

Charlton Memorial Home

1942 – 1966

Other Names:

- Archdeacon Charlton Memorial Home
- Charlton Boys' Home, Glebe

Details

Charlton Memorial Home, also known as Charlton Boys' Home, was established in Glebe by the [Anglican Home Mission Society](#) in 1942. It was a Church of England home that primarily accommodated boys who had appeared in Children's Courts, but also took a small number of girls. It was located in a building called 'Avona', which had previously been the [Church of England Home for Girls](#). It held up to 60 young people, ranging in age from seven to 20. Charlton could in some ways be described as progressive for an institution of its time, however former residents have also described major issues at the home with harsh punishments and sexual abuse perpetrated by staff and other residents. In 1966 Charlton Memorial Home moved to Ashfield.

Charlton was unusual for a Home for older children in that it took girls as well as boys. Though it was primarily a boys home, a small number of girls were admitted as an "experiment" so the boys could grow up with "adopted sisters" ('36 boys, girls run own delinquent home', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 June 1946). In 1946 this experiment was described as having been successful, and the superintendent stated that they would continue to admit girls, however by 1953 only boys were described as living at the Home.

Another way in which Charlton was progressive for a Home of its time was that it was conducted on the "honor system", with no locked doors. Children travelled to and from school and work without supervision, and groups of children were allowed to go out on excursions on the weekends. This trust system had, according to the article, resulted in only eight boys absconding in the four years the Home had been running. However, those who did run away often were not returned to the Home, and instead were sent to other youth training and detention facilities. Carl Beauchamp, in his submission to the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (submission no. 453), describes the positive impact this trust system had:

One thing in favor of how Charlton was controlled was an open policy of trust. The Gates were never locked although we were closed in by a high wall and once a month a few local girls and girls from Bidura Girls Home would come for a dance night or concert. We were able to go to church each Sunday at St Johns, walk to and from and we all walked to school at Glebe Technical School and any boy who had a job went to work each day. Each boy was able to retain a small part of wages and the rest paid into an account [the superintendent] kept. I mention this in all fairness, all in all and taking everything into account good and bad being in these homes was better than being with my mum. The concept of trust at Charlton was an idea that was good. But there was no love and punishment at times harsh and uncalled for

Children at Charlton were required to do the housework for the Home including washing up, tidying dormitories, and laundry work. They either attended local schools, or took jobs in the local area. They were also required to help with gardening, maintenance and construction at the Home, with children repairing roofs, moving stones, and building retaining walls. Carl Beauchamp describes the use of child labour at Charlton:

Every day our hands were cut and sore, cracked with your back in continuous pain for all of a full year, stopping only for meals and sometimes a rest. I imagine how the convicts at Port Arthur were made to lift near impossible weights. But the mind and body can do the impossible when you are forced to with no choice.

Often the lifting would near kill me but you did it to survive and to do what they wanted thus keeping you in the good books. Our reward for building the area for activities was we were taken to the pictures in Glebe to make up for the pain and suffering we all endured as convict labor at Charlton.

I was also made to assist an old local plumber put a galvanised new roof on a very long building. I had deep cuts on my hands which became infected and he [the superintendent] would not allow me to see a Doctor to stitch a few deep cuts.

Children at Charlton participated in sports and gymnastics, took music or singing lessons, and had a sewing room and library available to them. A class in building wireless radio systems was taught by one of the staff, and the children who participated in this class had installed a public address radio system in the Home. The Home had its own printery and workshop, and took orders for the printing of things like cards, invitations, and brochures for local businesses. Social events such as dances and concerts were also held once a month at Charlton, and girls from the nearby [Bidura Girls' Home](#) were invited to attend.

The children at the Home had their own "Parliament" where they would meet weekly to discuss the Home's rules, activities, plan fundraising activities (e.g. hosting musical recitals and concerts), and discuss how money raised by the children should be spent.

By 1946 Charlton had expanded to take in neighbouring property 'Strathmore', which was used as a hostel for up to 10 children over the age of 16 who had finished their schooling and were going out to work. These children were expected to hand their pay cheques over to the Home. Costs for their board and lodging would be deducted from their pay, they would be handed pocket money, and the remainder of their pay would be put into a savings account for them to access once they had left the Home. A newspaper article published in *The Sun* in 1953 stated that boys were encouraged to take up trades, and many had worked as mechanics, electricians, carpenters, boiler-makers, and pastry chefs ('In a Home Where the Doors are Never Locked', 22 July 1953).

Sexual abuse appears to have been a major problem at Charlton Memorial Home. Carl Beauchamp, in his submission to the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (submission number 453) and also in his memoir ('Come Home you Little Bastards', 2016), describes multiple instances of sexual assault committed against the boys by the staff and others at Charlton in the 1950s. He stated that boys were regularly watched by staff while in the showers, and they were often taken on camps, overnight trips, or invited to spend the weekend at the homes of staff, where they were routinely assaulted. He also stated that abuse took place when boys were at work. He described how the superintendent of the Home had an arrangement with the owner of a local pie-shop who would employ boys from Charlton as pastry chefs, and would then regularly assault the boys.

Punishment of children at Charlton occurred often. They frequently took the form of cold showers, beatings, and public humiliation. Children would receive these punishments for wetting the bed, talking out of turn, and disclosing sexual abuse. Carl Beauchamp describes the atmosphere of the Home:

[The Superintendent] was a very strict hard disciplinarian, the home was regimented and very institutionalised, if you were disliked by the staff, your time here was hard, if you were liked and did everything you were told you survived OK. The worst part of Charlton was the mental pain you suffered by trying to do what they wanted you to do.

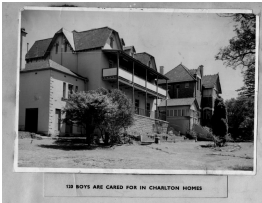
Charlton Boys' Home Glebe was sold in 1966 and moved to Ashfield, to what had been the Milleewa Home for Boys.

Gallery



C. of E. Girls' Homes at Glebe Point, for the transfer of which to Carlingford an appeal has been launched.

Description: This image shows buildings of the Church of England Girls' Homes in Glebe. The building in the foreground is Avona, then Tress-Manning behind it, and Strathmore in the background. Girls from the Home can be seen sitting on the steps outside of Avona. Avona and its grounds later became the Charlton Memorial Home. This image was published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 11 May 1928. The description reads: "The scattered and dilapidated buildings in which 150 girls are now housed. The building in the distance was formerly the residence of the late Sir George Wigram Allen."



Charlton Boys Home - Glebe

Description: This is a photo of the Charlton Boys Home at Glebe. It shows two large two-storey houses next to each other. The caption published with the photos reads "120 boys are cared for in Charlton Homes". This photo is undated - the date included is an estimate.

More info

Chronology

- **Charlton Memorial Home (1942 – 1966)**
 - Charlton Boys' Home, Ashfield (1966 - c.1979)
 - Robinson House (1970s - c. 1991)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Home Mission Society of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney \(1857 - 1997\)](#)
The Homes and Hostels Committee of the Home Mission Society ran Charlton Boys' Home at Glebe.

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, Parliament of Australia \(2003 - 2005\)](#)
Charlton Memorial Home is mentioned in submission No 453 to the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care.

Related Organisations

- [Bidura \(1920 - 1977\)](#)
Girls from Bidura sometimes attended social events and dances at Charlton Memorial Home
- [Charlton Boys' Home, Bowral \(1961 - 1969\)](#)
- [Avona Hostel \(1947 - c. 1962\)](#)
Avona Hostel was situated next to Charlton Memorial Home.

Resources

- [Man Jailed for Orphanage Child Sex Crimes](#), ABC News, 22 February 2013
- Carl Beauchamp, *Come Home You Little Bastards*, 2016
- [Homeless Dog Finds Three Good Friends](#), The Daily Telegraph, 22 January 1951
- [Glebe Care Homes for Children](#), The Glebe Society, 23 June 2013

Records

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

Records

- [Anglicare Children's Homes, Foster Care and Out-of-Home Care Records \(1932 - 2010s\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/charlton-memorial-home/>