

Commemorating the life of Lady Mary Fairfax

Harrington Park, Harrington Grove and Catherine Park Estate all stand proudly as part of the rich legacy left by Lady Mary Fairfax.

Lady (Mary) Fairfax AC OBE passed away at her family home, *Fairwater*, in September last year at the age of 95. She was instrumental in the development of Harrington Park and Harrington Grove. It was their vision to build a place for families to live comfortably, spaciouly and surrounded by the lush scenery that brought them so much pleasure on their visits to the area.

Early Life and Public Persona

Along with her parents, Marie Wein (later changed to Mary) fled Jewish persecution and political instability in Poland as a child in the mid-1920s, arriving in Australia. She grew into a woman of quick wit, intelligence and business acumen, studying Chemistry at the University of Sydney, assisting her parents with their fashion boutiques and working as a part-time pharmacist.

Lady Mary was a socialite, businesswoman and philanthropist. She was well known for her generous spirit and supported the Australian Ballet, the Australian Opera and many avenues of medical research and performing arts. She was a distinguished hostess and took great joy in entertaining, often raising money for causes close to her heart.

Love is Born

Upon first meeting Sir Warwick it was said to have been love at first sight, and their enduring romance until Sir Warwick's death in 1987 was well documented. They connected intellectually, emotionally and unconditionally, forging a joyful life together. Lady Mary married Sir Warwick Fairfax in July 1959, and they went on to have three children together; Warwick, Anna and Charles.



Lady Mary with Sir Warwick

From Double Bay to Harrington Park

The link between *Fairwater*, the Fairfax family home, in Double Bay and Harrington Park was forged in 1944 when Sir Warwick purchased the cattle property on which Harrington Park House stood. The home quickly became his weekend retreat, and he would travel the 60 km from the city to Harrington Park on Friday nights before making his way back again in time for the working week. Lady Mary, the children and the family dogs also loved heading out to the property, enjoying walks, picnics, swims in the dam, horse rides and milking the cows. Often they would host dinner parties and many dignitaries attended.

While it now stands opulently, the house began as a simple cottage in 1817 belonging to Captain William Douglas Campbell. The surrounding land was used for a multiplicity of agricultural purposes and the house underwent a series of renovations and extensions at the hands of its various owners throughout the years.

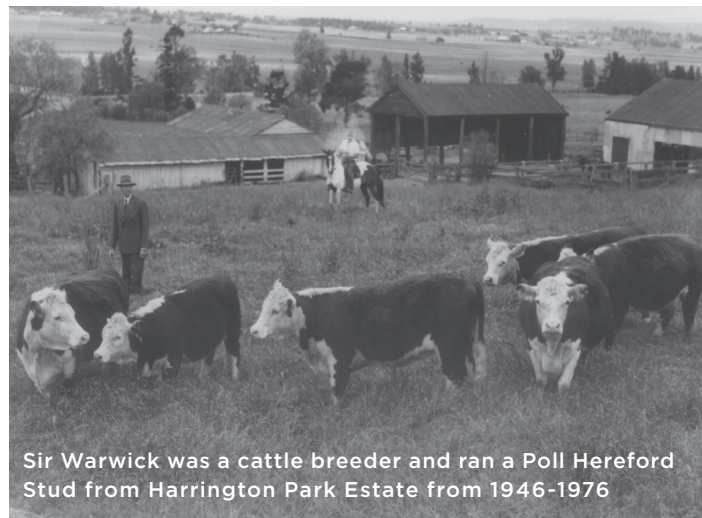
Lady Mary's Legacy Lives On

Throughout her long life, Lady Mary was a philanthropic spirit whose generosity knew no bounds. She was deeply passionate about a range of causes, including the Children's Cochlear Implant Centre (now the SCIC Cochlear Implant Program) and Opera Australia, and took great joy in helping others.

She established a trust that will continue to generously support the charities she was so passionate about for many years to come. The trustees will ensure that her philanthropic vision is carried on.



An historic shot of Harrington Homestead



Sir Warwick was a cattle breeder and ran a Poll Hereford Stud from Harrington Park Estate from 1946-1976

Rural Retreat to Urban Hub

In the mid 1970s Sir Warwick and Lady Mary began to consider developing the land into an urban estate. Together, they decided that it needed to be master planned, of the highest quality and affordable to residents of the area. Lady Mary was particularly fond of a 'pretty' estate in a bush setting.

Sir Warwick officially began the application process in 1981, but passed away in 1987, his visions still unrealised. Lady Mary threw herself into the process to ensure his hard work and vision was brought to fruition, bringing property developer Taylor Woodrow on board to see it through. Along with the Minister for Urban Planning, Lady Mary unveiled the commemorative plaque to officially open Harrington Park in October 1995.

She remained active in planning and building the communities of Harrington Park and Harrington Grove, always sharing and contributing her opinions and even judging the annual Sir Warwick Fairfax Garden Competition. Her passing provides an opportunity for the communities of Harrington Park and Harrington Grove to pause and reflect on the rich history of the land and the exciting future that awaits.

From a Vision to a Community

Lady Mary was proud of the neighbourhoods she helped to develop. The established communities of Harrington Park and Harrington Grove proved to be just as beautiful, serene and welcoming as she had always envisioned, and she greatly enjoyed her trips to the area.

While she regretfully will not be able to see Catherine Park Estate through to its completion, she was keen to incorporate everything she had learnt through the previous developments to ensure it lived up to the same standards. She was incredibly pleased with its direction and was excited about building another safe, quality neighbourhood for people to call home.

Lady Mary's legacy will always remain in Harrington Park, Harrington Grove and Catherine Park Estate. Her kind spirit will be felt in the warmth of the delicate sunrises, the overjoyed cries of children playing in their backyards and the sight of the bright green leaves blossoming in spring.



About Lady Mary

- Lady Mary passed away in the same home as her beloved husband Sir Warwick Fairfax was born in, 116 years earlier.
- An astute businesswoman, Lady Mary liked to look into the eyes of senior members of companies she did business with, often remarking 'If you can't trust the head of the company, then you can't trust the company!'
- Lady Mary and Sir Warwick were married shortly after midnight on 4 July 1959.
- As the development of Harrington Park was drawing to a close, Lady Mary chose to privately commemorate her late husband's contributions by purchasing a pair of rare Wollemi pines. The female tree was planted in the gardens of Fairwater, and the male tree was planted outside Harrington Park Homestead.

History of the area

- The wider area now known as Harrington Park and Camden was once an interaction point for three Aboriginal language groups – the Dharug, the Dharawal and the Gundungarra.
- In 1788, two black bulls and four cows from the First Fleet escaped from Sydney Cove and travelled 70km south-west into the Camden area. They were discovered years later peacefully grazing, and the area became known as the 'Cowpastures'.
- Sir William Douglas Campbell was granted 2000 acres in the Cowpastures in 1815. He named his new property Harrington Park after his beloved brig, the Harrington, which was stolen from him in the dead of night in 1808.
- Between 1940-1946, 142 acres of the Harrington Park and Orielton estates were used by the Narellan Military Camp as a training ground and holding area for more than 2000 soldiers.

Lady Mary was instrumental in creating the rich communities that the residents of Harrington Park, Harrington Grove and Catherine Park Estate continue to be proud of. With her passing, we lose a piece of our history and a passionate source of energy, but these communities will forever remain as a testament to her legacy. May she rest in peace.

Vale Lady (Mary) Fairfax

15 August 1922 – 17 September 2017