Thistle Foundation was originally set up by Sir Francis Tudsbery to provide homes for disabled ex-servicemen that would, in his words, enable them"to live in homes of their own, surrounded by their own families, by their own friends, and by their own belongings - and yet to be able to obtain on the spot all that skilled medical attention which is so essential to their wellbeing and which, up to now, has only been obtainable in a hospital."





Interest in this innovative housing development sprang up across Scotland and Thistle received offers of sites in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Craigmillar site was chosen and a competition was held to find an architect for the project. Edinburgh-based architect Stuart Matthew was the winner and designed the Estate.

Designs were received from various parts of the British Isles and from India, Canada and South Africa. One came from Baghdad. It was from Warrant Officer Christopher Pearce and Warrant Officer Robert Skater, R.E, (Engingeering branch), H.Q., Paiforce. This design was specially commended. In sending it, the two warrant officers said they regretted it was a bit untidy because it had been planned under very difficult circumstances, the men mentioning that they were writing in the light of a hurricane lamp and in a high temperature.

Extract taken from 'Thistle Foundation Centre: Features of the Winning Design'. Scotsman 29 November 1945.



Thistle welcomed the first residents to the estate. Among the first families to move in were the Hendersons.

"Back across the white line" the airport sergeant told three boys in Royal High School blazers at Turnhouse, Edinburgh, yesterday as the afternoon plane from London taxied in. Then someone whispered in his ear. "Oh that's different," said the sergeant. "Come right forward boys." And Leslie aged eight, Alan 11, and Keith Henderson, 14 dashed forward to greet their father. It wasn't an ordinary airport reunion, for ex-Corporal George Henderson hasn't walked since he was lifted out of his tank in Germany in 1945 with spinal injuries.

Extract taken from 'Dad's homecoming was different.' Daily Graphic 16 June 1950.



Elizabeth Fairbrother moves to the Estate.

At the opening ceremony the Queen Mother

as the work of "pioneers" where "for the first time there was a fusion of hospitals and homes

The BBC reporter noted how Susan Mottram,

who was only seven at the time, performed a

"perfect curtsy" and was "wreathed in smiles".

and recorded for BBC radio.

described this "novel and unique establishment"

into one complete and living community". The

ceremony was also attended by Princess Margaret

Elizabeth Fairbrother was accepted as a resident at the Thistle Foundation in December 1951. She moved from Stoke Mandeville to live an independent life in Edinburgh and was the only ex-servicewomen living at Thistle when the Foundation first opened.

In 1954 she spoke to the Edinburgh Evening News about the lack of facilities available for disabled women at the time. "It is tragic that there is not a place in the country that caters for chairborne women," she told the reporter. "It is more terrible, especially for people who are young and active in their minds."

With the support of Miss Farquhar, her full time nurse at Thistle, Elizabeth was able to live the life she wanted. In the article she describes how she would "beetle around" Edinburgh in the car with Miss Farquhar and take monthly trips to Perth.

The Robin Chapel was built as a memorial to the Tudsberys' only child, Robin, who died in the final days of World War II.

As well as being a touching memorial, the Chapel contains many important pieces of art, including the stained glass windows by Sadie McLellan and beautiful woodwork by Thomas Goode.

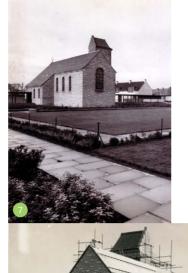
The Chapel continues its work with veterans by supporting courses run by Thistle Foundation and maintaining links with Robin's regiment, The Blues and Royals. At the heart of the chapel is a universal spirit of worship, unity and fellowship - open to all and a professional choir sing Choral Evensong every Sunday.



Loveday Thomson hands the Queen a bouquet

when she visits Thistle in 1962.







By this time Thistle was a vibrant and dynamic community that was so much more than bricks and mortar.

Over a hundred families lived within the village setting. Thistle began to open its doors more widely to include all disabled men and women and the estate became more of a mixed community.

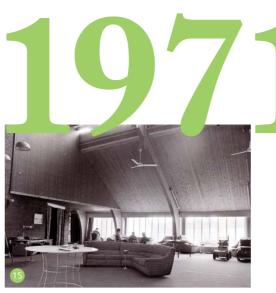


Thistle was very much involved in the early days of the Paralympics at Stoke Mandeville, where it frequently sent athletes to participate. Basketball, bowls and swimming played an important role in creating a sense of community at Thistle.



From the beginning Thistle recognised the importance of "interesting and remunerative work" so along with physiotherapy, nursing and occupational therapy services Thistlecraft was set up to provide paid work for some of the residents.







Wighton House opened in the Estate, originally as hostel style accommodation for single disabled men and women. It later became a residential home.

Thistle began to develop its innovative self management work supporting people with long term conditions to feel more in control of their condition and to get on with their life.

Thistle also returned to working with veterans. Although the type of work differs greatly from the early days, the commitment to supporting veterans as they adjust to life after service remains.



Andy and Theresa Dick get married in 1983 and move to the Estate in 1984 so they could live together as a married couple.

"Thistle was one of the few places that would support married people with disabilities at the time. I shall always be grateful to the Foundation for giving us the opportunity to fulfil our dream when there were many in society in the 80s who believed that we had no right to have such a dream or to make it reality." said Andy.



The growth of the disability movement saw a sea change in the hopes and aspirations of disabled people like Jim Dalgety, who did not want to live in a residential care home and instead wanted his own house and to employ his own staff.

Jim eventually persuaded Thistle to give him a home in 1989. Jim and others living in Thistle became pioneers in the emerging national movement for change.



Sir Francis had always hoped to establish a base in the West of Scotland. After a major fundraising initiative Blythswood House opened in Renfrew.

Thistle also began to change its focus to develop services more in demand and relevant to disabled people's changing requirements.

The Thistle Writers Group is formed and publish 'Oor Wuids' a collection of poems and stories from Thistle's

community.



A beautiful picture On a beautiful screen One of the loveliest I've ever seen With beautiful colours some Subtle some bold More of a treasure than Diamonds or gold

You could own this picture And see what I've seen If you stop all pollution And keep my world green

By Jean Smith, published in the Thistle Writers Group's second publication 'Gettin On Wi It' in 1995.



Democracy, Disability and Society Group is set up.

Thistle supported DDSG in their aim to break down the barriers faced by disabled people in heir everyday lives. One of their most significant projects focused on making public transport more accessible to people with disabilities. DDSG provided training for Edinburgh taxi drivers and information packs, gave advice to Lothian Buses and produced reports on new accessible forms of transport, such as the E7 taxi.



The Thistle Friends movement is set in motion, directly involving and empowering the people closest to Thistle to inspire others through their own lived experiences, raise Thistle's profile and secure funds to underpin its future.

"Whatever you do, it does help... and it will help... and you'll be a Thistle Friend for life." Louise Page, ounder of Thistle Friends.



birthday celebrations and meets some of the first residents, Doreen Martin and Win Scullard.



lula Thistle Foundation is still the boundary-

pushing, pioneering organisation the Queen Mother met in 1950 - helping bring about a society where everyone has the right to feel involved and empowered to live the life they choose, regardless of their disability or health condition.

- The people we support are at the heart of everything we do.
- → We focus on the person, rather than the disability or health condition.
- \rightarrow We work side by side with people.
- \rightarrow We are Thistle.

1. Sir Francis Tudsbery views architectural plans for the Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 2. Starting to build the Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle 1950 ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 5. Robin Tudsbery 7. Sadie McLellan's stained glass windows inside the Robin Chapel 8. The Robin Chapel 9. Thistle resident and basketball player Torms Wann won a gold medal in the 1959 Olympic games ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 5. Robin Tudsbery 7. Sadie McLellan's stained glass windows inside the Robin Chapel 9. Thistle resident and basketball player Torms Wann won a gold medal in the 1959 Olympic games ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 5. Robin Tudsbery 7. Sadie McLellan's stained glass windows inside the Robin Chapel 9. Thistle resident and basketball player Torms Wann won a gold medal in the 1959 Olympic games ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 5. Robin Tudsbery 7. Sadie McLellan's stained glass windows inside the Robin Chapel 9. Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 5. Robin Tudsbery 7. Sadie McLellan's stained glass windows inside the Robin Chapel 9. Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd 4. Susan Mottram hands the Queen flowers opening ceremony of Thistle estate ©The Scotsman Publicat Inside one of the houses on the Thistle estate 11. Rosemary Harvey in her kitchen 12. Archery on the estate 13. Making baskets for 'Thistle Craft' 14. Susan Mottram hands the Queen to arrive – image credit Louise Kennedy 18. Democracy, Disability and Society 19. Doreen and Win wait for the Queen to arrive – image credit Sam Sills