

Heathfield Homes Reformatory School for Protestant Boys

1905 – 1915

Other Names:

- Apollo Bay Industrial Farm
- Heathfield Homes

Details

The Heathfield Homes Reformatory School for Protestant Boys, Apollo Bay, was opened on the 4 July 1905 at Apollo Bay and run under the auspices of the Church of England. Boys sent to the Reformatory were trained in farm work. The School closed on 29 October 1915.

The Heathfield Reformatory was opened on 4 July 1905 on the banks of the Barham river at Apollo Bay, on land donated by Colonel Heath to the Church of England for the purposes of establishing a “Wayward Boys Farm and Home”. The boys were housed in a newly built dormitory building whilst the manager lived in the pre-existing house built by Heath. The first eight boys sent to the Heathfield Reformatory were transferred there from the Wandin Yallock Reformatory. The first superintendent of the Heathfield Homes Reformatory School for Protestant Boys was the Rev. A. Maxwell.

The Home was sometimes referred to as the Apollo Bay Industrial Farm. In January 1906, a newspaper article stated that the Victorian government had directed that the ‘former Church of England Boys Reformatory at Apollo Bay’ be renamed Heathfield Homes and ‘set aside as a reformatory home exclusively for Protestant boys’ (*Geelong Advertiser*, 2 January 1906).

The boys at the Reformatory worked on the farm and in the small dairy that had been built on the property. They were also employed as farm labourers by local farmers. In the first few years of the Reformatory there were approximately 10 to 12 boys in residence, with the number of boys residing there never rising above 20. At least one boy was sent to the Reformatory as an orphan, not as a ‘delinquent’.

In March 1906 the assistant superintendent of Heathfield Home, Mr. Allan Virgo, resigned in protest of ‘grave abuses’ of the boys in the reformatory. He alleged the boys were made to work ‘excessively long hours’, were fed at irregular intervals, sometimes working for up to eight hours without food, and were ‘turned out’ of the reformatory at 18 with only a railway voucher, no money, and no way to get to the nearest railway station 25 miles away. He stated that these conditions had led to all but two boys absconding from the reformatory in the previous week.

These allegations led to an inquiry into conditions at the reformatory. The inquiry committee concluded that the allegations made against the reformatory were unfounded or exaggerated, and that the resignation of Mr Virgo had been made not in protest to alleged ill-treatment of the boys, but in response to other matters. Despite these findings, on 20 March 1906 Cabinet funding of the reformatory was halted until improvements in its management had been made.

In 1906, the Victorian Gazette reported a new superintendent, the Reverend Edwin Selwyn Chase, approved under the Neglected Children’s Act 1890 as a ‘person desirous of taking charge of ‘neglected’ children

gratuitously'.

Mr W.N. Dunstan was Superintendent from 1907 to 1910, and Mr Clyne was Superintendent from 1910 to 1915.

Absconding continued to be an issue at the reformatory following these changes in management. In July 1910 it was reported that 'owing to the difficulty of obtaining boys, and the difficulty of keeping the boys', plans were being made to sell the Apollo Bay property.

The reformatory remained open for another five years, however, in 1915, the Victoria Gazette announced that the Government had withdrawn its approval for Heathfield Homes to operate as a Reformatory School for boys of Protestant denomination solely; it closed on 29 October 1915.

Gallery



Heathfield Home Reformatory for Protestant Boys



"Reformatory" Apollo Bay

Description: This is an image of the Heathfield Reformatory at Apollo Bay. It shows seven boys standing outside of the reformatory building, and two women on the balcony of the reformatory. The boys appear to be wearing a uniform. The date this photo was taken and the names of the boys, women, and photographer are unknown.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Anglican Diocese of Melbourne \(1847 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Wandin Yallock Reformatory School \(1886 - 1905\)](#)

Boys were sent to Heathfield Homes Reformatory School for Protestant Boys from Wandin Yallock Reformatory School when it closed in 1905.

Resources

- Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary and Inspector for the year ... / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools.](#), 1896 - 1924. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1906-1916
- Boyce, James, *For the record : background information on the work of the Anglican Church with Aboriginal children and directory of Anglican agencies providing residential care to children from 1830 to 1980*, 2003
- [Boy "Bushrangers" : Reformatory Escapees](#), Bendigo Advertiser, 20 November 1912
- Care Leavers Australia Network, [Geelong and District Orphanages](#), No date

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Records of the Apollo Bay Industrial Farm \(c. 1907 - c. 1915\)](#)
 - [Records relating to history of Heathfield Reformatory \(c. 1905 - 1987\)](#)
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