

HOUSE & LAND



Our colonial past gets an update

A new land release can tell a tale or two, writes Katrina Creer.

IT was once a weekend retreat for one of Sydney's wealthiest families, a country haven from their high-society life.

Today, Harrington Grove is the latest estate to be released in Sydney's west, with around 1000 blocks averaging around 1000sq m to be offered, complete with a continuous 6.5km green belt, hills, forest, creeks and small ponds and central clubhouse.

But if this land could talk, it would tell an intriguing tale that stretches into the mists of time. Of kangaroos and emus grazing on the grassy plains, of dingoes hunting and Aborigines living off the land's bounty.

With the arrival of Europeans came convicts and free settlers and the tales centred around nuggety settlers, desperate convicts and a "ghost herd" of cattle, four-legged escapees from the colony that thrived on the land known as Cowpastures.

But the Harrington estate is best remembered as one of the earliest land grants issued in the colony.

In 1815, Governor Lachlan Macquarie granted 2000 acres (810ha) to Captain William Douglas Campbell as recompense for the loss of his brig The Harrington to a gang of escaped convicts.

The captain became a pastoralist and country gentleman, naming the estate after his beloved ship.

Centuries and owners came and went and by the time media proprietor Sir Warwick Fairfax



Vision: Harrington Grove's club house (top and right); Harrington Park homestead (above); and part of the estate's 7km of cycle and walk ways



bought the land just outside Camden in 1944, it was prime land in easy reach of the city that he soon turned into a cattle stud.

But Sydney was expanding rapidly and by the 1970s Sir Warwick realised Harrington would some day make a perfect subdivision. He and his third wife, Mary, envisaged a private community of homesteads surrounded by rolling hills and green space.

"It was my dear late husband's vision to create an idyllic estate that would house a flourishing and vibrant community," said Lady Fairfax, who took over the project following Sir Warwick's death in 1987. She wrote in a book documenting its past: "I know it would have pleased him enormously had he been able to see it for himself."

The \$400 million Harrington Grove estate off Cobbity Rd follows the success of its

neighbour, Harrington Park, 14 years ago and is considered stage two of the overall development.

Unlike its Torrens-titled neighbour, Harrington Grove is community titled, not gated, and will be patrolled by security seven days a week.

There are picnic areas, parks,

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playgrounds and more than 7km of walking paths and cycle paths, ideal for families.

Life will revolve around the \$25-million Harrington Grove Country Club that was officially opened last weekend, even before the first homes have been built.

The public will be able to dine

at its restaurant or drink at the bar, but other facilities – such as swimming pool, gymnasium and tennis courts – are to be used exclusively by residents and their guests.

Those buying into the estate will be issued with a special swipe access card on settlement, enabling them to use the club before moving into their new homes.

At Harrington Grove, the average lot size is 1000sq m with none smaller than 800sq m.

Residents will be encouraged to choose a variety of architecture to create interesting streetscapes.

All garages must be recessed behind the living area by 900mm, ensuring that the home is the dominant feature.

The aim is to attract the slightly higher-end, second, third and fourth home buyers.

Businessman Michael Pope, 40, is among the first to buy into

the new estate, in a precinct called Araucaria, named after the bunya pines that grow around the existing Harrington Grove homestead. The precinct has 105 lots starting from \$325,000 for land only.

His wife, Tania, was reluctant to leave Camden with their children Gemma, 6, and Jaiden, 7, settled at school in nearby Mt Annan.

"We were actually looking at country blocks at Wilton or Picton, but then we came across Harrington Grove, which meant we could stay in the area but build a bigger house," Pope said.

"This is the first time for us [to build], it is actually pretty exciting." The community title will cost \$2500 a year, but he says they will save on gym membership and building their own pool.

Details: www.harringtongrove.com.au