

“The Kremlin” – 11 Kingfisher Street Coochiemudlo Island

The home located in Kingfisher Street has had three owners and whilst its history does not stretch back to early pioneer days, long-time residents still fondly remember the property as The Kremlin.

Valentin Admiralski, his wife Irene and their two daughters, Nina and Maria, came to Australia with thousands of other refugees and displaced people in the post-war wave of European migration. Nationals from Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania joined Russians such as the Admiralskis in choosing a country so far from home leaving all that was dear and familiar to start a new life that promised peace and opportunity. The Admiralskis were among some 600 passengers who embarked on the SS Amarapoorra, from Naples, Italy, bound for Sydney, Australia. It was 1949 (<http://immigrantships.net/v5/1900v5/amarapoorra19491020.html>).

Not much is known about the Admiralskis for the next twenty years but by the late 1960s they were living in Brisbane. Sometime between 1969 and 1972 the family decided to build a holiday house on Coochiemudlo Island largely because of Latvian friends living there. Valentin and Irene chose a block of land in Kingfisher Street that adjoined another Russian family. The land adjacent to Dawn and Kingfisher streets was once part of the Elliot family farm but the early pioneers had long since sold off their farms to developers with most of the land being subdivided into nineteen perch blocks (506 square metres).

In 2003, Irene who by now was 85 years old recounted to David and Ellen Paxton, (the Kremlin's current owners) that whilst their Russian neighbours went on to make a lot of money in the property market, the Admiralski's, after buying three blocks, sank all their savings into Coochie. In the early 1970s Nina and Maria, who by now were married and starting families built their own homes on the adjoining blocks.

Dick Whitehall was running the ferry service between Coochiemudlo Island and Victoria Point at the time and apart from enjoying a drink he loved nothing more than to talk or should I say argue politics with his good friend Val Admiralski. The Admiralskis had a table in their lounge with a map of the world inlaid and the two men were known for their rousing discussions that got more fired up as the vodka flowed. This is how the house came to be known as 'The Kremlin'. Unfortunately, Valentin fell ill with bowel cancer causing them to sell up in 1979. Val and Neil Aylesbury became owners No.2.

At this time, Ellen and David Paxton were living in New Farm on the Brisbane River, but they loved nothing more than to sail their boat, Isa Lei, down river and out into Moreton Bay. It was on one of these trips they anchored off Coochie and took a walk around the island. The Paxtons soon fell under Coochie's spell and in 2002 became owners No. 3 of the Kremlin. Ellen recalls what stuck in her mind when they first came to view the house was that it drew her imagination to a Russian dacha. Two mango trees and a stand of bananas in the grounds were remnant reminders of Coochie's farming past.

The house is a solid extremely well built two story home. Plastered ceilings framed by beautifully ornate cornices and large picture windows dress every room. In typical dacha style the home draws the outside in. The downstairs rooms lend themselves perfectly for reading and looking out onto the garden, whilst the rooms upstairs offer expansive views of the trees planted in the rear. The window glass was recycled from older buildings somewhere in Brisbane. One can tell because when the light beams in at a certain angle the faint impression of etching indicates that some of the thick glass came from a chemist shop. Even though the home is situated on a corner, The Kremlin offers an ambiance of generous rooms, wide stairways and doorways, high ceilings and wooden floors that shine through a golden patina.

Whilst changes and renovations have been made to the home over the years, The Kremlin evokes a European flavour and a bygone era. If walls could talk Val and Irene Admiralski can feel proud of their creation and their decision to give life on Coochiemudlo Island 'a fair go'.

Acknowledgements

David and Ellen Paxton 2017;

Denise Foley, Bayswater Real Estate, Coochiemudlo Island, 2017.