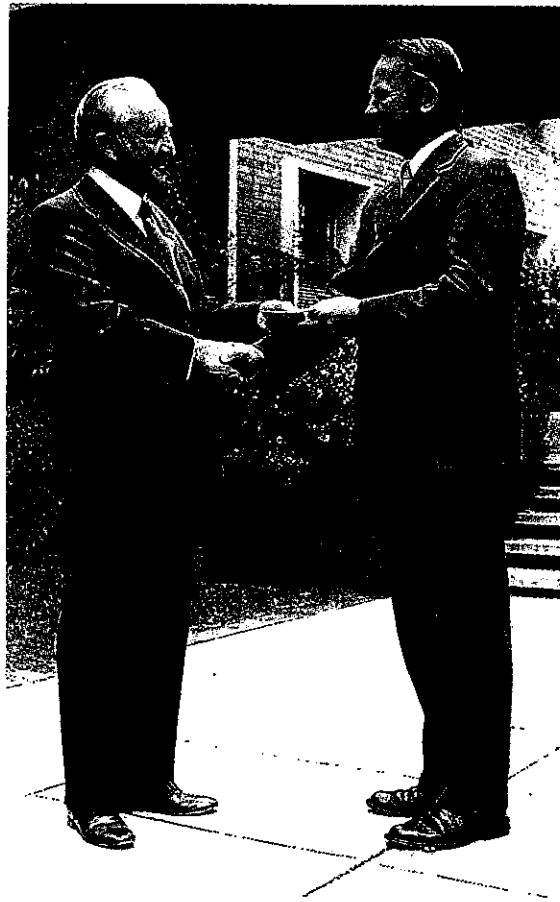


Inflation at the time was running at over 10% per annum, but two factors worked in Sirovilla's favour to produce a favourable outcome.

The Department of Social Security increased the matching grant from 2 to 1 to a new level of 4 to 1.

The newly acquired land was revalued, and had risen from the initial purchase price of \$13 000 to a new value of \$54 000. It was this latter figure that was used as Sirovilla's contribution towards the project's cost, thereby substantially increasing the size of the Commonwealth Government's grant.

Fund raising continued to boost Sirovilla's contribution, and extensive appeals were made to trusts and philanthropic bodies. A number responded with useful donations.



*Stuart Harris (left), Chairman of the Community Service Committee of Belmont Rotary Club, presenting a cheque for \$1500 to Sirovilla President, Dr Don Taylor in 1975.*

A key function of the Sirovilla committee was the selection of residents. The Society had to comply with the requirements of both the Hospital and Charities Commission and the Department of Social Security. Residents needed to be fit, to be able to live independently, and to be in receipt of a Department of Social Security old age pension (65 years for men and 60 years for women).

Up to half of the units could be open to 'self-sponsors': people who could afford to pay an ingoing fee, set by the committee at one-third of the cost of building a unit, and satisfy the criteria of the Hospital and Charities Commission. All residents, whether self-sponsors or not, were guaranteed an 'active life' tenancy.



### *Stage One*

Stage One was completed in 1975 and the Minister for Social Security, Senator Wheeldon, officially opened the first eight units on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November 1975. Over 200 people attended the opening, highlighting the interest and support that Sirovilla had generated within the Geelong Community.



*The Minister for Social Security, Senator Wheeldon, unveils the plaque to mark the opening of the first eight units in November, 1975.*



*The official party inspecting Stage One units in 1975.*

## 4. Stages two & three

**Stage Two:** following the completion of Stage One, the committee was sufficiently encouraged to plan for Stage Two on the basis of a growing waiting list, and the availability of continuing grants from the Commonwealth Government. With the design of the units established, Neil Everist was asked in June 1976 to prepare a plan for six more new units. Neil and his team skilfully sited the units with a northerly aspect and individual privacy, but close enough to reassure residents that neighbours would be close at hand in times of need.

An application for a grant to build up to six units was submitted to the Department of Social Security late in 1976. The level of funding available from the Commonwealth was somewhat uncertain at the time and when tenders were called in February 1977 it was for the construction of four units with possible expansion to five or six.

The position had clarified by June 1977, and the committee agreed to accept the quotation of Wycombe Industries for \$102 937 for the construction of six units. The capital shortfall was met with a bank loan from the State Savings Bank. Building was well in progress by October of that year and the units were completed on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1978.

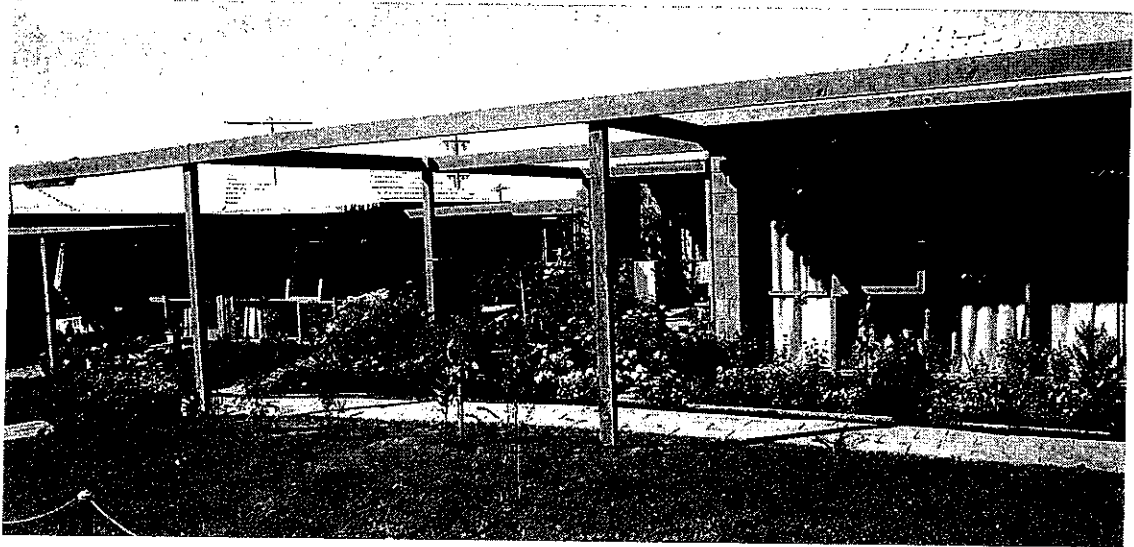
**Stage Three:** in February 1981 the Committee decided to proceed with plans for Stage Three. Capital reserves at 30<sup>th</sup> June 1981 were in excess of \$120 000, and with Government grants and in-going donations from self-sponsors it was estimated that this would be sufficient for approximately 13 units.

The finance sub-committee (Geoffrey Watson, Ken Drayton and Hayden Smith) met with architect, Neil Everist, early in February 1982, to prepare a brief for the Stage Three units. A budget for the construction of 10 units was tabled at a committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1982. Fortuitously, additional funds for housing the elderly were announced by the Commonwealth Government in the August 1982 budget, and the Department of Social Security subsequently advised Sirovilla that a subsidy sufficient to build 14 or possibly 15 units could be anticipated.

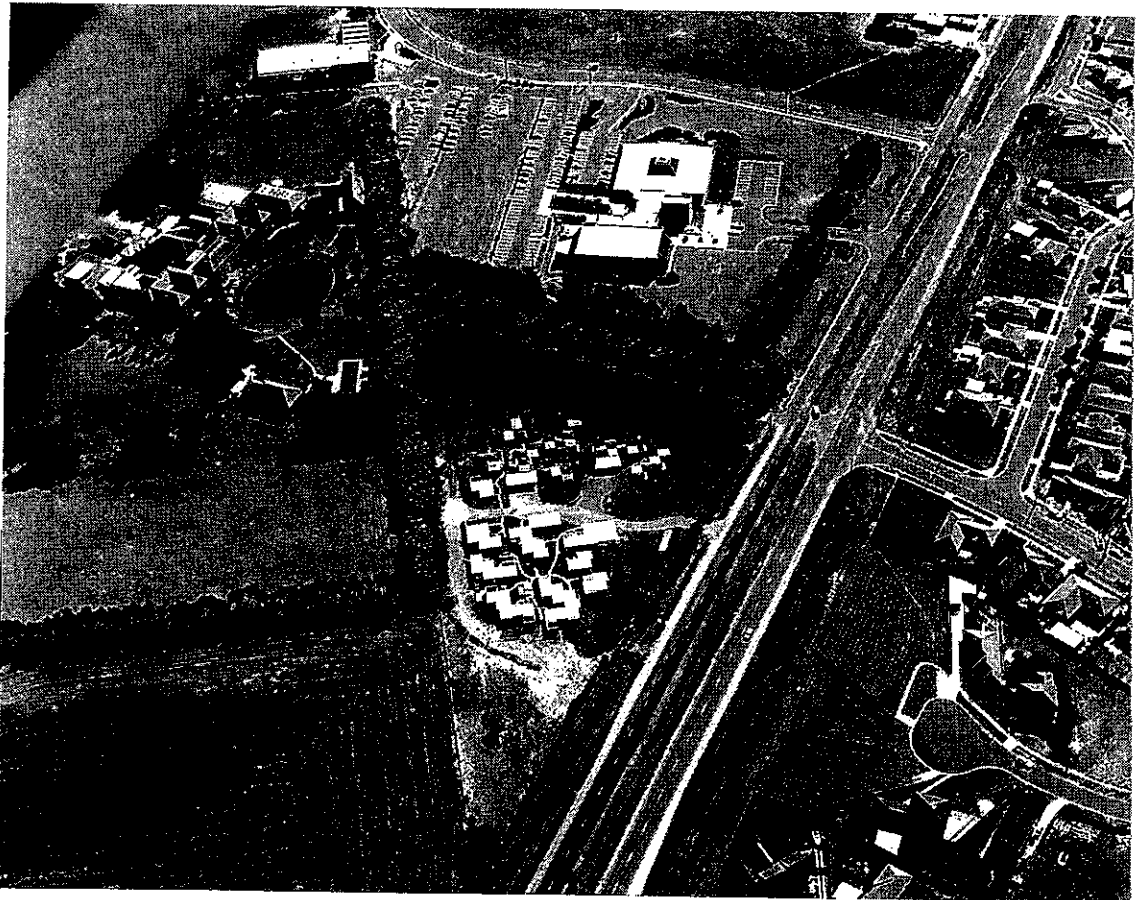
Neil Everist completed plans and specifications for 15 units by November 1982, and the building contract was awarded to Stan Murray early in 1983. Building commenced in February 1983, and was completed by August. At the committee meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> August 1983 the Secretary, Geoffrey Watson, reported in the minutes that 'the units are finished, and are now either all occupied or are ready for occupation'.

This simple statement hides an enormous amount of work on the part of retiring Secretary Geoff Watson, incoming Secretary Stan Boston, and Treasurer Hayden Smith. Stage Three was the most ambitious venture in Sirovilla's short history, and required extensive work from Geoff, Stan and Hayden to settle 22 new residents into units. This included allocation of units, providing advice on when units would be ready, and handling the myriad of teething problems that regularly cropped up during the first few months. It is a credit to their organisational abilities that they managed to do all this while still working full-time for CSIRO.

Particular recognition should be given here to the work of a dedicated group of ladies who spent many hours creating curtains from experimental woollen fabric that the Committee was able to purchase from CSIRO at commercial rates. This work provided the units with quality woollen drapes at a very reasonable price thereby saving the Society many thousands of dollars.



*Stage Three units completed in 1984*



*Aerial view of site in 1984 showing completion of Stage Three.*

## 5. Incorporation

Sirovilla had remained a Society, with all land holdings in the names of three Trustees, since its foundation in 1972. Whilst this system had served the Society well, it left committee members vulnerable for any liabilities of the Society, and also required, in the event of the death of any of the Trustees, that a new Trustee be appointed.

The committee, led by President Geoffrey Watson, incoming Secretary David Evans and Treasurer Hayden Smith, moved in 1984 to incorporate Sirovilla, on the recommendation of Honorary Auditor Ian Fort. This required the transfer of all land holdings from the Trustees to the Incorporated Body, and amendments to the Purposes and Rules of Sirovilla. During this transfer the Committee consolidated the 12 land titles into one.

Ed Nyhoff, who acted as the Society's honorary solicitor, undertook all legal requirements for incorporation. The move to incorporate Sirovilla was approved at an extraordinary general meeting of the Society on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1986, and Incorporation was formally granted by the Victorian Ministry of Corporate Affairs on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1986.

A final meeting of the Trustees (Drs Menzie Lipson, Gordon Walls and Jack Delmenico) was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1987. The President, Geoff Watson, thanked them for their role and continuous support from 1972 to 1986.

## 6. Stage Four

Sirovilla had a surplus to the order of \$100 000 at the end of the 1984/85 financial year. The Committee was keen to proceed with the purchase of additional land for future expansion, and construction of additional units on existing land. However, despite this favourable financial position, and a growing waiting list of both self-sponsors and financially disadvantaged persons, it was to be another seven years before any additional units were built.

In March 1986, Sirovilla made an application to the Commonwealth Department of Community Services for a grant to build eight units. This was a period of significant change in Commonwealth Government policy for the provision of housing for the aged. It followed the release, in April 1986, of the Senate Select Committee Report (known as the Giles Report) on Private Nursing Homes in Australia.

A significant recommendation of this report, subsequently adopted by the Federal Government, was that future growth in aged care services should be directed towards increasing the provision of hostel accommodation at the expense of individual units.

This meant that there would be no further grants from the Commonwealth for building individual units for the elderly. In September 1986, formal notice was received from the Department that the grant application was unsuccessful.

Undaunted, the Committee pursued the objective of acquiring additional land. The existing site could accommodate only about eight more units, so additional land was essential if the objective of 50 to 60 units with a resident caretaker/manager on site was to be realised.

Talks with the Glastonbury Committee regarding the possibility of purchasing an area of land abutting Sirovilla had been held 'on and off' since 1981. It wasn't until 1988 however, that Glastonbury agreed to sell Sirovilla a further 1.37 hectares of land abutting the north-south boundary for \$200 000.

The purchase price was a huge jump compared with previous prices, since it represented full market value for prime residential land. The committee debated whether to proceed with this purchase. Some committee members felt that Sirovilla should not proceed with the purchase until a firm plan on the need for future land was in place. On the other hand, further land abutting the Sirovilla site would be unavailable in the future with sub-division in the vicinity proceeding rapidly. The most convincing argument to proceed with the purchase, however, came from Treasurer Hayden Smith and Secretary David Evans. They argued that Sirovilla needed to grow, in terms of unit numbers, to provide sufficient cash flow to fund a caretaker/manager, and also to allow for future options with respect to continuity of care. In the end the committee decided to proceed with the purchase and voted in favour of further expansion.

The Committee examined the possibility of building a hostel on the newly acquired land, which would provide an element of continuing care and for which Commonwealth Government funding was available. A 35 to 45 bed hostel was the minimum size that could be economically viable, given the level of funding available for operating expenses. It was anticipated that considerable voluntary labour, in addition to permanent staff, would be required for the level of care required in hostel accommodation.

The Committee decided against this course of action, after careful consideration, because the size of such an enterprise was considered to be too great for Sirovilla's small voluntary committee.

In 1988 the Secretary David Evans became aware that the State Government provided funding for units for people on low incomes under a new scheme called Project Partnership.

Under this scheme, the Victorian Ministry of Housing and Construction (HCV) would construct housing for financially disadvantaged elderly people on suitable land owned by a partner organisation.

The President, Geoff Watson, Secretary David Evans and Treasurer, Hayden Smith met with the Regional Director of HCV in May 1989 to explore the possibility of funding under this scheme. Following further discussions with HCV the Secretary, David Evans, submitted an application for funding in December 1989. This application received 'in principle' approval in May 1989. The planning process was a long and tortuous one however, with numerous legal problems associated with the lease and sub-lease agreements required under the scheme. Two years passed before these were sorted out.

Given the slow progress of the Project Partnership scheme, the Committee looked at the possibility of 'going it alone' with Stage Four, and appointed a sub-committee of Hayden Smith, David Evans, Geoff Watson and Jim McDonald to consider proposals for Stage Four. In September 1991, the sub-committee met with architects Neil Everist and Geoff Saunders, and asked them to undertake master planning to identify site development options, and to prepare a site plan. These were considered at a special meeting of the Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1992, at which a brief for the design of the new units on the Colac Road Frontage was approved.

This site covered what was at that time the main entrance to Sirovilla. The choice of this location was determined by the need to avoid any clash with the area identified for unit construction under the Project Partnership scheme, and the need to establish a new entrance to the site to avoid the heavy traffic on Colac Road.

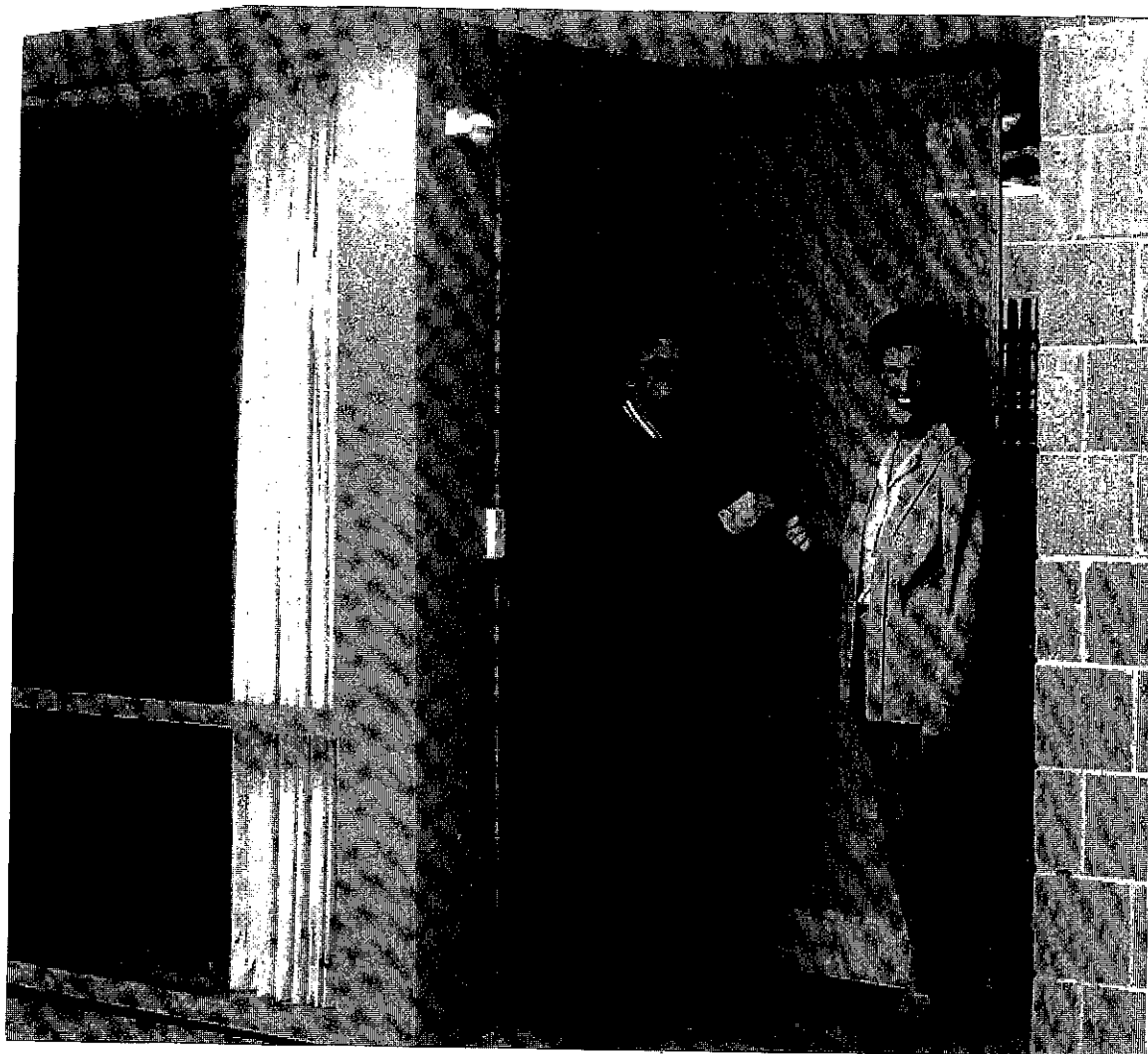
The decision of the committee to proceed with Stage Four at a time when the outcome of the Project Partnership scheme was uncertain was financially prudent, since the latter scheme did not involve the outlay of any capital by Sirovilla.

By November 1992 tenders for Stage Four had been called and a contract signed with Wycombe Industries. Sirovilla was also waiting on a land survey for the Project Partnership units at this time, and for a short time it seemed that the two projects would run simultaneously. This was not to be however, since the new Victorian Government that came into power in October 1992 cancelled all pending projects not already under contract.

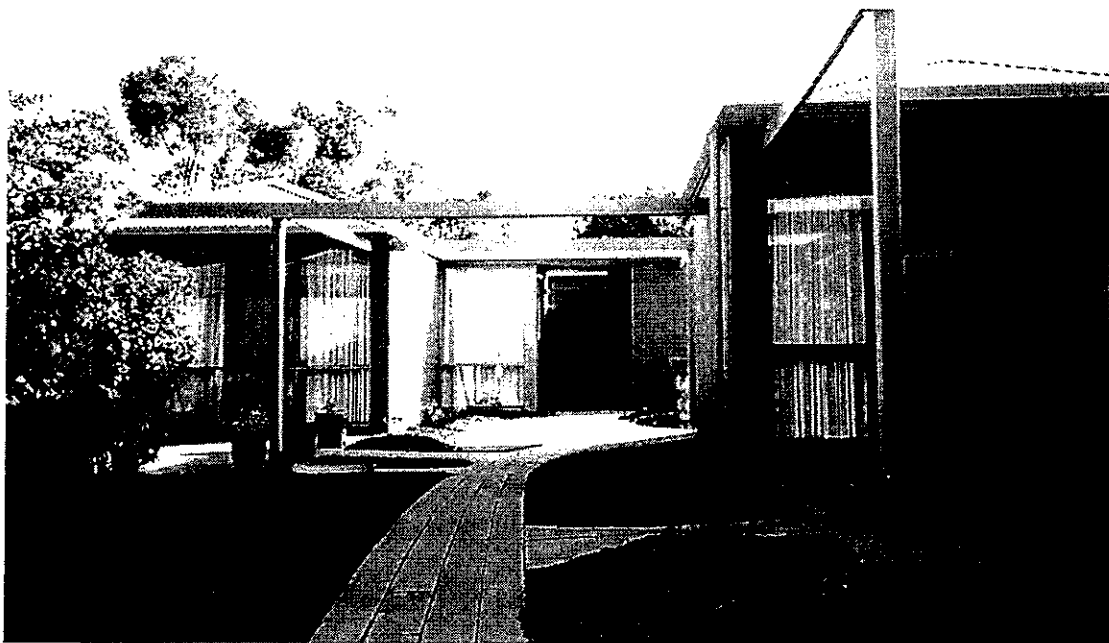
Construction of the Stage Four units commenced in December 1992 and was completed on time and within budget in May 1993.

The new units were approximately 50% larger than earlier units and addressed some problems in the earlier design, particularly with respect to access in the bathroom and laundry area. The cost of each unit was \$75 000. Although the units were larger, it is interesting to compare this figure with the cost of \$13 518 for each unit in Stage One – a five-fold increase since 1975. In order to finance Stage Four, all the units were filled by self-sponsors, and all had settled into their respective units by late 1993.





*Honorary Secretary, David Evans,  
presents the key of Unit 30  
to Beryl Robertson, October 1993*



*Stage Four Units*

## 7. Sirovilla today

The site had essentially been turned on its head with the completion of Stage Four. The old entrance via Colac Road had been blocked, and a temporary 'front' entrance established at what had been the back of the site. Private development around Sirovilla gained pace as Glastonbury sub-divided much of the surrounding area for residential development.

The old Glastonbury home was sold in 1996 to Christian College, and the preparatory school opened in February 1997. The once familiar avenue of cypress trees to the Glastonbury home was removed and construction of Broughton Drive completed.

Glastonbury generously donated to Sirovilla the narrow strip of land between Broughton Drive and the northern boundary to create the now familiar Broughton Drive frontage. The new Sirovilla entrance and driveway were constructed early in 1997, and shortly thereafter trees were planted and a new front fence erected.



*Front entrance to Sirovilla from Broughton Drive (1997)*

Under the purposes and rules of Sirovilla, at least 50% of the units must be reserved for financially disadvantaged persons. This was a requirement of the Hospital and Charities Commission in the early seventies and was essential to obtain grants from the Commonwealth Government.

Vacancies are generally filled with financially disadvantaged persons, so that in time the proportion of such residents has increased. Today that proportion is 80% financially disadvantaged and 20% self-sponsors. It is a matter of some satisfaction that since the building of Stage One in 1975, Sirovilla has accommodated 111 people of whom 76% have been financially disadvantaged.

In-going donations from self-sponsors have made an important contribution to the capital required for building new units. In-going donations are set at one-third of the cost of building a unit plus infrastructure costs, and in 1993 this amounted to \$25 000. While this represents a large outlay for incoming self-sponsors, it is very small fraction of the costs involved with purchasing a unit in a commercial retirement village. At the

discretion of the committee, a refund may be paid in the event of a resident leaving during the first five years.

Residents enjoy a life tenancy and pay rent according to the size of the unit. Rents are affordable for aged pensioners and are adjusted annually. The Commonwealth Government provides rent assistance directly to pensioners so that the net rent payable by a single pensioner is between 22.6% and 23.8% of the basic single pension. In return, Sirovilla maintains the units, grounds and basic services, and meets appliance maintenance costs. It is perhaps not surprising that the average stay at Sirovilla is relatively long and many residents have remained for over ten years, reaching well into their eighties. The low turnover of residents has proved beneficial and has helped to develop a sense of community within the village.

The committee has had no problems filling vacancies, and maintains a waiting list. The admissions sub-committee regularly updates this list, and has responsibility for establishing that applicants satisfy the entry criteria.

It is interesting to note that to date, despite the original intention, not one ex-member of CSIRO staff has been accommodated, but the enthusiastic support of CSIRO people for what has become a community welfare activity remains unabated.

One of the most enduring aspects of Sirovilla is the caring attitude of the Committee of Management. This is exemplified in the number of regular contacts between the committee or its representatives, and residents. Rent is collected by volunteer collectors and passed onto the Treasurer each fortnight. This regular contact provides a useful mechanism for passing on information, requests and problems as they crop up.

Treasurer Hayden Smith and Secretary David Evans carry out a site inspection of the village about every four weeks. These inspections enable maintenance issues to be identified and maintenance priorities to be updated regularly.

The caring nature of the committee is exemplified by its regular visits to the residents about every six months. These provide an important link between residents and the committee, and give residents an opportunity to discuss maintenance problems or raise issues of concern in the privacy of their own home. These visits were first introduced in 1975 and continue to this day.

## 8. Willem (Bill) van Barneveld



In reading the minutes of Sirovilla Committee meetings held between 1977 and 1986, the name Willem (Bill) van Barneveld (left) keeps reappearing.

Bill accepted a new unit within Stage Two as a self-sponsor, and moved into unit 14 in June 1976. He was 72 years old – or perhaps it is more accurate to say that Bill was 72 years young – because over the following nine years Bill, acting as a defacto site manager, worked tirelessly for Sirovilla on a large number of projects. In undertaking this work, Bill saved the Society many thousands of dollars.

Not a lot is known of Bill's early years except that he was born in Holland in 1905. Bill was in Java at the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, was taken prisoner by the Japanese, and was held in a labour camp until the end of the war. It was during this time that he learnt to survive by his wits, growing vegetables and eating rats to supplement the meagre diet. The culinary skills he acquired at this time were later to surface at Sirovilla. Once a fortnight Bill went to Steggles factory at Whittington and purchased a parcel of poultry bits and pieces. These were incorporated into a secret recipe which was cooked the next day and formed a major part of the Barneveld's diet for the next fortnight. His wife, Rene, always assured us that it tasted better than it smelled – and perhaps that was just as well.

After the war Bill made his way to Australia. He first worked on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, then later in Canberra as a contractor for CSIRO. This gives Bill the distinction of being the first resident with a direct link to a Division of CSIRO.

Bill liked to keep himself busy and was always working on a project be it large or small. One skill that Bill brought from Holland was clog making. He first made clogs in Australia while working on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, and later used them as indoor and outdoor shoes around Sirovilla.

Bill put his many and varied skills to good use and kept himself busy around the village. A measure of the work undertaken by Bill can be gauged by the number of entries in the minutes, relating to jobs in which he was either involved or wholly responsible. These included:

- making unit numbers and mounting these on the units;
- laying pavers;
- installing safety chains at the entrance;
- putting up post and rail fencing on the boundary with Glastonbury;
- constructing a garage/workshop;
- road repair;
- painting;
- tree planting;
- installation of hot water service overflow trays;
- installation of assist rails in bathrooms;

numerous drainage improvements around the units using water-filled plastic tubing to establish his levels.

Bill also made himself available to other residents for odd jobs, and made many gadgets to make their life easier. One such device that is still functioning today is a door catch that holds open the wire screen doors on each unit. To close the door all that is needed is a simple pull on a rope attached to a lever.

Bill was also a very keen gardener and set up a very successful hydroponic system on his back porch. All of these activities show that Bill was an intelligent, innovative person who enjoyed the challenge of a new project.

A piece of Bill's handiwork that is readily visible today is the large 'Sirovilla' sign that faces Colac Road. For this job Bill enlisted the help of fellow resident, Gladys Makepeace, who drew the letters on the timber. Bill shaped the letters and then mounted them on the cross-beam to make the now familiar sign.



*The Sirovilla sign in Colac Road constructed by Bill van Barneveld  
with assistance from fellow resident Gladys Makepiece*

One of his more memorable labour-saving devices was the 'unattended lawn mower'. According to residents of the time, Bill tied Sirovilla's geared lawn mower to a stake with a suitable length of rope and then put the mower into gear. The mower moved in a circle cutting the grass as it went. As the rope wound around the stake the mower moved in smaller and smaller circles. It's not clear if the experiment was totally successful.

Bill collected barrow loads of pine needles to improve the garden areas, attacked overhanging pine branches with gusto, and established a huge and effective drain at our

boundary with the Glastonbury entry road, complete with vehicle and pedestrian bridges.

Bill's work load obviously left some time for socialising, since in May of 1979 he married fellow Sirovilla resident Rene Cornelius (right) from Unit 7. They made Unit 14 their home after their marriage, making Unit 7 available for a new resident.



Bill gave not only his labour to Sirovilla, but also financial support. He came to Sirovilla as a self-sponsor, and became a Life Governor in 1979. He donated several garden seats to Sirovilla in the same year. These were made from vibrated concrete in a mould (both mould and vibrator were also made by Bill) with hardwood seat and back.

During the building of Stage Three, the Committee was juggling funds in an attempt to convert a planned 14 to the actual 15 units. Bill insisted on making an interest free loan to the committee to bridge the financial gap.

Bill's sight started to fail during the latter years of his life and he found this particularly difficult. He died in 1986 at the age of 81 after a short illness. His legacy to Sirovilla will be remembered for many years.

## 9. The committee

The lifeblood of Sirovilla has been the Committee, backed by the support of CSIRO Textile and Fibre Technology and its staff. As with most organisations of this kind, the bulk of the work tends to fall on the Secretary and the Treasurer.

There have been rewards, however, in carrying out such a worthwhile task despite the acknowledged heavy workload. In twenty-seven years there have been just three secretaries; Geoff Watson, Stan Boston and David Evans; two treasurers, the late Ken Drayton, and Hayden Smith; Betty Hirst and Graeme Harvey remain from the original Committee, and many other committee members have also served long periods.

The strong links with CSIRO senior management have been maintained with the involvement of the Chief (or Officer-in-Charge) at Belmont. Since 1989 the Presidency of Sirovilla has been held by the incumbent Belmont site Chief or Officer-in Charge. This has maintained a strong linkage between CSIRO and Sirovilla, providing residents with a sense of security and raising the public image of CSIRO in the Geelong Community.

Sadly some of the Committee did not live to see the present success of the project, and we salute the contributions of Ken Drayton, Tom Sinkinson, John Eley and Neil Davidson, together with Jack Delmenico (an original Trustee), Jack Sinclair and Joe Turner (rent collectors), and Graeme Gilbert (Honorary Auditor).

### Committee Members of Sirovilla (1972 – 1999)

D Ayrton <sup>2</sup>	B I Hirst	H Pargeter <sup>2</sup>
B Bateup	I E Hirst	D Plate
P Belin <sup>2</sup>	G Heintze	C Reichl <sup>2</sup>
R Bennet <sup>2</sup>	R Hoskinson	E Sherriff
S Boston	N Holowka	T Sinkinson
J Callahan <sup>2</sup>	H Katz	H Smith
J Card	B McDonald <sup>2</sup>	D Taylor
N Davidson <sup>2</sup>	J McDonald	S Trembath
K Drayton	R Matthews	J Warner
J Eley	V Martin	J Watson
D Evans	D Nason	A Wemyss
P Foster <sup>2</sup>	G Naylor	R Zevenberger
G Harvey <sup>2</sup>	E Nyhoff <sup>2</sup>	

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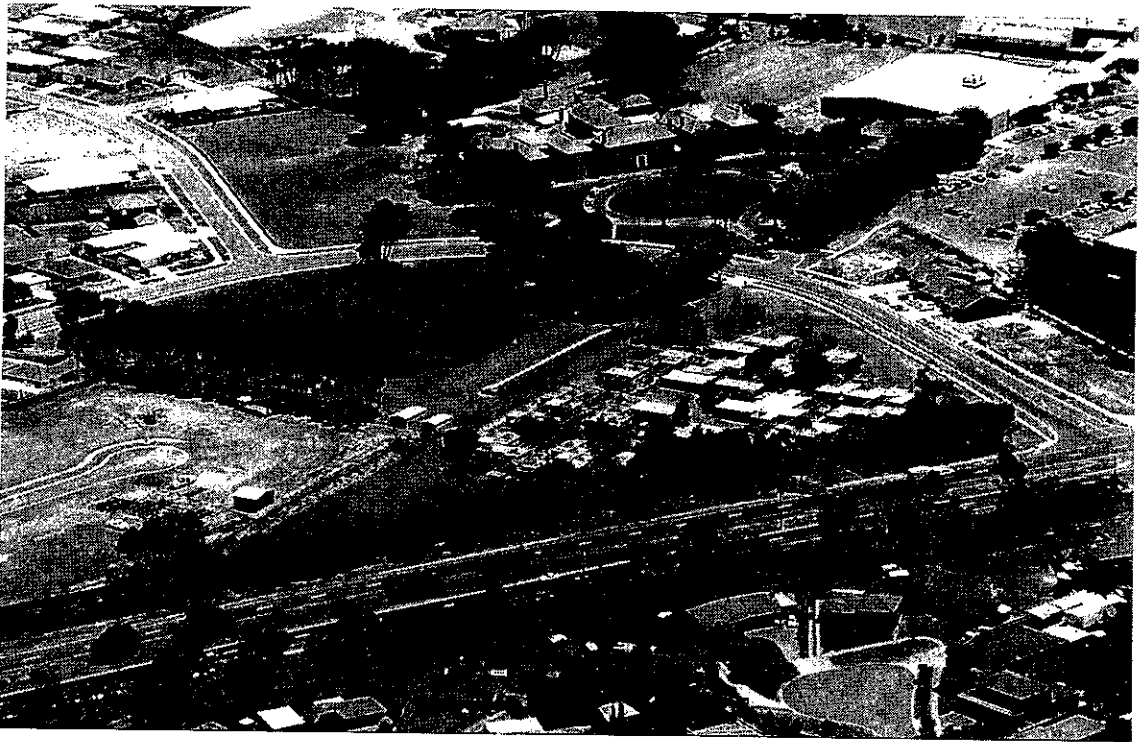
<sup>2</sup> These committee members are not from CSIRO. All others are current or former CSIRO staff.



## 10. The future

Sirovilla's mission is to provide affordable and secure unit accommodation for senior citizens in a pleasant garden environment. The Sirovilla committee has set two important long-term goals to support this mission.

The first goal is to expand the village to a size that will make the appointment of a resident manager/caretaker economically viable.



*Aerial view of Sirovilla (1997) showing the total area of land.*

Committee members, working on an honorary basis, have to date conducted all management functions for the village. The committee has an established maintenance policy, which it regularly reviews, and appropriately skilled people carry out all maintenance work as required. With such a large number of units however, there is a significant amount of maintenance work and other issues that require immediate attention. As with all voluntary organisations this places considerable demands on both the Treasurer's and Secretary's time and it is unreasonable to expect that this situation can be sustained in the long term.

The presence of a manager/caretaker on site will alleviate this problem and provide an immediate contact person for residents' day to day problems. The committee estimates that on present figures the village will require about 17 additional units before this goal can be fulfilled.

The second goal is to establish an amenities centre. Sirovilla is well situated with regard to community amenities, being only a five-minute walk from the Belmont Bowling Club, and a major sporting complex with an indoor heated swimming pool. This complex caters for senior citizens, including classes for all levels of fitness.

The addition of a small amenities centre at the village that could serve as a common area for meetings, and activities such as indoor bowls, cards and hobbies would complement the otherwise excellent amenities available in the neighbourhood.

An additional idea for future development of the village, although not formulated as a specific goal, is the establishment of a hostel or special accommodation centre at Sirovilla. Such centres are essential for continuity of care when independent living is no longer an option. They can also provide special needs during periods of convalescence, so that friends and partners are close during such difficult times.

As the aerial view (page 31) of Sirovilla shows, there is ample land for such a venture. The committee will need to give careful consideration to such a project in the future, as the need for such centres continues to grow within our aging community.

## 11. Sirovilla office bearers (1972 – 1999)

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Vice President(s)
1972	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	R Bennett, H Katz
1973	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	R Bennett, R Hoskinson
1974	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	R Bennett, R Hoskinson
1975	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	R Bennett, R Hoskinson
1976	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	R Bennett, B I Hirst
1977	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1978	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1979	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1980	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1981	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	K M Drayton	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1982	D S Taylor	J H G Watson	R H Smith	W S Boston, B I Hirst
1983	D S Taylor	W S Boston	R H Smith	B I Hirst
1984	D S Taylor	W S Boston	R H Smith	B I Hirst
1985	D S Taylor	W S Boston	R H Smith	B I Hirst, R Bennett
1986	J H G Watson	D J Evans	R H Smith	B I Hirst
1987	J H G Watson	D J Evans	R H Smith	B I Hirst
1988	J H G Watson	D J Evans	R H Smith	B I Hirst
1989	D E A Plate	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1990	D E A Plate	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1991	D E A Plate	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1992	D E A Plate	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1993	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1994	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1995	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1996	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1997	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	J H G Watson
1998	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	R H Smith
1999	B O Bateup	D J Evans	R H Smith	R H Smith

**Honorary Auditors<sup>3</sup>**

Graeme M Gilbert  
Ian Fort  
Colin Helwig

**Admissions Secretaries<sup>3</sup>**

I E (Betty) Hirst  
Barry I Hirst  
Sandra Trembath

**Rent Collectors<sup>3</sup>**

Jack Sinclair  
Ron Dorrington  
Joe Turner  
J H Geoff Watson  
Bruce Beard  
Nola Fort

John Card, Keith Shepherd, Hayden Smith  
and Sandra Trembath have also acted as  
relieving rent collectors.

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<sup>3</sup> In chronological order.

## 12. Life members



**Don Taylor** is the founding President of Sirovilla, and served in this capacity for 14 consecutive years from 1972 until 1985. Sirovilla has held a special place in Don's life. He played an important role in building support in its early days, was active in all aspects of establishing Sirovilla, and assisted in the many fund raising activities. Don became Chief of the Geelong Division in 1976 following the retirement of Menzie Lipson, and retained the Presidency of Sirovilla until 1985. Don was made a Life Member of Sirovilla in 1988.



**Geoff Watson** is undisputed founder of, and the driving force behind Sirovilla. Born in Geelong, Geoff has been actively involved with many community organisations in the region, and has a large number of good friends and acquaintances both within and outside CSIRO. He is an excellent organiser and a man of drive and enthusiasm. It has been said 'he could twist almost anyone's arm, and press them into service in such a way they thought it was their own idea'. Geoff was Honorary Secretary of Sirovilla from its foundation in 1972 until 1984; he was a man with a purpose and worked tirelessly for Sirovilla. He was a committee member until 1998, when he retired through ill-health. Geoff was made a Life Member in 1992.

### 13. Life governors

1	Janet M G Watson	6.6.72	26	Olwen Hunter	16.4.74
2	Kenneth M Drayton (C) <sup>4</sup>	6.6.72	27	Margaret Drayton	25.6.75
3	John H G Watson (C)	6.6.72	28	Gwenda Groft	22.10.75
4	Charles R Bennett (C)	6.6.72	29	Alan E Osborne	23.6.76
5	Isabel E Hirst (C)	6.6.72	30	Arthur J V Card	30.6.76
6	Dieter E A Plate (C)	15.6.72	31	Ronald G Dorrington	18.8.76
7	Jack Delmenico (T) <sup>5</sup>	23.6.72	32	Rene L Cornelius	12.8.76
8	Evelyn M Sherriff (C)	23.6.72	33	Trudi Peters	16.8.76
9	Neil L Davidson (C)	27.6.72	34	Eva M Marfatia	8.9.76
10	Lindsay A Allen	28.6.72	35	William van Barneveld	5.2.79
11	Peter Foster (C)	28.6.72	36	Norman Mckenzie	9.2.79
12	Donald S Taylor (C)	28.6.72	37	Gerald West	21.12.79
13	Thomas Sinkinson (C)	29.6.72	38	Verona J Scarlett (C)	4.3.80
14	Raymond H Matthews (C)	26.6.72	39	Graeme Harvey (C)	28.1.82
15	Jack F Sinclair	30.6.72	40	Bruce McDonald (C)	28.1.82
16	Menzie Lipson (T)	12.7.72	41	Malcolm A Newling	11.3.82
17	George F Wood	17.7.72	42	William S Boston (C)	4.6.82
18	Charles A Anderson	31.7.72	43	Patricia Belin (C)	4.6.82
19	Doris E Cotton	31.10.72	44	John Eley (C)	4.6.82
20	Albert Carpenter	1.11.72	45	R Hayden Smith (C)	4.6.82
21	Gordon W Walls (T)	14.11.72	46	Paul P Slattery	31.3.82
22	Ralph J Turner	21.5.73	47	James I. McDonald (C)	8.11.83
23	Barry I Hirst (C)	28.6.73	48	Derek Forster	29.10.93
24	Rudolf E T Belin	28.6.73	49	Brett O Bateup (C)	18.11.93
25	Ronald M Hoskinson (C)	5.11.73	50	David J Evans (C)	12.8.97

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<sup>4</sup> C = Committee member

<sup>5</sup> T = Trustee

## 14. Trust and industry contributors (1972 – 1999)

Over the years Sirovilla has received the support of many people and it would be impossible to list them all here. The following trusts, companies and service organisations have given sustained support to Sirovilla.

### Trusts

David Syme Charitable Trust  
 Estate of Joshua Glover  
 Estate of Patrick Brennan  
 Howard Hitchcock Charitable Bequest  
 Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation  
 Percy Baxter Charitable Trust  
 Sidney Myer Fund  
 The Danks Trust  
 The William Buckland Foundation

### Companies and organisations

3GL  
 Apex Club of Barwon  
 Belmont Church of Christ  
 Belmont Rotoract Club  
 CSIRO Division of Textile Industry Social Club  
 (now CSIRO Textile and Fibre Technology)  
 CWA Southern Group  
 Geelong and District Riding Club  
 Herald and Weekly Times  
 International Harvester Company  
 Lions Club of South Barwon  
 McGlashan and Everist  
 Myer Geelong  
 Pilkingtons  
 Quota Club of Geelong  
 Rotary Club of Corio  
 Rotary Club of Belmont  
 Rotary Club of Highton  
 Rotoract of Geelong  
 The Geelong Advertiser  
 United Way Geelong

## 15. Sirovilla residents (1975 – 1999)

Unit	Residents in order of occupancy	No.
1	Mrs L Clissold Mr J Martin Mr & Mrs Savage Mrs M Stephens Mr K Parker Mr F & Mrs E Kuylaars	8
2	Mrs Hall Mrs E Fergusson Mr & Mrs Young Mrs S Hyland	5
3	Mr & Mrs E Robinson Miss J Monro	3
4	Mrs I Keable Mr R & Mrs L Green Mrs J Webster	4
5	Miss L Greig Mrs V Sanderson Mrs C Wright	3
6	Mrs V Read Mrs G Moore	2
7	Mrs R Love Mrs R Cornelius <sup>6</sup> Mrs E Cook Mrs E Wilson	4
8	Mrs Lloyd Mrs S Saunders Mrs D Gammon Mrs G Nicks	4

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<sup>6</sup> Mrs Cornelius became Mrs van Barneveld and moved to Unit 14



9	Mr C & Mrs M Winter Mr & Mrs G Adams Mr R & Mrs T Maxwell	6
10	Mrs H Shaddock Mrs F Callaway Mrs E Levasseur	3
11	Mr A & Mrs M Buckenara Mrs M Wilson	3
12	Mr F & Mrs V Hathaway Mr Mestrovic Mrs D Clark Mr D Scott	5
13	Mrs G Makepiece Mr A Wilson Mr L White	3
14	Mr W & Mrs R van Barneveld Mrs D Stanley Mr G MacKay Mrs J Eames	4
15	Mr J & Mrs F Rice Mr & Mrs M Leckie Mr M & Mrs J Robertshaw Mrs D Cox	7
16	Mr & Mrs I Gilvear	2
17	Mr W & Mrs F Callaway Mrs J Phillips Mr A & Mrs C Stranger	5
18	Mr P & Mrs M van den Bosch Mrs J McIntyre	3
19	Mr I & Mrs C Hirst Mr W & Mrs B Greening	4
20	Miss A Heaton Mrs S Thomas	2

21	Mrs U Merry Mrs M Robinson	2
22	Mrs G Sanders Mr A Radmall Mrs F Welding	3
23	Mrs W Smith	1
24	Mr E & Mrs C Somers	2
25	Mrs F Murphy Mrs D Eldridge Mrs D Meridith	3
26	Mrs J Anderson Mr W Stanley Mr D Baker Mr L Arnott	4
27	Mr H & Mrs F Blatchford Mr S Barry	3
28	Mr L & Mrs M McFarlane Mrs J Gildea Mr C Doyle	4
29	Miss E Skinner Mrs E Prosser	2
30	Mrs B Robertson	1
31	Mr T Holden Mrs T Nicholson	2
32	Mr B Wemyss Mr A & Mrs R Cox	3
33	Mrs M Scully	1

**Total number of residents at September 1999**                      **111**

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**Dr David Evans**  
Honorary Secretary  
Sirovilla (1986-)

When David Evans joined the Sirovilla Committee in 1986 it was soon realised that his attention to detail, excellent communication skills, and caring benevolent approach were ideal characteristics for the position of Secretary. The Committee (and especially Geoffrey Watson) therefore had no hesitation in immediately nominating him for that crucial role.

During David's time as Secretary there have been tremendous changes: government policy, land purchases, completion of Stage Four building developments, and numerous new residents to be welcomed to the village. David has guided Sirovilla through every opportunity (and challenge) to achieve the very best for Sirovilla and its residents.

David has assumed these responsibilities cheerfully, and carried them out most capably. He has given up his free time without any hesitation, and without a thought for the sacrifices that he has made on behalf of Sirovilla, its residents, and its Committee.

The residents and Committee members who have worked with David have recognised his talents and abilities, and have regarded their opportunity to work with him as a most rewarding experience. This book, like all the other projects he has undertaken on behalf of Sirovilla, is a demonstration of David's dedication and his ability to get things done. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to unreservedly thank David for this book, and for his contribution to the life and nature of Sirovilla.