

St John's Homes for Boys

c. 1924 – 1958

Other Names:

- St John's Home for Boys
- Shrublands
- St John's Evangelist Home for Boys

Details

St John's Home for Boys was established in Canterbury in the mansion known as 'Shrublands'. It formally opened in November 1924. In 1926, boys from the former St Martin's Home in Auburn, together with its timber building, relocated to St John's in Canterbury. St John's Home accommodated boys aged between 5 and 14. By 1958, the Home had also began caring for young girls and became St John's Homes for Boys and Girls.

St John's Homes for Boys was officially opened on 22 November 1924 by the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Harrington Lees.

The Home was situated in Canterbury, on a property donated to the Church of England by the Hindson family. In 1923, Alice Hindson donated her mansion at 16 Balwyn Road, Canterbury ('Shrublands') to the Church, with the condition that the building bear the name of St John the Evangelist.

Timber buildings from St Martin's Home for Boys in Auburn was transferred to the Canterbury site, and were later known as the Kimpton Buildings. The two homes were sometimes referred to as the 'Church of England Homes for Boys'. Older boys were housed at St Martin's, and younger boys at St John's. The combined homes were opened officially in 1926 by the Governor, Lord Somers.

Founder of St John's Home for Boys, the Rev. Eric Thornton served as its Director from 1921 to 1936. Canon Lambie, a key figure in the establishment of many Church of England institutions, was also the rector of St John's Home for Boys and St Martin's Home for Boys.

The Great Depression led to an increase in the number of boys requiring accommodation at St John's. The Board of management bought an adjoining property and the foundation stone for a new wing was laid in June 1934 (Reseigh, p.3).

The Rev. Neale Molloy was the Director at St John's Home for Boys, later known as St John's Homes for Boys and Girls, from 1940 to 1976. (Molloy was also a member of the Family Welfare Advisory Council, Chairman of the Church of England Boys' Society for 21 years. When Molloy retired as the Chairman of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria in 1976, he was described as a 'practical visionary'.)

Boys from St John's (and St Martin's) attended the local Balwyn Primary School. St John's Home for Boys had a relationship with Brighton Grammar School. The 1958 annual report thanked the school for "entertaining our boys" at the CEBS (Church of England Boys Society) Camp at Frankston for a week prior to Christmas.

In 1944, St John's opened a hostel for senior boys, called St Martin's House. It was first situated in Auburn and moved onto the campus at Canterbury in 1953. Before the establishment of St Martin's hostel, boys had to leave the Home at age 15.

Around this time, Reverend Molloy recommended to the Board of Management that St John's move from congregate care towards a cottage system, where children would be in groups of 8 to 10, cared for by a house father and house mother. In 1945, the Home launched a Rebuilding Appeal to set up a "boys' village" Reseigh, p.5).

From 1949 and into the 1950s, St John's Home was one of the institutions in Victoria to receive child migrants from Britain. St John's was the first organisation in Victoria to register as a Church Child Migrant Agency (The Age, 20 June 1953).

In June 1951, St John's by the Sea opened, a pilot 'cottage' home in Beach Road, Sandringham. Designed to house 20 boys, St John's rented the property in Sandringham from the Ministering Children's League. St John's By the Sea accommodated some child migrants from Britain.

According to Reseigh, St John's By The Sea provided an experiment in caring for both boys and girls, as the superintendent Mr Charteris lived at the Sandringham home with his wife (as matron) and their 3 daughters who "shared in the life of the cottage" (Reseigh, p.6).

St John's launched an appeal in 1953 to raise £15,000 'to enable an L-shaped building in cream brick to be built in four cottage units under the same roof. The new building will accommodate 44 boys, and enable each to receive more individual and homely care. Each cottage unit will be under the guidance of a married couple' (The Age 22 May 1953, p.9) This new wing at Canterbury with the cottage style of care opened in 1955. The cottages were located in a block of four flats that shared a communal dining room and kitchen facilities.

In January 1956, St John's Homes for Boys was declared an approved children's home under the Children's Welfare Act 1954.

In 1956, with the move away from institutional care and towards the cottage system, the Board of Management made the decision that St John's would accommodate boys and girls at Canterbury. It launched a Rebuilding and Expansion appeal in 1958.

The St John's Annual Report Calendar for 1957-58 has some information about the way boys were accommodated on the Shrublands site and the philosophy of the institution.

We who work at Shrublands, St. John's Homes for Boys, know that room and board, even though it comes with "tender, loving care," are NOT enough for boys who come to us for help. Our home-like cottages and beautiful grounds are NOT enough and we all know that these, with the best medical and dental care, academic and religious education and recreation, are NOT enough. That is – they are not enough for most of the boys who come to Shrublands.

Visitors to our Homes often ask: "What more could these boys need or want?" A quick look into their backgrounds will begin to tell why the boys need special understanding, special education and tutoring, casework and psychiatric treatment, and a carefully loving environment.

In 1958, the Home changed its name to St John's Homes for Boys and Girls, marking the beginning of an era of expansion and deinstitutionalisation.

Gallery



St Johns Home for Boys, Canterbury

Description: [St Johns Home for Boys was located at 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury].



St Johns Home for Boys, Canterbury

Description: [St Johns Home for Boys was located at 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury but the property backs on to Rochester Road). 2 photographs : gelatin silver ; 8.8 x 12.5 cm. Approx.



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St John's Home

Description: This is a copy of an image from the cover of the of St John's Home for Boys Fifth Annual Report Calendar for 1957-58. It shows a group of boys walking past a sign saying "St John's Home" and a pillar with a plaque saying "Shrublands" above the letterbox.



Badge from St John's Homes for Boys

Description: This is a copy of an image of a badge from St John's Homes for Boys. It was published on [an old website about the Shrublands mansion site](#). The badge likely dates from the period before 1958 when St John's started to accept girls as well as boys.

More info

Chronology

- St Martin's Home for Boys (1921 - c. 1926)
 - **St John's Homes for Boys (c. 1924 – 1958)**
 - St John's Homes for Boys and Girls - Canterbury (1958 - c. 1997)
 - Anglicare Victoria (1997 - current)

Related Entries

Run by

- [St John's Homes for Boys and Girls Board of Management \(1926 - 1997\)](#)
- [Anglican Diocese of Melbourne \(1847 - current\)](#)

Related Events

- [Fact-Finding Mission on Child Migration \(1956\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [St Martin's House \(1944 - 2000?\)](#)
- [The Children's Society, United Kingdom \(1881 - current\)](#)

Child migrants from The Children's Society homes were sent to St John's Home for Boys

Related Concepts

- [Child Migration \(1800s - 1970s\)](#)

Resources

- Immigration Museum, [Stolen childhoods](#), 2012
- Georgeff, Diana, *Delinquent Angel*, 2007
- Swain, Shurlee, *Traces in the archives: evidence of institutional abuse in surviving child welfare records*, Children Australia, 2007
- Hutchinson, John, *Reminiscences of St. John's Home for Boys*, 2004
- Farrar, Lindsay, [Submission no 479 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 2005
- *Social service work has personal side*, The Argus, 27 August 1949
- Fuller, P.C.R., [Correspondence: St. John's Home for Boys: To the Editor](#), Gippsland Times, 9 December 1948
- Heritage Victoria, [Shrublands - 16 Balwyn Road Canterbury, Boroondara City](#), Victorian Heritage Database, 2011
- *P.M. Opens 12,500 Pounds Youth Hostel*, The Sun News-Pictorial, 30 November 1953
- [St John's Home for Boys \(and girls\) \(1926-96\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to St John's Homes for Boys
- [Church Hostel opened by PM](#), The Age, 30 November 1953
- [Ray Willis interviewed by Lyn McLeavy in the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project \(2000\)](#), 12 June 2000
- Reseigh, Rosalind, *St John's Home for Boys and Girls 1921-1971: fifty years of child care*, 1971 - 1974

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [Clements Langford Pty Ltd \(1868 - 1960\)](#)
- [Records, 1896-1985, \[manuscript\], Children's Protection Society \(Vic.\) \(1896 - 1985\)](#)
- [Anglicare Victoria Records \(1886 - current\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Child and Youth Migration Records \(1901 - 1983\)](#)

- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
 - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-johns-homes-for-boys/>