

Northcote Farm School

1937 – 1979

Other Names:

- Lady Northcote Farm School
- Lady Northcote Recreation Camp
- Northcote School
- Northcote Children's Home

Details

The Northcote Farm School was established at Glenmore, near Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, in 1937. It was the only institution in Victoria to have been constructed specifically for child migrants. From 1937 to 1958, the Northcote Farm School received a total of 273 child migrants and from 1962 it accepted local children, including wards of the state. Northcote Farm School had accommodation for approximately 200 children. It was run by the Northcote Trust until the Social Welfare Department took over in 1976. It closed in 1979.

The Northcote Farm School was established at Glenmore, near Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, in 1937. The Farm was established as a result of a bequest by Lady Northcote, an admirer of Kingsley Fairbridge and his Farm School initiative. The Farm School was based on Fairbridge principles.

Although the Northcote Farm was established independently of Fairbridge it soon developed a close relationship with the Fairbridge Society, with the Society agreeing to select and send children from Britain to the farm school.

The Northcote Farm School received 273 child migrants in total, between 1937 and 1958 (Lost Innocents Report, Table 3.2 Numbers of Fairbridge Child Migrants).

A group of 28 children (16 boys and 12 girls, the first girls to be placed at the farm school) arrived on the *Largs Bay* ship on 17 May 1938, bound for the Northcote Farm at Bacchus Marsh. The *Age* newspaper reported that many of these children were related to the first group of migrant boys who arrived at Northcote Farm in July 1937.

Eric Goldspink was part of the sixth group of British child migrants to arrive at Northcote Farm School in 1939. He described a typical routine, with days starting with a cold shower at 6am, making your bed and undertaking household duties in the dorm of your cottage.

'In the morning, everyone had a job to do, whether it was cleaning the dining room, sweeping the dormitory or cleaning the bathroom – the jobs always changed'.

Children would then rush out to a paddock to take part in military-style exercises, before eating breakfast – porridge, bread and jam -and departing for school.

'It was more or less a seven-day week. Every day was housework; we had five days of school, sport on Saturday and Sunday School and church on Sunday. 'You got out of the village whenever you could, most of the time we went hunting, as we'd make money from selling rabbit skin' (Moorabool News, 2017).

The start of World War Two halted the supply of child migrants from Britain, which was suspended between 1939 and 1948. A number of children were sent from Northcote Farm to the Fairbridge Farm School at Molong, New South Wales. Eric Goldspink was one of 18 boys who stayed behind at Bacchus Marsh, tending to the farm.

From 1948 until 1958, 17 more groups of child migrants were brought to the Lady Northcote Children's Village.

Some children who were accommodated at Northcote Farm School came under the Fairbridge Society's family migration scheme, which was introduced in the late 1950s when child migration numbers were dwindling. The scheme brought children from Britain to Fairbridge institutions (as well as to Northcote Farm School), and they were later joined by and reunited with their parent or parents.

A document in the National Archives of Australia records the numbers of children at Northcote Farm in 1967 who had come under Fairbridge's family migration scheme. As at 4 May 1967 there were 3 children from the One Parent Scheme and 22 from the Two Parent scheme living at the institution in Bacchus Marsh.

A 1959 report by an inspector for the Child Endowment scheme noted that Northcote Farm School had accommodation for 200 children. However, it stated that due to the changes in policy in England and the reduction in numbers of child migrants being sent to Australia, there were only 140 children at the Home at that time, and there had been no new admissions since August 1957. The report also stated that after they had been admitted to the Home, very few children were discharged or transferred to other Homes before their 16th birthday. The majority of those that did leave prior to this time were either discharged to foster parents or returned to England.

The Northcote School Act was passed in 1960, making it possible for other children, including Victorian wards of state, to be placed at the Home. According to the preamble of the Act:

- the Northcote School can provide accommodation for at least one hundred children;
- the English trustees have recently been unable to secure sufficient children from Great Britain qualified under the trust for education and upbringing at the Northcote School
- there are now not more than 20 English children at the School
- the Australian trustees have resolved to disband the School at the end of 1960 unless additional children can be admitted.

Despite this change that led to state wards being accommodated at Northcote Farm School, the institution continued to be run by the Northcote Trust. In the mid 1970s, the Northcote Trustees sold part of the farm school site at Bacchus Marsh in Victoria and gifted the village to the Victorian Government (the terms of this sale were set out in the Northcote Trust Fund Act 1975).

From 1976, Northcote School was run by the Victorian government as a departmental children's home. Children were housed in cottages in a campus setting. It was government-run until it was closed in 1979. Funds were redirected to replacement family group homes and to support other regional family service programs. The property was transferred to the Department of Sport and Recreation to be used as the Lady Northcote Recreation Camp.

Since 1997, the site has been known as the Lady Northcote Discovery Camp, and is owned by Sport and Recreation Victoria. It is managed by the YMCA who use it for adventure and recreation camps.

One of its remaining buildings, House 12, was granted to the 'Old Northcotians', the former residents' society, along with a financial grant to assist in the repair of the building. .

In October 2008 the Lady Northcote Recreation Camp was included in Victoria's Heritage Register for its cultural heritage significance. It is the only institution in Victoria to have been constructed specifically for child migrants.

National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the Commonwealth and Victorian governments have agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

Gallery



Boys at Northcote Training Farm school at Glenmore near Bacchus Marsh - holding piglets

Description: This photograph was taken at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, Victoria. It shows two boys (presumably residents of the training farm) each holding two piglets.



Boys mustering cattle at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, near Bacchus Marsh

Description: This photograph was taken at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, Victoria. It shows a boy (presumably a resident of the training farm) on horseback with cattle on a farm.



Boys at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, forking hay into a cart

Description: This photograph was taken at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, Victoria. It shows two boys in overalls (presumably residents of the training farm) forking hay onto a small cart.



Boys making hay at the Northcote Training Farm, Glenmore, near Bacchus Marsh, Vic

Description: This photograph was taken at Northcote Training Farm school, Glenmore, Victoria. It shows three boys in overalls (presumably residents of the training farm) forking hay onto a small cart.



Immigration - Northcote Farm, 40 miles from Melbourne, Vic



Immigration - Northcote Farm, 40 miles from Melbourne, Vic



Boys for farm school

Description: This is a copy of the photograph of a group of boys destined for the Northcote Children's Farm. It appeared in *The Age* on 27 July 1938, p.8. The original caption reads: 'The principal of the Northcote Farm School, Bacchus Marsh (Col. S. J. Heath) and his wife, with the 28 English boys who arrived yesterday by the Orford. They left shortly afterwards for their new home, where they will gain farming experience.'



Northcote Farm School children disembarking

Description: This is a copy of an image that was part of the 'On their own - Britain's child migrants' exhibition at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne from October 2011 to May 2012.



Northcote Farm School - Victoria - Australia

Description: This is historical footage of the Northcote Farm School

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Northcote Trust \(1936 - current\)](#)
Date: 1937 - 1976
- [Social Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria \(1970 - 1978\)](#)
In 1976, the Social Welfare Department took over the administration of the Northcote Farm School from its non-denominational committee of management.
Date: 1976 - 1978
- [Department of Community Welfare Services, State Government of Victoria \(1978 - 1985\)](#)
Date: 1978 - 1979

Related Events

- [Fact-Finding Mission on Child Migration \(1956\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [The Children's Society, United Kingdom \(1881 - current\)](#)
Child migrants from The Children's Society homes were sent to Northcote Farm School
- [Fairbridge Farm School, Molong \(1938 - 1973\)](#)

Related Legislation

- [Northcote School Act 1960, Victoria \(1960 - current\)](#)
- [Northcote Trust Fund Act 1975, Victoria \(1975 - current\)](#)
- [Northcote Children's Home Act 1976 \(1976 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Immigration Museum, [Stolen childhoods](#), 2012
- *The Old Northcotean: magazine of the Old Northcoteans' Association, Northcote Farm, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria*, 1949 - 1951

- [On their own: Britain's child migrants](#), Australian National Maritime Museum website, 2010
- Owen, Nigel, ["Stolen innocence": memoirs of a child migrant](#), 2018
- Clough, L. M., *Northcote: our heritage an account of the Northcote Children's Home, formerly Northcote Farm School at Rowsley, via Bacchus Marsh, Vic.*, 1987
- Stocker, John B., *The Lady Northcote Farm School, Glenmore, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria: a home and training farm for British child migrants 1937-1976, as experienced by one of them*, 1990
- [Happy Reunions](#), The Argus, 7 January 1939
- [Learning the Art of Farming](#), The Argus, 18 September 1937
- [Beginning a New Life](#), The Argus, 18 May 1938
- [The first English boys for the new Northcote Farm School](#), The Argus, 7 July 1937
- [\[A big smile\]](#), Albany Advertiser, 16 August 1937
- [Lady Northcote Children's Farm School \(1937-79\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Northcote Farm School
- Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse, [Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report](#), March 2018
- [Training of Young Migrants: Funds from Lady Northcote Trust](#), Melbourne Leader, 30 March 1935
- Langfield, Michele, [More people imperative: immigration to Australia 1901-1939](#), 1999

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Northcote Trust Fund \(c. 1924 - c. 2010\)](#)
 - [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
 - [Child and Youth Migration Records \(1901 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Samuel MacMahon Wadham Papers \(1926 - 1969\)](#)
- There are records in the Samuel McMahon Wadham Papers relating to Northcote Farm School.
- [Visit to Australia of Major-General Hawthorn, director and secretary of Fairbridge Society \(1964 - 1968\)](#)
 - [Autobiography, 1983. \[manuscript\], Graham Budd \(1983 - 1983\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, multiple number series \(policy matters\) \(1922 - 1968\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, Class 5 \(British Migrants\) \(1920 - 1957\)](#)
 - [Records of Fairbridge Society \[M1841-1845\], \[19--\] \[microform\] \(1925 - 1976\)](#)
 - [Departmental Children's Homes Files \(1955 - 1987\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
- Item B256 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Northcote Farm School
-

You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/northcote-farm-school/>