

NEWSLETTER

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Inglemere House and Hospital

By Cathy Jones



Image 1 'Inglemere' now known as Darcy's Hotel, 2 Abbotsford Road Homebush. Photo Cathy Jones 2026

'Inglemere', 2 Abbotsford Road Homebush, is a two storey Federation style building, located near the corner of Homebush Road. 'Inglemere' was originally a private residence, but since 1928 the property has also been used as a hospital (Inglemere Private Hospital), nursing home (The Crescent) and hotel/bed & breakfast (Darcy's Hotel).

It was built in 1906 and first appears in the Sands Directory in 1907, occupied by Mrs C H Humphrey and named 'Inglemere'¹. The house was originally numbered 17 Homebush Road Strathfield, though the property had original frontages on Homebush, Abbotsford and Beresford Roads. In 1954, the property was renumbered 17-23 Homebush Road Strathfield with an alternative address of 2 Abbotsford Road. After further subdivision of its grounds facing Homebush Road, the entry to the house changed to Abbotsford Road. Though Abbotsford Road is located in the suburb of Homebush, the location of 'Inglemere' was addressed as Strathfield, when it was addressed as Homebush Road.

'Inglemere' is located on the original 1793 Frederick Meredith land grant. This and other lands in Strathfield and Homebush eventually came under the ownership of James Underwood. In 1878, part of the vast Underwood lands were subdivided and marketed as the 'Village of Homebush' estate.

In September 1880, Janet Coutts, a widow, purchased various lots from the estate, including land now occupied by 'Inglemere'. Lots 17-20, Section 4 were located on a corner and faced Homebush, Beresford and Abbotsford Roads. In 1905, Coutts transferred ownership of lots 17-20 to Minnie Christie, wife of William Bede Christie, which was shortly transferred to Alice Humphrey of Homebush in June 1905.

¹ Sands Directory

The Humphrey family

The owner of 'Inglemere' Alice Humphrey (1871-1946) was the daughter of Charles Henry Humphrey (1817-1898) and Ellen Humphrey (née Harris) (1838-1922). Charles Humphrey and his family settled in Burwood about 1861. According to Dunlop (1974), Humphrey was a Devon man educated at Teignmouth, England². He trained as a surveyor and migrated to Australia in 1842 and took up grazing on the Paterson before moving on to the Liverpool Plains and later to Queensland. After marrying Ellen Harris in 1861, he entrusted his Queensland property to a manager and built a large home, 'Luscombe', 12 Livingstone Street, Burwood. In 1874, he was elected an Alderman on the first Burwood Council and was elected the second Mayor of Burwood in 1875³.

He also was a founder of the Burwood School of Arts, benefactor of numerous charitable institutions, and a member of the Sydney Agricultural Society. He also had significant local land interests in Burwood and Strathfield. He died in 1898 at the age of 81⁴. In 1924 the imposing tower at St Paul's Anglican Church Burwood was erected as a memorial to Charles Henry Humphrey and Mrs Ellen Humphrey by their daughters.⁵

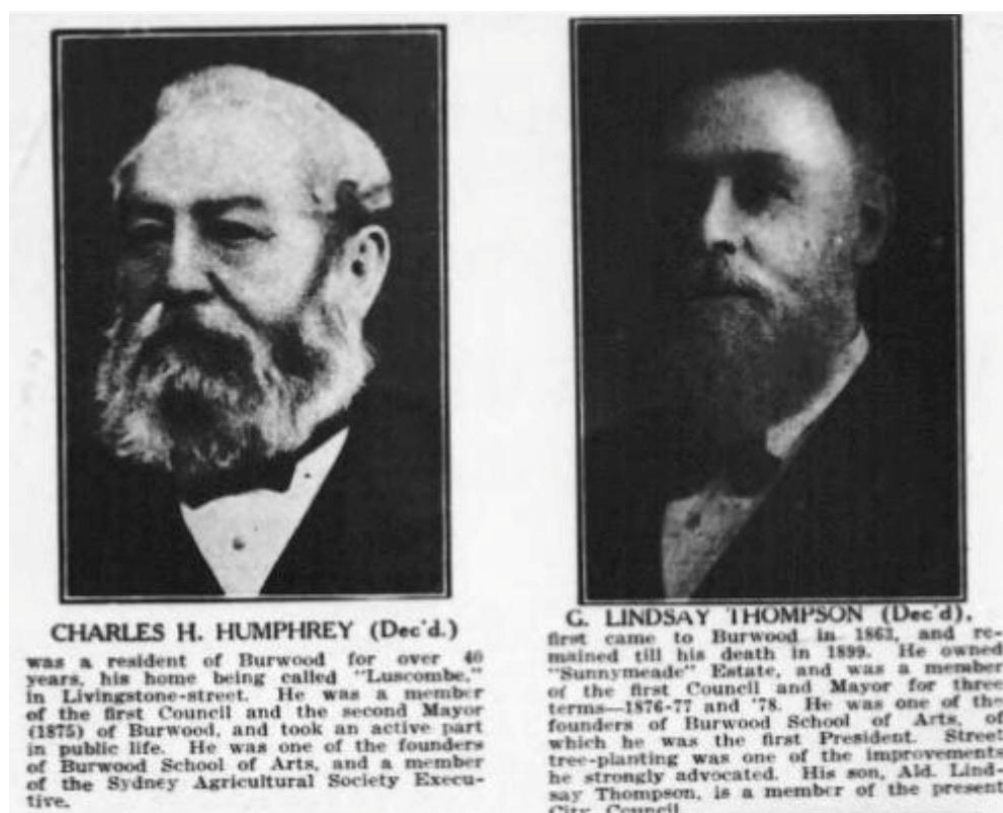


Image 2 Charles Humphrey & G Lindsay Thompson, former Mayors Burwood Council. Featured in Burwood Jubilee (1924)

Land from Humphrey's estate was sold in 1903 to George Hoskins, which was later developed as the Appian Estate in Burwood⁶.

Strathfield Council's rates books in 1905-1906 contain a pencil notation that a house was added to the land and notes change of owner to Humphrey. The name of the architect or builder is not recorded. However the architect is likely to be Ernest Lindsay-Thompson. The Council minutes of 28 August 1905

² Dunlop, Eric (1974) *Harvest of the Years*, Burwood Council, pp 174-175

³ Ibid, Dunlop, 1974, pp174-175

⁴ Ibid, Dunlop, 1974, pp174-175

⁵ 'Luscombe' Burwood & District Historical Society <https://burwoodhistory.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Luscombe.pdf>

⁶ Appian Group Listing Heritage Assessment Report (2022, November 22), Report to Burwood Council

references correspondence from architect E. Lindsay-Thompson on behalf of his client. He requested 'Boulevarding' and street tree planting in front of the property fronting Abbotsford Road, Homebush Road and Beresford Street, and that if this work could be done especially on Abbotsford Road and Homebush Road "his client would forward a check without delay for the sum of £50 as a contribution towards the cost".

Ernest Lindsay-Thompson (1870-1935) was a prominent Sydney architect and served as an Alderman of the Sydney City Council for 27 years (1900-1927). He designed many hotels including the Oxford Hotel Paddington, Orchards Chambers at Railway Square and City Tattersalls in Pitt Street. He was a lifetime resident of Burwood and there are many connections between the families. His father (G Lindsay Thompson) served on Burwood Council with Charles Humphrey, the father of Alice Humphrey. Both families were members of St Paul's Anglican Church Burwood. Lindsay-Thompson designed the bell tower in 1924 and the front fencing. The bell tower was dedicated as a memorial to Charles and Ellen Humphrey, parents of Alice Humphrey, and members of the Humphrey family, including Alice, funded the work.

Following completion of the erection of the house in 1906, Alice Humphrey and her widowed mother Ellen moved to 'Inglemere'. Ellen Humphrey died in 1922 and her daughter Alice lived in the house until about 1928⁷.

Image 3 Subdivision plan 'Inglemere House' 1928. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

In 1928, Alice Humphrey submitted plans to Strathfield Council to subdivide part of the lands fronting Beresford, Homebush and Abbotsford Roads (deposited Plan 15265) into separate residential lots. Council approval issued on 31 January 1928 for the subdivision plan submitted by Messrs Chatfield and Brown (showing 5 lots Abbotsford and Beresford Roads). Council in its minutes state "Miss Humphrey to be thanked for improvement in subdivision"⁸.

In April 1928, an advertisement appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald titled 'Around Big Home - Four Sites Made', which stated:

*'Grounds around Inglemere, a big residence at the intersection of Homebush and Beresford roads, Strathfield, have been cut into four allotments, and these are to be sold by auction next Saturday by Messrs. Hardie and Gorman. They are handily sized homesites, with frontages of from 50 to 70 feet and depths of about 200 feet. Two lots have frontages to Beresford-road and to Abbotsford-road. Homebush station is only a few hundred yards from the subdivision, which is in a well populated centre. Terms of sale are: Ten per cent, deposit and balance in three years'*⁹.

⁷ Humphrey, Ellen (1922 March 11), Daily Telegraph, p10

⁸ Strathfield Council (1928, January 31), Minutes of Council meeting

⁹ 'Around Big Home Four Sites Made' (1928 April 25), The Sun, p2

In August 1928, Alice Humphrey was granted building approval from Strathfield Council to convert the house into a private hospital and for the addition of two rooms at the rear of the building.

Matron Ellen Imlay

In 1929, a lease to operate the hospital was registered on the certificate of title to Ellen Jeanine Imlay for a five-year period, which was later renewed to 1941. The property appeared in the 1930 Sands Directory as *Inglemere Private Hospital* for the first time.

The first notification of a birth at Inglemere appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on 22 December 1928, for Mr and Mrs Ken Craigie (née Gertrude Wallace) of a daughter.

Under the *Private Hospital Act 1908*, private hospitals were conducted under a licence issued annually under the control of the NSW Board of Health. The *Nurses Registration Act 1924* amended the Hospital Act and required that the manager of a private hospital must be a registered nurse. The legislation required that the hospital operated under the direct control of a person approved by the Board. Licensees were required to comply with regulations as to structure, management, and inspection.

Hospitals were required to report births or deaths to the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages within 24 hours and also report infectious diseases. They were also required to maintain a register of patients with details such as name, age, sex, home address, dates of arrival and discharge, attending medical practitioner, diseases manifested, details of operation etc. However, they were not required to lodge these records to a public authority and therefore, few Private Hospital records including *Inglemere Private Hospital* have survived.

According to the NSW Year Book 1928-1929, a total of 288 private hospitals operated in the Sydney area¹⁰. There were three types of private hospitals in NSW: medical and surgical; medical, surgical and lying-in; or lying-in. Lying-in was another term for maternity. Most private hospitals were small, many operating with fewer than 10 beds.

'Inglemere' was characterised as a medical, surgical and lying-in hospital, one of only 88 such hospitals registered in NSW¹¹. It is assumed that 'Inglemere' was one of the larger private hospitals based on its categorisation.

In 1951, the property was listed for sale and though it wasn't sold at this time, the advertisement provides a description of the property including its internal rooms and features¹². *Prominent corner position, most conveniently situate, a few minutes to station and shops. No. 17 Homebush Road. Attractive and well built, commodious two-storey residence of brick, tuckpointed, and roughcast front, slate main roof, front and side verandas, porch entrance, and contains wide vestibule reception hall and centre hall, 14 main rooms, bathrooms on ground and first floors, kitchen, laundry, and all conveniences, operating theatre and necessary annexes. Laundry and garage.*

¹⁰ NSW Year Book 1928-1929, p432

¹¹ Sydney Telephone Directory May 1932 states 'Inglemere' (Miss Imlay), Surgical, Medical and Obstetric, 17 Homebush Road, Strathfield. UM6128. Also NSW Year Book 1928-1929, p432

¹² Strathfield Inglemere Private Hospital - Vac. Possession (SMH 24, 1951), page 24

Ellen Imlay was the first Matron and manager of Inglemere Private Hospital. She was an experienced nursing sister and is featured in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) with her brothers Alexander and Norman. The three siblings actively served overseas during World War I.

She was born in Toowoomba, Queensland in 1881 and was appointed as a probationary nurse in 1903 to the Coast Hospital at Little Bay in Sydney¹³. The Coast Hospital was founded by in 1881 to combat a smallpox outbreak and was a isolation and quarantine facility treating leprosy, plagues, diphtheria, and tuberculosis. It was later known as Prince Henry Hospital.

Imlay served for three years with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) Reserve. In March 1915, she enlisted in the Reinforcements for 1 and 2 Australian General Hospitals (AGH). With the rank of staff nurse she embarked for Egypt aboard HMAT Kyarra on 13 April 1915¹⁴.



Image 4 Ellen Imlay. Australian War Memorial
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P05772.002/>

According to White's (1983) essay in ADB¹⁵, Imlay:

"served there until 19 March 1916 when she re-embarked on a hospital transport for Sydney, returning to Egypt in May. On 20 May she was appointed sister and further promoted to temporary matron for another trip to Australia on 10 July. Leaving Sydney on 7 October as temporary head sister in the Ceramic for service in England, she worked at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford, Kent, from 29 November until 8 January 1918 when she was transferred to France for service with the 2nd A.G.H. at Boulogne and later with various casualty clearing stations. In December she became ill and was invalided back to Sydney on 7 February 1919 and discharged in June. Miss Imlay retired from the A.A.N.S. Reserve in 1930 and later moved to Toowoomba, Queensland".

The ADB listing does not reference her work at Inglemere Private Hospital, which she held a licence from 1928 to 1937. Imlay is listed at 'Inglemere Private Hospital Strathfield' on the NSW Register of Nurses (NSW Government Gazette) from 1928 to 1937¹⁶. From 1938, Elizabeth Neil is registered at *Inglemere* in the NSW Register of Nurses, while Ellen Imlay is registered at Cooper Street Strathfield¹⁷.

Ellen Imlay lived in Sydney after her marriage to a retired public accountant and World War I veteran Harry Ninham Gooch on 10 July 1945 at Mosman. The ADB listing notes that:

"In old age, alert and good-humoured and wearing her medals on Anzac Day, she recalled the lighter moments of her nursing experience at Heliopolis where the hospital was a disused amusement park and the troops slid down the slippery dips on their pillows. Predeceased by her husband, she died in Sydney on 11 June 1978¹⁸."

¹³ Ellen Jeannie Imlay, appointed 19 May 1903 in the 1904 NSW Public Service List. This series is from 1858-1960

¹⁴ White, K R (1983) 'Imlay, Ellen Jeanie (1881-1978)', ADB, National Centre of Biography, ANU

¹⁵ Ibid, White 1983

¹⁶ Register of Nurses in NSW Government Gazette (1928-1937)

¹⁷ Register of Nurses as at 31 December 1938 (1939, August 29). NSW Government Gazette.

¹⁸ White, op cit. 1983

Matron Elizabeth Neil

In 1941, a five year lease was registered to Elizabeth Neil (1888-1971), who had been the Matron of Inglemere Private Hospital since 1938.

Alice Humphrey, moved to Castle Hill but maintained ownership of 'Inglemere' until her death in September 1946. Application for transmission (will) was made in June 1947 by the executors Francis Humphrey Cureton of Gordon, electrical engineer and Francis Eric Howard of Sydney, solicitor, joint tenants. In November 1947, the property was sold to Elizabeth Neil, the Matron of Inglemere Private Hospital.

An advertisement for sale of *Strathfield Inglemere Private Hospital* appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1951. It noted that the '*premises are most suitable for a private hospital, as used at present nursing home, guesthouse, and for those desiring large premises for entertainment, or an institution, to all of whom we can recommend with confidence. To be offered as a going concern or a vacant possession home*'. The land was described as 194 feet on curve to Homebush Road, by a depth of 136 feet along Abbotsford Rd on one side, 131 foot on the other'.

The sale did not proceed and the hospital continued to operate, based on notices appearing in newspapers advertising for staff or notifying births or deaths.

On 3 April 1954, Dr Roxburgh, a local Strathfield doctor, addressed a meeting of Strathfield Council by invitation of the Mayor on the projected closure of Inglemere Private Hospital. Dr Roxburgh stated that he understood that the Matron who was conducting this hospital had intimated that she proposed closing the hospital as such and was not taking any more cases or bookings for confinements. He stated that if this were so, it would cause great inconvenience to expectant mothers in this Municipality, and he accordingly asked if the Council would be prepared to consider the acquisition of the property as a going concern. Though there is no response recorded, the Council clearly did not acquire the hospital. The hospital continued to operate until 1962.

In March 1955, it was reported that Mrs Richie Benaud gave birth to a baby son at 'Inglemere', and both were doing well¹⁹. It also reported that Richie Benaud, will be leaving at 11 am next Saturday to fly with the Australian Cricket Team XI. to the West Indies. Benaud's obituary notes that 'he hit a dazzling 121 in the Kingston Test against West Indies in 1955²⁰. His century came in 78 minutes, then the third fastest Test century. This onslaught prompted a Jamaican barracker to shout, "Do it to England, maan, not to us."²¹ The renowned heritage architect Dr Clive Lucas OBE was born at 'Inglemere'. In November 1943, a notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced the birth of Clive Leslie, son of Leslie Lucas and Gurvan (Pat) (nee Nash). Screenwriter, author, film and television producer Greg Haddick, son of actor Ron Haddrick and his wife Lorraine was born at 'Inglemere' in September 1960. Haddrick is a Logie Award-winning screenwriter and film and television producer. His credits include the TV series *Underbelly*, *Janet King*, and *Pine Gap*, and he has also won seven AWGIE Awards as a writer, three AFI Awards as a producer, and an International Emmy Award nomination as a writer and producer. He is the author of *In the Dead of Night* (2025) about the Wonnangatta Valley murders and *The Mushroom Murders* (2025) about the Erin Patterson trial.

¹⁹ Son For Benaud (1955, March 9). *The Cumberland Argus (Parramatta, NSW : 1950 - 1962)*, p. 1.

²⁰ Meher-Homji, (2015) 'Benaud, Richard (Richie) (1930-2015)', *Obituaries Australia*

²¹ *Ibid*, Meher-Homji 2015

The final newspaper notices concerning Inglemere Private Hospital issued in 1962, which appears to be the year when the hospital finally closed. The final notice in the Sydney Morning Herald appeared in March 1962, notifying birth of a daughter for Kyra and Peter Tatarinoff. The Tatarinoffs were long-term residents of Homebush and co-writers of the book *'Russians in Strathfield'*, which was published in 1999.

Elizabeth Neil (1888-1971), the long serving Matron of Inglemere, died in 1971 aged 83 years. She was living in Concord at the time of her death but is buried in South Australia where she was born. She is fondly remembered by many of the former patients of Inglemere Hospital. Many have posted remembrances of her on the Strathfield Heritage site (www.strathfieldheritage.com) as well as references to Inglemere's attending doctors including Dr Templeman, Dr Roxborough and Dr Evans.



Image 5 Photo of Elizabeth Neil. Photo from Ancestry.com posted by Alice Underwood

- Wendy Cook (née Fuller) (posted 2011/2012). Her mother had four children at Inglemere between 1944 and 1957 under Matron Neil's care. She shares a protective story: before 1944, her mother went in for a medical procedure and faced harsh gossip from locals who assumed she was having an abortion. Matron Neil stepped in directly and "soon put the nasty people in their place" on her mother's behalf.
- Kerry Lyn Scholz (née Bailey) (posted 2012). She was born at the hospital in March 1948 and notes that Matron Neil is officially listed on her birth certificate. She disputes the idea that the hospital was exclusively for unmarried mothers, as her own parents were married.
- Les Stafford (posted 2016). As the eldest of five children all born at Inglemere between 1949 and 1960, he recalls seeing the Matron later in her career. By 1958, he remembers Matron Neil as being quite old—describing her as a small woman with white hair.
- Keryn Haymen (née Cooch) (posted 2016). She remembers Matron Neil as being "very generous". Her father used to prepare and put up a Christmas tree for the Matron at the hospital every year. She also passes down a memory from her late father about the Matron's strict entry routine: she would greet the expectant mother and husband at the door in her starched veil, take the suitcase right out of the husband's hand, wish him well, and immediately send him on his way.
- David de Carle (posted 2018). He notes that he was born at Inglemere in 1944 and his older sister was born there in 1939, with Matron Neil acting as the official witness at both births.
- Bob Slater (posted 2018). He shares that he was born at the hospital in April 1943, and Matron Neil was the recorded witness for his birth as well.
- Janice Taylor (posted 2019). She mentions that according to her mother's memories, Matron Neil "ran a very tight ship!"
- Professor Christene Leiper (posted 2023). She shares a distinct memory regarding the hospital's adoption practices and the Matron's strictness. Born there in 1957, she recalls her father taking her back to the hospital when her sister was born in 1960. She notes that there were many unwanted babies there, and Matron Neil would openly ask mothers and visiting fathers if they would like to see the babies who were going up for adoption. Her father even asked her during the visit if she wanted a brother as well. Her mother always reinforced the impression that the Matron was very strict with how things were run.

In September 1962, the property was sold to Noel Vincent Shanahan and Terence Patrick Shanahan of Strathfield, dentists and by November 1962, was transferred to John Willis McKay of Kings Cross, investor with a mortgage held by the Shanahans.

Council's valuation registers note that property was known as Crescent Private Hospital. The nursing home closed in the late 1990s. The house then reverted to private ownership. A development application was lodged in 2001 to convert the building into a Bed & Breakfast. It currently trades as a B&B called '[Darcy's Hotel](#)'.

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Next Historic Talk - Malvern Hill Estate

The Strathfield -Homebush District Historical Society aims to present four historic talks each year. We are grateful for the support of Strathfield Council in providing a room for the talks. This allows us to offer this event for any member of the public to attend which encourages community awareness and participation in local history and heritage.

John Johnson will discuss stories from his book *The Model Suburb: A history of the Malvern Hill Estate, Croydon*. The talk will highlight how the Malvern Hill Estate developed, the architecture and architects, and the interesting people who lived there including actors, soldiers and politicians. The talk will interest anyone with an interest in the local history of the Burwood and Strathfield districts.

John Johnson is an experienced local studies librarian, archivist, and consulting historian. The book *The Model Suburb: A History of the Malvern Hill Estate* will be available for sale at \$30 per copy.

The event will take place on **Saturday 8 August from 10.30am** at the Ironbark Room, Strathfield Library, Rochester Street Homebush. Morning tea will be served from 10.15am before the commencement of the talk. The event is free. (*Note this is a different time than previous talks due to changes in access to the room*).

Copies of the Pictorial History of Strathfield book will also be available for sale. Further questions, email Cathy Jones at strathfieldhistory@gmail.com

Registrations are required for this event. For bookings: <https://events.humanitix.com/strathfield-history-talk-malvern-hill-estate>

Next Stop Strathfield - upcoming Strathfield Historic Exhibition

The *Next Stop, Strathfield* exhibition will open on **Thursday 15 October 2026** until **Sunday 6 December 2026** at the Ironbark Gallery, Strathfield Library, Rochester Street, Homebush during Library opening hours. The exhibition is a collaboration between Strathfield Council and Strathfield-Homebush District Historical Society.

The exhibition welcomes everyone to get *All Aboard* for a lively journey through Strathfield's transport story! Best known today for its busy railway station, Strathfield has also been home to some surprising transport firsts, including Australia's first motorcycle race at Homebush. Discover how people, goods and ideas moved through the district over time, from early roads, stagecoaches, ferries and steamers to bicycles, motorcycles, freight, trams, buses, car yards, cars and even planes. Come along and see Strathfield's history in motion.

The exhibition will feature photos and images, information, displayed objects and a video showing a range of transports from all periods of Strathfield's history.