

Kingsbury Farm Reformatory

1893 – 1912

Other Names:

- Kingsbury Farm Reformatory School
- Kingsbury Farm Reformatory, Newstead, for Protestant Boys

Details

Kingsbury Farm Reformatory was a training farm for Protestant boys that opened in Newstead in April 1893. It was operated on the 'family system', run by a married couple, and had capacity for six boys. Boys were sent to Kingsbury from other reformatories in order to learn practical farm skills, such as land clearing, dam-making, planting, tending to and harvesting crops, as well as assisting with house work. The boys also received school lessons five nights a week. Once boys were deemed to be sufficiently skilled and 'reformed' they were sent out to work on privately-owned farms. Boys placed at Kingsbury typically spent six months there before being sent out to service. Kingsbury Farm Reformatory closed on 1st July 1912.

Kingsbury was a farm that was originally intended to be a winery, but became an orchard (*Leader*, 10 November 1906). It received its first "lad" in April 1893. The department's annual report stated that Mr Brebner, the superintendent, preferred to begin in this small way, "not having had any previous experience with this class of boys" as had the superintendents of other private reformatories established around the same time. There were 6 on the farm by the time the annual report for 1893 was written, with others sent out to service, or to friends on probation.

The 1893 report stated that Kingsbury was run on the 'family system': "Mr and Mrs Brebner have no children of their own, and have evidently 'adopted' their wards". It noted that the farm was being connected by telephone with the nearest police station, as a precaution against absconding".

The 1906 annual report of the Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools described Kingsbury: 'This reformatory is noted for the homely manner in which the boys are treated. Mr Brebner (superintendent) is ably assisted by his wife, who devotes many of her evenings to educating the boys in reading, writing and arithmetic. All branches of farming are taught here'.

The local newspapers often carried reports of boys having absconded from Kingsbury. For example, an article from 1912 about 'a couple of young scamps' who stole a couple of bicycles, described the Kingsbury Reformatory as a farm 'from which one or more lads walk off at frequent intervals' (*Bendigo Independent*, 17 May 1912).

More info

Resources

- Victoria. Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools](#), 1887 - 1895. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1893-1896

Records

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

Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/kingsbury-farm-reformatory/>