



BLACKWOOD

(No. 10 Home)

Background

Following the opening of Son of the Rock on 10 April 1920 by Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, her husband, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, laid the foundation stone of the Blackwood Home which was opened on Saturday 6 August 1921 by Sir Walter Davidson, the State Governor.

The Home, designed by the architects A L McCredie and Anderson, was built by Mr. R Lightfoot at a cost of £4,495. It was erected and furnished by the four legatees of the late Mr. James Blackwood in his memory. He had been a staunch supporter of Burnside and was well known and respected among the Scottish community.

At the opening the Burnside Boy Scouts formed a Guard of Honour as the party proceeded to the Blackwood Home and the children sang "Annie Laurie" to the assembled crowd.

The architect, Gregory Nolan has described the building as follows:-

"Blackwood is a simple two storey, late Federation building of brick on sandstone levelling courses. The roof is simply hipped with terra cotta tiles with exposed rafter ends. The floor and chimney feature double-dashed bands. There is a prominent sandstone entry portico of truscan columns

supporting a sandstone balustrade while the windows and doors to this entry have elements of classical revival.”

1921- 1944

Blackwood, the twelfth Home, was designed to house 30 boys. When it opened the boys who had been in Dunkeld were transferred to Blackwood. The number of children at the Burnside Homes had now reached 361, comprising 3 cottages of kindergarten children, 6 boys' homes and 3 girls' homes. The cost of feeding each child in July 1921 was 12/6 (12 shillings and 6 pence) per month.

When it was decided during the war years as an emergency measure to evacuate the Burnside Homes, over 500 children were rehoused at various locations in the Blue Mountains for the years 1942 -1944. The Burnside Homes were then occupied by various units of the Second Australian Army.

1945 – 1968

Following the return to Parramatta in January 1945 the number of children in the Homes had declined by a third to approximately 330 children. This allowed several of the vacant Homes to be remodelled including Blackwood. The bathrooms and lavatories were completely remodelled with new baths, tiled walls and terrazzo floors. The kitchen was tiled, a gas stove substituted for the fuel stove, stainless steel sinks and a refrigerator fitted. The hot water boiler formerly in the kitchen was moved outside thus making the kitchen both cleaner and cooler.

The next notable event at Blackwood was the retirement in November 1952 of Miss Ferrier who had been appointed as Matron to Blackwood in 1928. For many years she had also been organist at morning prayers each day and was much loved not only by the boys of her Home but also by children from other Homes. They all made presentations to her at a special farewell function.

Miss Ferrier was replaced by house parents, Mr. and Mrs. Etheridge, who had 23 boys to care for. In the following years house parents at Blackwood included Mr. and Mrs. Vizer, Mr. and Mrs. Britten, Mr. and Mrs. Copp, Mr. and Mrs. Grimstone, Mr. and Mrs. McMahon, Mr. and Mrs. Buist, Mr. and Mrs. Dove and Mr. and Mrs. Day.

Mr. and Mrs. Day were house parents at Blackwood from July 1961 until October 1968. During that period, there were many changes at Burnside. As a result of the Brennan report, whose recommendations Burnside implemented, commencing in 1962, the number of boys in each Home were reduced and each Home was remodelled. The large dormitories were transformed into small rooms

accommodating from one to five children. Other modern features introduced included replacing the shutters with windows and placing television sets in the Homes. The maximum number of boys that Blackwood could accommodate became 16.

1968 - 1994

By October 1968 the overall numbers of children at the Burnside Homes had reduced to 192. Blackwood continued to operate and the over the subsequent years house parents included Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas (Oct 1968-Jan 1970), Mr. and Mrs. Fisher (Feb 1970-Jan 1974), Mr. and Mrs. Kenning (Jan 1974-June 1975), Mr. and Mrs. Hill (Jun 1975-April 1978), Mr. and Mrs. Hodge (April - July 1978), Mr. and Mrs. Hall (July 1978- Feb 1980) and Mr. and Mrs. Hadgett (Feb 1980-Jan 1984) who moved in 1984 with some of the 5 boys they cared for to the group home, Minnamurra.

Blackwood remained operating as a residential unit until 4 August 1984 when the last of the children housed there were placed in foster care. The last houseparent at Blackwood appears to have been Mrs. James.

Blackwood was subsequently leased to the Redeemer Baptist School and purchased by them on 22 July 1994.

