

History Of Homes

Reverend Graham realised his vision and founded St. Andrew's Colonial Homes.

www.drgrahamshomes.net

Early Beginnings



In 1900, more than a century ago, Reverend Dr. John Anderson Graham began giving life to his dream. A dream to build an institution that manifested his love for children. A Home for orphaned and abandoned Anglo-Indian children whose only craving was for love and an opportunity to live a life of dignity. Whilst working in Edinburgh as a clerk in the Civil Service, Graham was influenced and encouraged by the Minister of his Church, the Reverend John McMurtrie, to be ordained in the Ministry of God. Following his graduation with an M.A. from Edinburgh University, he spent three years in Divinity Hall. At Divinity Hall, he developed a keen interest in the activities of the Young Men's Guild, an

organisation that sought to unite the young men of the Church in fellowship, prayer, study and service. This interest inspired Graham to consider the possibility of working with an overseas mission in one of the poorer parts of the world.

In 1887, the Young Men's Guild decided to send a missionary of its own to a foreign land, and Graham was sent to work in Kalimpong, which was at that time, part of the Darjeeling Mission of North East India. Graham was ordained in 1889, and two days later, married Katherine McConachie, to whom he had been engaged for two years. Reverend Graham and his wife set sail for Calcutta on 21st March, 1889. For two years, Graham worked to build a new Church in Kalimpong. He also established the Kalimpong Mela – an agricultural exhibition for local farmers – as well as a

silk committee to encourage the industrious locals. He also helped them establish a cooperative credit society.

There was one particular group in the Darjeeling area whose plight affected Reverend Graham more than anyone else. During his visits to the tea gardens of the Dooars in Darjeeling, he noticed groups of children who suffered deprivation and hardship. Most of them were the illegitimate sons and daughters of British tea planters and local Nepalese, Lepcha and Assamese mothers. Such liaisons were common in those days, but as the young tea planters rose to management positions, and European brides arrived in the gardens, the 'kanchis' and their children were, more often than not, discarded to no man's land. His heart was filled with a desire to find a solution to the problems of these

Eurasian (now known as Anglo-Indian)
and poor domiciled European children.

🕒 The Turn of the Century



On his return to the mission in early 1900, Reverend Graham sought an appointment with the Governor of Bengal, Sir John Woodburn, to discuss what he had in mind. He also met with a group of gentlemen in Darjeeling to whom he presented his proposal. This was the first step to make his dream – to help poor European and Eurasian children live a life of dignity and to give them the opportunity to make a decent life for themselves – a reality.

With the help of the Governor of Bengal, Reverend Graham leased 100 acres of land from the Government on the slopes of the Deolo Hills to the east of Kalimpong, where he would build a

school for both boys and girls. He believed that it was in the safety, security and relative freedom of the school in Kalimpong that the children would find a stable and caring environment just like a home. Something they had been hitherto denied.

The idea of setting up a school in Kalimpong was to provide a home to these children where they would be insulated from their “corrupt” surroundings and be able to breathe clean and pure air, both physically and spiritually. Reverend Graham believed that such a nurturing and caring environment would create positive early imprints which would leave lasting impressions on their minds and hearts.

▶ The Birth of the Homes



On 24th September 1900, Reverend Graham realised his vision and founded St. Andrew's Colonial Homes. The beginnings were modest – a rented building, Kiernander Cottage, just below the tract of land leased for the Homes. There were six children – two first generation Eurasians, and four European children whose recently widowed mother became the first ever Housemother of the Homes. Following Kiernander, Woodburn Cottage was opened on 4th November 1901 by Lt. Governor Sir John Woodburn, after whom the cottage was named. Built with Government grants and donations from friends in Scotland, the cottage was designed to house 26 children and three staff members. The opening of Woodburn

was soon followed by that of Elliot Cottage on 4th November 1902 by both Sir John Woodburn and the Hon. Mr. Bourdillon, who was the first President of the Board of Management of the Homes.



Bourdillon School was inaugurated on 18th December 1902 by Mr. A. Pedler who was the Director of Public Instruction, Government of Bengal. Named after the Committee that made the funds available, Calcutta Cottage was opened by Lady Bourdillon on 30th April 1903. On 8th September 1903, the Hedger Playsheds – named after Mrs. Hedger of Allahabad who donated Rs.3000 for their construction – was opened. The Christison Farm Steading – named after Mr. G. W. Christison, who had a special interest in agriculture – was opened by Sir Charles Allen, Director of

Agriculture, Darjeeling on 29th October 1903. Named in memory of Mrs. J. D. Strachan of Allahabad, Strachan Cottage was inaugurated by Mr. Robert Laidlaw of Whiteaway Laidlaw and Company on 12th January 1904.

The Water Works were inaugurated on 5th November 1904 by Sir Andrew Fraser, Governor of Bengal and President of the Homes. Mr. E. A. Gait, Finance Secretary to the Government of Bengal inaugurated Thorburn Cottage, named in memory of the late daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Thorburn of Scotland who funded the construction. In 1905, the James Patterson Memorial Workshop was opened and named after the Late Mr. James Patterson. In 1917, this building was transformed into the Clothing Department. The legacy of the Late Major Jarvie of Bearsdean funded the construction of Jarvie Hall, opened by Sir

L. Hare on 24th April 1906. His legacy also funded the construction of Bene Cottage (named after Major Jarvie's late wife, Robina Patterson – "Bene"), opened on 15th June 1906 by Mr. Earle, the Director of Public Instruction for Bengal.



The second wing of Bourdillon School was opened in 1907, followed by the completion of the Georgina McRobert Memorial Tower – named after the late wife of Mr. A. McRobert of Cawnpore who funded the tower and chimes. The Steel Memorial Hospital and Sanitorium – named after Mr. Octavius Steel of Octavius Steel and Company of Calcutta – was opened on 4th February 1908 by Miss L. Steel who was one of the donors. Mr. R. T. Greer, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, opened the Pugh

Gymnasium (named in honour of Mr. L. P. Pugh) on 31st October 1908.

Inaugurated in 1910, Lucia King Cottage is home to the School's infants and toddlers who have no other refuge. Their infectious joy ensures that it continues to hold a very special place in visitors' hearts.

For the next 15 years, new buildings were added to the Homes, all due to the generosity of benefactors who were inspired by the vision and commitment of Reverend Graham.

▶ 1920 and after



The Pickford Scout Den for the boy scouts was opened by the Chief Scout Commissioner of India, Sir Alfred Pickford, in 1920. On 24th May 1921, Wiston Cottage was opened by Lord Ronaldshay, Governor of Bengal. The Prince of Wales School House was opened on 15th January 1923 by Lady Reid of Aboyre and was named after the Prince of Wales who gifted Rs.15,000 for its construction. On 19th May 1923, the John A. Crozier Workers' Club House was opened by Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal. It was funded by the workers, and later by a committee, in memory of J. A. Crozier of Silchar, Cachar. In 1924, 24 acres was acquired at the Rilli Farm, the Tropical Fruit Garden. Ronaldshay Park was opened formally

along with a pavilion on 4th March 1925 by Sir Archibald Birkmyre.

The Birkmyre Hostel in Calcutta was opened on 14th January 1927 by Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal, and named after Sir Archibald Birkmyre, who had the Hostel built for the boys of Kalimpong. In April 1930, the Homes' Guest House, Ahava, meaning Peace, was opened.

▶ The World Wars



Boys of the Homes fought for the British Empire during the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945). Some of them joined the Indian Armed Forces in the years following Independence and fought with valour for God and their country.

🕒 Katherine Graham Memorial Chapel



Katherine Graham
breathed her last on
15th May 1919, leaving
her husband, Reverend

Graham, without the one person he so loved and relied upon. But her spirit lived on within him and gave him the strength to carry on his work for God and for the children he loved so dearly.

On 24th September 1925, the Katherine Graham Memorial Chapel, built in her memory, was inaugurated by Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal. A labour of love and a manifestation of the deep love that bound Katherine and Reverend Graham to each other, the Chapel is a haven of peace, a place of worship and a spiritual oasis where staff, students and visitors can encounter the Almighty and feel His love and protection over them. A testimony to

the lives of love and compassion that both Katherine and Reverend Graham lived, it is a place where their spirit and love can be experienced. Their mortal remains are interred in the cemetery adjoining the Chapel.

▶ A Legend Departs



Reverend Dr. John Anderson Graham, the founder of the Homes and “Daddy Graham” to thousands of children who passed through the portals of Dr. Graham’s Homes since its inception, passed away on 15th May 1942.

Reverend Graham believed that the Homes was to be a place that not only represented a solution to the problems of a particular community, but that through its work and influence, the children might take with them a way of life that would extend far beyond Kalimpong.

His death signaled the end of an era. An era of love, compassion and service during which thousands of children received love and affection, and grew up with dignity and self-respect. Indeed,

Reverend Graham provided the inspiration for those who came after him to continue his work. His spirit lives on and is the motive force of all those engaged in supporting and running the Homes.

A telegram sent to the children by Reverend Graham read, "The world is in difficulty and this is the call to us all to do all we can to help. You dear children have your part to play and it may be a big part. The way for you as for all of us, is to live just as Jesus lived, to follow him in His loving, unselfish, generous life of service to all, to bear witness to Him and His way, in everything we do. So shall we best help the world out of its difficulties by helping to bring God's Kingdom to come... from your loving friend, J. A. Graham."

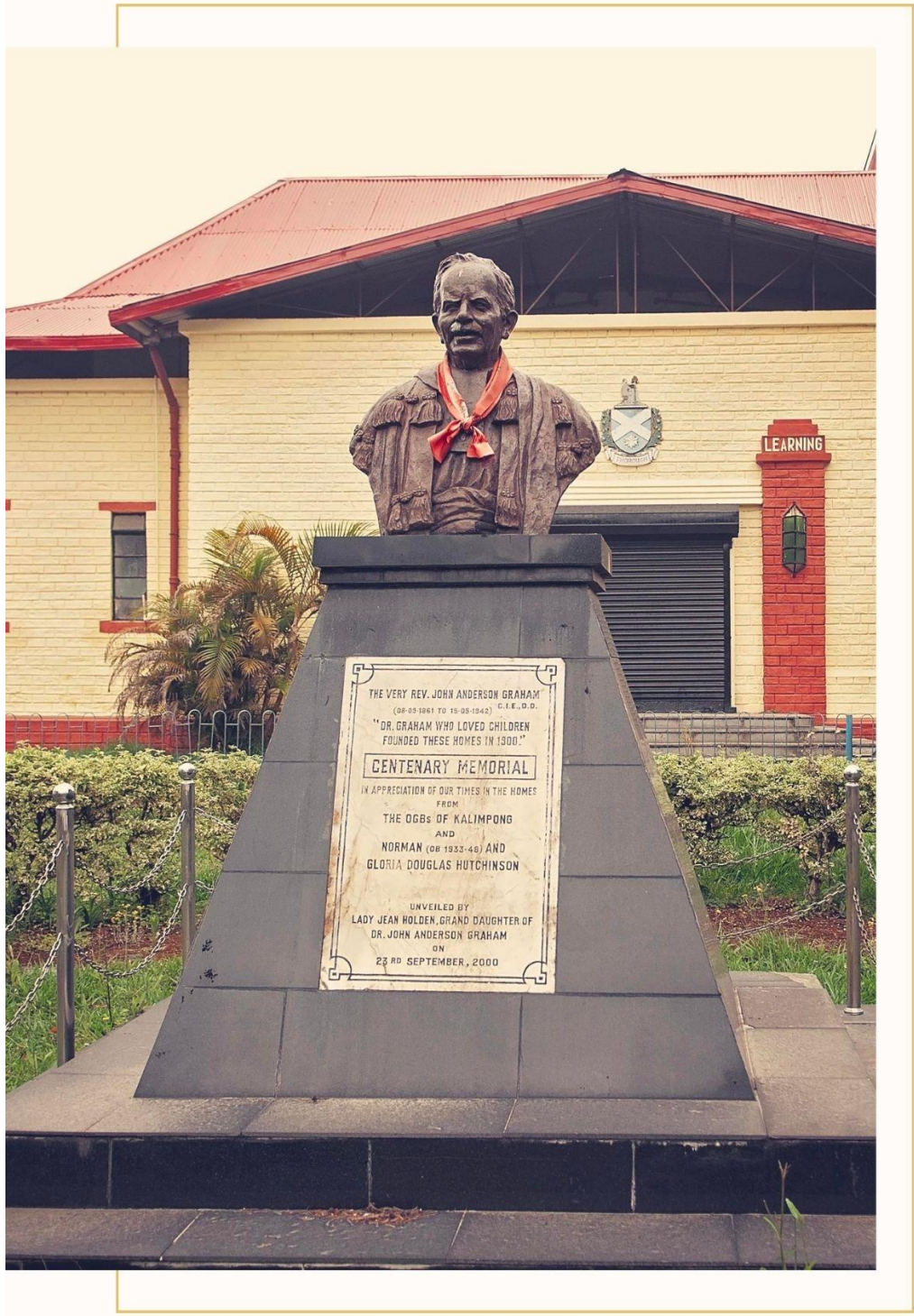
► The Years that Followed



In 1947, the Homes was re-christened Dr. Graham's Homes, in memory of and in gratitude to its Founder. India became an independent nation and the Homes embraced the new reality with optimism and courage. Indeed, India's independence strengthened the resolve of the Homes to continue serving the poor with passion and commitment and encouraged it to serve children from other communities as well, thereby extending the scope of its mandate.

Since then the Homes has grown from strength to strength. There have been times of great difficulty. Often the Homes has been plunged into many a crisis. But the benefactors, staff and students have

rallied around to help the Homes return to stability, for the spirit of Daddy Graham continues to inspire all those associated with the Homes. It strengthens their resolve to look ahead, despite the odds. To bring comfort and hope to the children; to help them live a life of dignity and love. To continue the legacy of love that Reverend Dr. John Anderson Graham has left behind.



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The End