

Thirlmere Babies' Home

1907 – 1913

Other Names:

- Harmony Home for Babies
- Babies Hospital, Thirlmere
- Home for Invalid Infants, Thirlmere
- Thirlmere Home for Invalid Infants

Details

Thirlmere Babies Home, also known as the Harmony Home for Babies or the Home for Invalid Infants, Thirlmere, was established by the State Children's Relief Department in 1907. The home aimed to keep nursing mothers and babies together and to provide care for babies without their mothers or who were sickly and could not be fostered. Once children recovered they were either boarded out, discharged with their mothers, or sent to Mittagong Cottage Homes.

Thirlmere Babies' Home was one of a number of homes established by the State Children's Relief Board under the Infant Protection Act 1904. It was intended to keep unmarried mothers together with their babies until the child was weaned, as the State Children's Relief Board was concerned about the very high rate of death amongst 'illegitimate' babies who were removed from their mothers and placed in babies' homes because the mothers had to support themselves.

The idea behind Thirlmere Babies' Home was to support mothers to breastfeed for an extended period. Once the baby was weaned the mother could try to find employment that allowed her to keep the child or the baby could be placed in the boarding out system. Thirlmere also nursed babies who were without their mothers.

The 1912 Annual Report of the State Children's Relief Board stated that many of the babies admitted to the Home were in poor health. The country location of the Home was seen as beneficial to the welfare of sick babies, and it was described as having "healthful surroundings". The existence of a small dairy attached to the Home, providing fresh milk, was also seen as a benefit to babies suffering from malnutrition. However, many of the babies admitted to Thirlmere Babies Home died whilst in the care of the Home. The 1912 report showed that, of the 56 babies that had been admitted to the Home in the previous year, 22 had died, mostly of infectious diseases. This number was considered to be a significant improvement over the mortality rate of sick babies who were not admitted to the home, which was estimated in the 1908 annual report of the State Children's Relief Board to be around 80 to 90 percent. Researchers from Picton Historical Society have found death records for 113 of the 215 babies they identified as being admitted to the Home in the 6 years it was operating, many of whom were buried at the Thirlmere cemetery. In 1978 a monument was installed at Thirlmere cemetery to commemorate these babies.

Thirlmere Babies' Home closed in 1913 and was replaced by Shaftesbury Home for Mothers and Babies, at Double Bay. The property was subsequently used as a guest house before falling into disrepair, and in 1939 it was destroyed by bushfires.

Gallery



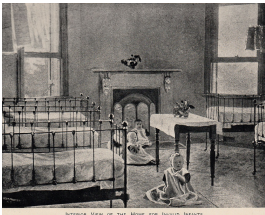
Home for Invalid Infants at Thirlmere

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows the exterior of Thirlmere Babies' Home.



Another view of the Home for Invalid Infants at Thirlmere

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows the exterior of Thirlmere Babies' Home.



Interior view of the Home for Invalid Infants

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows a nursery in Thirlmere Babies' Home with babies sitting on the floor.



Another view of the interior of the Home for Invalid Infants

Description: This is a digital copy of an image that appeared in the State Children Relief Board Report for year ending 5 April, 1907. The image shows the interior of Thirlmere Babies' Home with babies and nurses sitting on the floor.

More info

Chronology

- **Thirlmere Babies' Home (1907 – 1913)**
 - Shaftesbury Home for Babies and Mothers (c. 1913 - 1915)
 - Eastwood Home for Mothers and Babies (1915 - 1922)

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Relief Board \(1881 - 1923\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Infant Protection Act 1904, New South Wales \(1904 - 1923\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/thirlmere-babies-home/>