

St Henry's Roman Catholic Asylum

June 1889 – 1950?

Other Names:

- St Henry's, Thursday Island
- Thursday Island Roman Catholic Orphanage
- Sacred Heart Mission Thursday Island

Details

St Henry's Roman Catholic Asylum, on Thursday Island, was an orphanage run by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It was part of the Sacred Heart Mission. The orphanage opened in 1889 and closed 1942 when the children were moved from Thursday Island to Cooyar Mission. The orphanage reopened for a short time in August 1948 with two residents, and was closed in the 1950s.

The orphanage, built by the missionary brothers, opened around June 1889. The Constitution, dated 20 June 1889, outlines the orphanage's purpose:

St. Henry's Roman Catholic Asylum is a charitable institution where children of every race and denomination are received to be boarded and educated by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Children of both Vicariates of New Guinea and New Britain belonging to the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred heart are entitled to be received into it... Passed 18 years of age, boys and girls can be taken away by their parents or guardians; or a place of employment, or trade will be provided for them by the establishment if possible. Should parents or guardians for a good motive be unable to pay expenses, children are kept free.

Girls and boys aged from approximately 5 to 16 years stayed in the orphanage. Residential care for girls was the responsibility of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, while residential care for boys was the responsibility of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

The first school on the Mission opened in 1887 and was known as the 'Catholic School, Thursday Island'. The first purpose-built school opened in 1890. It was primarily for indigenous children from Thursday, Hammond and Naghir Islands, but was open to children from Papua New Guinea and New Britain. According to *A Piece of the story* (1999), many of the children were placed in the school by their parents or guardians.

By June 1935 there were about 120 children attending the convent school, and about 30 orphan girls being cared for by the Sisters.

The orphanage was evacuated in 1942 during World War Two. By March 1946 Thursday Island was no longer under military control and civilians were free to return. The orphanage reopened in August 1948 with two residents. It is not clear when the orphanage closed but Departmental files provide occasional detailed lists of Orphanage residents including some from August 1948, and January 1949 and 1950. In 1961-1962 the orphanage building was remodelled into a two classroom school.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Missionaries of the Sacred Heart \(1885 - current\)](#)
Date: 1889 - 1942
- [Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart \(1885 - current\)](#)
Date: 1889 - 1942

Related Organisations

- [Cooyar Mission \(1942 - 1944\)](#)

Resources

- Lamb, Brother Barry, *History of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Thursday Island*, 2012
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Thursday Island, [Our History, Our Present, Our Future](#), 2014

Records

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

Records

- [St Henry's Roman Catholic Asylum and Catholic School Records \(1889 - 1942\)](#)
- [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/st-henrys-roman-catholic-asylum/>