

Swan Boys' Orphanage

1876 – 1942

Other Names:

- Swan Boys' Home
- Swan Protestant Orphanage Industrial School
- Swan Protestant Orphanage for Boys
- Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Junior Protestant Boys

Details

Swan Boys' Orphanage was opened in 1876 in Middle Swan. It had previously been the Perth Boys' Orphanage in Perth. In 1942, the boys were joined by girls who had been evacuated from the Perth Girls' Orphanage due to World War II. In 1943, Swan Boys' and Perth Girls' orphanages were combined to form Swan Homes.

In either 1908 or 1909, boys started to attend Middle Swan State School. Pre-school age boys were transferred from the Swan Boys' Orphanage in 1917 or near that time so that they could have kindergarten classes in the Perth Girls Orphanage.

For some years, the Swan Boys' Orphanage had been accused by the Perth newspapers of cruelty towards the boys in its 'care'. In 1908, for example, the *Sunday Times* ran a series of articles about the harsh discipline and inhumane treatment of boys at the orphanage – including such things as making children walk barefoot from the orphanage to North Beach; flogging them with leather straps; binding their hands for days at a time; and stripping children to administer floggings. The Bishop of Perth instructed the Anglican Orphanage Committee to conduct an internal inquiry into these matters on 8 February 1908 and a report of the findings was eventually published in the newspaper in March:

The Committee found that the statements made were, in some instances, ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE, whilst in others there was a FOUNDATION OF TRUTH, but so manipulated as to convey an entirely wrong impression. Sunday Times, 8 March 1908, p.5

The *Sunday Times* considered that the Anglican Orphanage Committee had conducted the inquiry with 'their eyes closed and their ears stuffed with cobbler's wax'.

In April 1911, the Colonial Secretary ordered the Under-Secretary Mr FD North to conduct a Departmental Inquiry into allegations of starvation at the orphanage. The 'North Inquiry' as it became known found these allegations to be 'entirely unsubstantiated' and the Colonial Secretary apologised to the Anglican Orphanages Committee for the 'inconvenience and annoyance' of the Inquiry (*Kalgoorlie Miner* 27 May 1911, p.8).

A few months later, the treatment of children at the Swan Boys' Orphanage was examined in a coronial inquiry into the 31 May death of a 9 year-old boy, George Jones, who had been resident there. The *Western Mail* reported (22 July 1911, p.44) that the inquiry heard evidence that the boys were 'under fed, insufficiently clothed and ill-treated'. The coronial inquiry had originally begun as an inquest into the death of George Jones, but the Coroner widened its scope to include the administration of the orphanage. In relation to George's death, the jury found that George died from toxæmia with his death accelerated by 'gross negligence and want of attention by

the matron' (p.44), who was subsequently committed by the Coroner to be tried on a charge of manslaughter.

The jury's verdict in relation to the administration of the orphanage was reported in the newspaper:

the management of the Swan Boys' Orphanage has been lax...due mainly to the indifference of the committee of management, who apparently have not exercised sufficient supervision...the administration by the Rev. A. Burton's manager was faulty, being principally due to a want of proper supervision and control of the staff of the Orphanage...the boys at the Orphanage were suitably clad, but...there was a want of variety in the food which made it distasteful to them...on many occasions...the boys of the Orphanage were short of bread...the jury advise that...the boys be given more variety in their food, more particularly in regard to solid food such as meat...

...owing to the want of supervision, there has been an indiscriminate use of the cane and corporal punishment which is not justifiable...Mr. Hockliffe was guilty of unsympathetic and unjust treatment of the inmates of the Swan Boys' Orphanage...Mr Jones is considered incapable of carrying out the responsibilities of either superindendent or acting-superintendent...Messrs. Coward and Elliott...are adjudged to be utterly unfitted to have the control of the Orphanage boys, and in our opinion have ill-treated those boys under their charge...

...there has been a neglect on the part of the State Children's Department...[the jury] recommend that an officer be appointed...for the exclusive purpose of paying surprise visits from time to time to all charitable institutions under the control of the State...[and that these institutions] be periodically visited by a medical officer, a dentist, and an oculist. Western Mail, 22 July 1911, p.45

In his response to the findings of the Coronial Inquiry, the Colonial Secretary upheld the conduct of the Public Charities and State Children Department, the Anglican Orphanages Committee and Reverend Burton.

A letter of appreciation of the *The Daily News* Orphans' Christmas Cheer Fund in 1915 gives another insight into life at the Swan Boys' Orphanage. The letter shows that donations enabled the children to occasionally have extras that were not part of their daily experience:

...sports material, games, and story books were bought for the children, and extra fruit and provisions were provided for their picnics. Letter, 23 August 1916 published in The Daily News 2 December 1916, p.10

Gallery



Swan Boys Orphanage, near Guildford, 1900s

Description: 'Swan Boys Orphanage, near Guildford, 1900s' is a digital copy of an image included (p.10) in the *Annual Report 1979* of the Department for Community Welfare. It is part of a history of the department, written to celebrate 150 years of European settlement in Western Australia. The caption reads, 'The Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, near Guildford'.



Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, Guildford [Middle Swan]

Description: 'Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, Guildford [Middle Swan]' is an image included (after p.22) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, etc.*, for the year ending 31 December 1900. The caption reads, 'The boys in this picture are wearing their working clothes'. This image shows a group of approximately 40 boys standing in front of a large three-storey brick building. Some of the older boys are holding long-handled tools, including hoes and shovels.



The Swan Orphanage Farm

Description: 'The Swan Orphanage Farm' is an image included (after p.22) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, etc.*, for the year ending 31 December 1900. This image shows approximately 10 boys and men standing in dirt yard, bordered by simple timber sheds, with a large two-storey house visible in the background. Most of the boys and men are holding long-handled tools such as mattocks and picks. The boys appear to be working bare-foot.



Squad Drill - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906

Description: 'Squad Drill - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906' is an image included (after p.18) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools* for the year ending 31 December 1906. This image shows approximately 50 boys walking in lines of four through a yard in front of a church. Most of the boys are barefoot.



Main Building - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906

Description: 'Main Building - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906' is an image included (after p.18) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools* for the year ending 31 December 1906. This image shows a large two-storey brick building with a large main entrance and one wing on the right hand side, and a church in the background. A person can be seen standing on the upper verandah of the building.



Robbing Bees - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906

Description: 'Robbing Bees - Swan Orphanage Industrial School for Protestant Boys, 1906' is an image included (after p.18) in the *Report by the Superintendent of Public Charities and Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools* for the year ending 31 December 1906. This image shows four boys and an adult wearing beekeeper hoods standing next to two rows of beehives. The adult appears to be showing the boys how to use a bee smoker.



Boy Scouts, Swan Orphanage, 1927

Description: 'Boy Scouts, Swan Orphanage, 1927' is an image included (after p.4) in the *Annual Report of the State Children Department, 1927*. The caption reads, 'Boy Scouts, Swan Orphanage, at Fete, Government House'. This image shows a group of approximately 40 boys and one man sitting or standing on the grass in front of a brick building. The boys are all wearing scouting uniforms.

More info

Chronology

- Perth Boys' Orphanage (1869 - 1876)
 - **Swan Boys' Orphanage (1876 – 1942)**
 - Swan Homes (1943 - 1959)
 - Swanleigh (1960 - 2010)

Related Entries

Run by

- [The Committee \(1868 - 1888\)](#)
- [Anglican Orphanages Board of Management \(1940 - 1954\)](#)
- [Orphanages' Committee \(1889 - 1939\)](#)

Related Events

- [Committee to Consider the Capitation Grant for Orphanages, Crown Colony of Western Australia \(29 March 1884 - 3 June 1884\)](#)
The cost of raising a child in the Swan Boys' Orphanage was examined by a Committee in the Legislative Council.
- [Coronial Inquiry into the death of George Jones and the management of Swan Boys' Orphanage, State of Western Australia \(2 June 1911 - 13 July 1911\)](#)
- [Departmental Inquiry into allegations of starvation at the Swan Boys' Orphanage, Colonial Secretary's Office, State of Western Australia \(1911\)](#)
Date: 1911 -

Related Organisations

- [Perth Girls' Orphanage \(1868 - 1942\)](#)
Girls from the Perth Girls' Orphanage were evacuated during World War II to the site of the Swan Boys' Orphanage.
Date: 1942 -
- [Safe Ministry and Professional Standards, Anglican Diocese of Perth \(2004 - current\)](#)
Professional Standards has been set up by the Anglican church as a service for people who have suffered abuse in out of home care run by the Anglican church or its agencies.
- [Seaside House, Coogee \(1931 - 1968\)](#)
Children from the Swan Boys' Orphanage came to the Seaside House at Coogee for annual summer holidays.
Date: 1931 - 1942

Related Legislation

- [State Children Act 1907, Western Australia \(1907 - 1948\)](#)
Swan Boys' Orphanage was classed as an orphanage within the meaning of the *State Children Act 1907*.

Resources

- Information Services, Department for Community Development, [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#), 2004
- Battye, JS, [The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia \(1912\)](#), 1912. *Relevance*: p.505-506
- Name withheld, [Submission No 319 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 17 March 2005
- Foster, Darren J, [Submission No 347 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 3 April 2004
- Foster, Darren J., *Neglected children in Western Australia : a case study, 1897-1908 : John George Foster*, 1997
- [Church of England News](#), The Inquirer & Commercial News, 10 November 1875
- [Canning Races \[Anglican Orphanages\]](#), The Inquirer & Commercial News, 3 January 1883

- [Report by the Superintendent of Poor Houses](#), 1882 - 1889. *Relevance*: 1883, 1884, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889
- Heritage Council of Western Australia, [Swanleigh Precinct](#), inHerit: our heritage places, 8 February 2015
- [State Children](#), The West Australian, 30 April 1904
- [The Swan Orphanage tragedy \[III\]](#), Sunday Times, 2 July 1911
- [Swan Orphanage Tragedy](#), Sunday Times, 1911
- [The orphanage sensation](#), Sunday Times, 18 June 1911
- [The Swan Orphanage tragedy \[III\]](#), Sunday Times, 25 June 1911
- [The Swan Orphanage tragedy \[IV\]](#), Sunday Times, 9 July 1911
- [Swan Orphanage Scandal](#), Sunday Times, 16 July 1911
- [The Swan Orphanage Scandal](#), Sunday Times, 16 July 1911
- [The Swan Orphanage inquiry](#), The West Australian, 18 July 1911
- [Report by the Superintendent of Poor Relief](#), 1890 - 1896. *Relevance*: 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896

Records

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

Records

- [Perth Protestant Orphanage / Perth Anglican Orphanages, State Library of Western Australia \(1872 - 1955\)](#)
 - [Anglican Diocese of Perth, Western Australia, Records \(1880s - 2010\)](#)
 - [Canon Richard Hamilton personal film \[videorecording\]: Swanleigh Anglican Hostel: Swan Boys' Home \(1943? - 1943?\)](#)
 - [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files, Colonial Secretary's Office, Chief Secretary's Department \(1883 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Files - Department of Aborigines and Fisheries \(1909 - 1920\)](#)
 - [Files - Departmental \[Education Department\] \(1 January 1885 - 31 December 2000\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
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