

# Fairbridge Society Inc.

1909 – 1987

- Other Names:**
- Fairbridge Society (London)
  - Fairbridge
  - Child Emigration Society
  - Fairbridge Drake Society Incorporated

## Details

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The Fairbridge Society developed from the Child Emigration Society, established in 1909 by Kingsley Fairbridge. Its purpose was to send British child migrants to different parts of the Empire where they would learn farming at special farm schools. The Fairbridge Society ran Pinjarra in Western Australia from 1913, and sent children to farm schools in New South Wales and Victoria from the 1930s, to Tasmania from 1952, and to South Australia from 1962. In 1987 it became Fairbridge Drake Society Incorporated, and in 2011 the Society merged with the Prince's Trust.

The Child Emigration Society (predecessor to the Fairbridge Society) was formed in 1909 in response to what Kingsley Fairbridge saw as many 'poor children, grubby and exhausted from lack of fresh air and food' in English cities. According to the Fairbridge Society's website, Fairbridge had been shocked to see 'workhouses filled with children, orphanages bursting at the seams, and the overall waste of young lives not able to reach their potential'. The Child Emigration Society was to pursue Fairbridge's 'vision splendid' of

*"little children shedding the bondage of bitter circumstances and stretching their legs and minds amid the thousand interests of the farm. The aim was to provide children with a sense of self worth, and the training and skills necessary for their future in the sparsely populated rural areas of the British Empire."*

In 1911 the Western Australian Government offered Kingsley Fairbridge land at Pinjarra, south of Perth, to enable him to pioneer his farm school initiative. The following year Kingsley and his wife, Ruby, travelled to Western Australia and established the world's first Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra. The objectives of the Farm School were to train children for rural agricultural life, with boys being taught farming methods and girls given domestic training. The first 13 child migrants to attend Pinjarra arrived from Britain on 1 January 1913, and by 1959 the farm school had received approximately 1200 child migrants through the Fairbridge Society.

The organisation became known as the Fairbridge Society from 1920, and went on to establish more farm schools in Canada and Australia. In New South Wales the Fairbridge Farm School established at Molong in 1938 was the primary destination for child migrants sent to New South Wales by the Fairbridge Society. The Molong Farm School was not run by the Fairbridge Society but by the Fairbridge Farm Schools of New South Wales company, which had been founded on the Fairbridge principles and arranged accommodation and education of child migrants sent by the Fairbridge Society. Although the two organisations were separate, the Fairbridge Society maintained control of the records of children living at Molong and also had the right to hire and fire the principals of the farm school.

From 1937 the Fairbridge Society also sent children to the Northcote Farm School in Glenmore, Victoria. Although Northcote Farm School was founded independently, not by the society, it was established following the principles of the Fairbridge Society, and the two shared a close association. Between 1937 and 1958 the Northcote Farm School received 273 child migrants.

The Fairbridge Society began sending children to Tasmania in 1952, however there had been plans to receive them before that. According to the *Burnie Advocate*, Kingsley Fairbridge saw Tasmania as the 'most desirable State in which to establish his second farm school'. An attempt by the Society to set up a school in 1923 failed because of Fairbridge's death in 1924. Another attempt in 1937 also failed. In 1940, a cottage was built at Hagley Farm School in northern Tasmania to receive children permanently evacuated from Britain and to educate and train them according to Fairbridge methods. They never arrived because by then World War Two had made the journey from Britain too dangerous. However, between 1952 and 1955, the Fairbridge Society placed nine boys at Hagley Farm School.

In 1957, the Society established a Home for child migrants in Exeter, Tasmania, known as Tresca. Most of the children at Tresca migrated under the parent following scheme by which the children came first and their parents followed afterwards. The intention was to make it easier for people to migrate who did not easily fit the criteria for it. Many of them were single mothers. Fairbridge placed its last child migrants at Tresca in 1970.

In South Australia, the Fairbridge Society opened Drapers' Hall in 1962. Draper's Hall was the last Fairbridge institution to open, and, along with Pinjarra, it was the last to close in 1981. Unlike most of the other children's homes that received children through the Fairbridge Society, Draper's Hall was not a farm school. It also exclusively accepted children who had arrived in Australia through Fairbridge's family migration program and who had been accompanied by at least one parent despite being unable to live with them immediately upon arrival.

In 1987 the Fairbridge Society became Fairbridge Drake Society Incorporated. By 1998, the archives of the Fairbridge Society were held and administered by the University of Liverpool. In their 1998 evidence to the Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants, Fairbridge stated that the Fairbridge Society ceased in 1982, that it was operating under a different constitution but that it continued to own the records of the Fairbridge Society. In 2011 in Britain, Fairbridge became part of The Prince's Trust, which in 2024 changed its name to The King's Trust.

## Gallery

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**Stewart Lee on SS Strathnaver, 1955**

**Description:** This is a copy of an image that was part of the exhibition: 'On their own: Britain's child migrants'. Stewart Lee was sent to Australia by the Fairbridge Society in 1955, aged 4, and went to Molong Farm School in New South Wales. This webpage is no longer in operation. This version was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 19 November 2016.

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **Fairbridge Society Inc. (1909 – 1987)**
  - The King's Trust (1976 - current)

### Related Entries

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- [Tresca \(c. 1958 - 1976\)](#)  
Date: 1958 - 1976
- [Drapers' Hall \(1962 - 1981\)](#)  
Date: 1962 - 1981
- [Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra \(1913 - 1981\)](#)

### Related Events

- [Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants, House of Commons Health Committee, Parliament of the United Kingdom \(July 1997 - 23 July 1998\)](#)
- [Visit of John Moss \(1951\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Fairbridge Farm Schools of New South Wales \(1935 - 1973\)](#)  
The Fairbridge Society sent children to Fairbridge Farm Schools and directed some of the activities of that organisation, but did not directly administer either Fairbridge Farm Schools or Molong Fairbridge Farm School.
- [Fairbridge Foundation \(c. 1973 - c. 2016\)](#)
- [Hagley Farm School \(1936 - 1976?\)](#)  
The Fairbridge Society sent child migrants to Hagley Farm School.
- [Social Services Department, State of Tasmania \(1934 - 1961\)](#)
- [Overseas League \(1910 - current\)](#)  
The Overseas League worked with the Fairbridge Society in bringing child migrants from Britain to Australia
- [Old Fairbridgians Association \(1974? - current\)](#)
- [Fairbridge Farm School, Molong \(1938 - 1973\)](#)  
The Fairbridge Society sent unaccompanied child migrants from the United Kingdom to Fairbridge Farm Schools of New South Wales and they were sent on to Fairbridge Farm School at Molong.  
Date: 1938 - 1973
- [The Children's Society, United Kingdom \(1881 - current\)](#)  
Children from The Children's Society homes in Britain were sent as child migrants to Fairbridge Farm, Pinjarra Western Australia via the Fairbridge Society.  
Date: 1925 - 1953
- [Beaufront \(c. 1949 - c. 1958\)](#)

## Resources

- BBC Cornwall, [Child migrants' harrowing memories](#), 29 January 2010
- Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse, [Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report](#), March 2018
- [For 500, a new start in life](#), Good Neighbour, 1 March 1958
- [Fairbridge Society Annual Reports - 1949 to 1979](#), 1949 - 1979
- [Government to proceed with first unit of Hagley Farm School](#), Advocate, 1 July 1940
- Health Committee, House of Commons, [Health - Third Report](#), 23 July 1998. *Relevance*: Fairbridge made a submission to the Select Committee on Health Third Report
- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 4 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 4 June 1998
- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 11 June 1998
- The Children's Society, [Memorandum by The Children's Society](#), Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998, 11 June 1998
- Tomblason, MacAllister, [Submission No 375 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 1 March 2004
- Lane, John, *Fairbridge Kid*, 1990
- Sherington, Geoffrey and Jeffery, Chris, *Fairbridge : Empire and child migration*, 1998

## Other Resources

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**Title:** Moss Report Implementation [Excerpt] - Case Histories

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 18 March 1955

[Details](#)

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**Title:** Moss Report [Excerpt] - Pocket Money

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 23 February 1955

[Details](#)

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**Title:** Moss Report Implementation [Exerpt] - Fairbridge

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 22 January 1954 - 12 July 1954

[Details](#)

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**Title:** Moss Report Implementation [Excerpt] - Health Examinations

**Type:** Image

**Date:** 21 April 1955

[Details](#)

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## Records

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### Records

- [Fairbridge Society, Records \[United Kingdom\] \(1908 - 2007\)](#)
  - [Fairbridge Society and Fairbridge Farm School Pinjarra, Records \(c. 1908 - 1981\)](#)
  - [Visit to Australia of Major-General Hawthorn, director and secretary of Fairbridge Society \(1964 - 1968\)](#)
  - [M3157 John Moss \(Child Welfare Expert of U.K\) \(1951 - 1952\)](#)
  - [M3846 Fairbridge Society of Tasmania \(1956 - 1971\)](#)
  - [General Records of the Society, Fairbridge-Drake Society \(1925 - 1985\)](#)
  - [Reports to the Minister, Child Welfare Advisory Council \(1967 - 1971\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, Class 5 \(British Migrants\) \(1920 - 1957\)](#)
  - [Fairbridge Society diamond jubilee dinner \[motion picture\], State Library of Western Australia \(1969 - 1969\)](#)
  - [Former Child Migrants Referral Index \(1913 - 1968\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/fairbridge-society-inc/>