

Unemployed Boys' Farm, Wokalup

1932 – 1938

Other Names:

- Wokalup Farm School
- Bundidup Farm School

Details

The Unemployed Boys' Farm at Wokalup was established on the Bundidup farm by the Ugly Men's Association in 1932, for city-raised boys aged 14 to 18 years. Beginning with seven boys, 250 boys had been sent to the farm by 1937, either by the Child Welfare Department, by family or at the boy's request. After a period of five to eight months' training, boys were found positions on other farms in Western Australia. The Unemployed Boys' Farm closed around 1938. The site was later used by the Wokalup Research Station and, from 1999, Harvey Agricultural College.

The Unemployed Boys' Farm at Wokalup was established on 9 December 1932 by the Ugly Men's Association at the request of members of Parliament. An existing farm, Bundidup, comprising 2,270 acres, at Wokalup had been purchased by the Association earlier in 1932 and the homestead was renovated (the boys' dormitory, for example, had once been the homestead's ballroom where the Premier, Sir James Mitchell had met his future wife).

The purpose of the farm school was to provide agricultural training for up to 22 city boys aged 14 to 18 years, so that they could then work on Western Australian farms. Twenty seven boys were admitted in the first seven months of operation.

The regime at Wokalup was described in *The Daily News* in 1933:

The lads are divided into three working groups, the dairy group, the gardening group and the kitchen group, each being under the charge of a prefect, who is responsible for the behavior of the boys under his supervision, both in the dormitories and at work... The boys are picked for the different groups according to their temperaments. Whereas some of them are content to go on, day after day, milking and churning or ploughing, others want to see the results of their labours more rapidly. These boys are put into the gardening group *The Daily News, 9 December 1933, p.6*

A student who was interviewed by *The Daily News* at that time reportedly said that 'each boy had to pull his weight. If he was slacking or complained that the work was too much for him, he was gradually put on harder work until he became hardened.'

According to another news item in 1934, a 'great percentage of the lads' came from 'the homes of indigent families'. The Secretary of the Child Welfare Department, Mr HH Brodribb, supported the project and said that the Department placed boys there as a way of diverting them from the courts, the industrial schools, and prisons. By March 1935, the Child Welfare Department had placed 30 of the 100 boys who had been sent to the farm.

In 1935, it was reported that 'annual sports' days were part of the program at Wokalup. At this time, boys could also spend school holidays at the farm, learning agricultural skills.

By 1937, approximately 55 boys per year had been placed at Wokalup. Young people could be referred by the Child Welfare Department or their family, or self-refer. In evidence to the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System in 1937, the Chairman of the Unemployed Boys' Farm stated that a key motivation for establishing the farm was the perceived relationship between unemployment and 'youthful delinquency'. Staff included two instructors and a matron. Boys did not stay for the full agricultural year, but the boys reportedly received:

a thorough grounding in dairying, milking, attention to cows and calves; milk separation, cleanliness and hygienic conditions; how to feed and look after pigs and attend to them when they are sick; how to grow their own vegetables; they are taught work in the kitchen; how to drive horses, handle machinery and so on...according to the season they learn a little about shearing, lambing, lamb-marking, fertilizing, topdressing, etc. Evidence, Henry Willoughby Mann, Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System, 15 June 1937, paragraph 2377, p.185

In 1937, there were reports that the farm school was in danger of closing due to lack of funds and a number of functions to raise public interest and donations were held in that year and in early 1938.

On 12 April 1938, the Ugly Men's Association put the Bundidup farm up for auction. At this time, it was reported that the property consisted of a house with ten rooms, machinery and shearing sheds, a 'modern' dairy that had 'recently been constructed' and a milking shed.

By 1939, the land had been purchased by the Mental Hospitals Department. The Wokalup Research Station was established on the property by the Agriculture Department in 1950 and since 1999 the land has been used by the Harvey Agricultural College.

Gallery



Unemployed Boys Farm Bundidup, Wokalup

Description: 'Unemployed Boys Farm Bundidup, Wokalup' is an image published by 'Harvey History Online'. It shows a dilapidated brick farmhouse, which was one of those renovated for the boys' use in 1932.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Ugly Men's Voluntary Worker's Association Inc. \(1917 - 1948\)](#)
Date: 1932 - 1938

Related Events

- [Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System, State of Western Australia \(1937 - 1938\)](#)
The Unemployed Boys' Farm (Bundidup) at Wokalup was reviewed by the Royal Commission on Youth Employment and the Apprenticeship System.

Date: 1937 -

Related Organisations

- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
The Child Welfare Department placed boys at the Unemployed Boys' Farm [Bundidup], Wokalup
Date: 1932 - 1937?
- [Mental Hospitals Department, State Government of Western Australia \(1934 - 1954\)](#)
The Mental Hospitals Department, in 1939, purchased the farm that had previously been the Unemployed Boys' Farm (Bundidup) run by the Ugly Men's Association at Wokalup.
Date: 1939 -

Resources

- [The Success of Bundidup](#), Sunday Times, 20 October 1935
 - [A Splendid Service](#), Sunday Times, 28 April 1935
 - [Dairy herd assembling at the milking pens](#), Sunday Times, 23 July 1933
 - [Youth employment](#), The West Australian, 21 May 1935
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