

Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes

1911 – 1955

Other Names:

- Burnside
- Burnside Orphan Homes
- Burnside Homes for Orphans
- Burnside Orphanage

Details

Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes, on Pennant Hills Road at North Parramatta, were children's homes founded in 1911 by philanthropist Sir James Burns. Burnside pioneered cottage care in Australia and was a functioning village, with 14 cottages, all grand in scale, its own farm, hospital and school, and a gymnasium and swimming pool. In 1955 Burnside changed its name to Burnside Presbyterian Homes for Children, as the word 'orphan' was stigmatising and misleading.

James Burns (1846-1923) was a Presbyterian philanthropist, whose wealth derived from his shipping and business activities, including his part in the giant trading firm Burns Philp and Co. Ltd. He became aware that the Presbyterian Church wanted to establish a home for orphaned and destitute children. In 1909 he offered to purchase 45 acres of land in North Parramatta and transfer it to the Church, together with a donation of ?500. The offer was accepted. Despite the close links with the Presbyterian Church, Burnside was independent and was not controlled by the Church hierarchy. The Burnside Homes were established and maintained entirely by private donations, including from James Burns' estate.

The first home, No 1 Cottage, or 'Blairgowrie', was opened on 17 June 1911 by Lady Dudley, wife of the Governor General. Within 12 years, there were 14 homes on the North Parramatta site, caring for more than 500 children in cottage-style accommodation. Burnside had its own school with a gymnasium and swimming pool, a hall, a hospital, playing fields, and a farm, dairy and vegetable garden. There was also staff accommodation.

The cottage homes established at Burnside were unique in the early twentieth century. Most were designed to care for around 30 children in each home, which was considered to be a model for child care. The Board of Directors was receptive to innovations in child care, and Burnside was considered to offer a very high standard of care.

In 1921, Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes were granted 5 shillings per week for every orphan in its care by the NSW Government. This allowance was extended to a range of private institutions that cared for children.

In 1922, Burnside became involved in child and youth migration. 'Reid Home', bestowed by Mr and Mrs Andrew Reid, was built to house Scottish war orphans but as few such children could be found, instead was home to 22 Irish Protestant children, who arrived in December.

Although Burnside Homes were called 'orphan homes', few of the children were actual orphans, in the sense of having lost both parents. Children were usually committed to the homes because of poverty, family breakdown, illness and hardship. Parents were expected to pay fees to maintain their children and were allowed to maintain contact, although this was limited to set visiting hours, on rare Sundays. This separation was heartbreaking for children and their parents.

'We were Burnie Kids', a film made by Burnside in the period 1937-1940 to promote its work, depicts a typical (though made-up) family seeking help from Burnside. The made-up family has a father dying from war service, a mother exhausted by working and caring and live in squalid, dark accommodation in inner-city Sydney. When the father dies, the mother collapses and, reluctantly, agrees to her children being taken to Burnside by the Presbyterian minister. The arrival at Burnside, where the children walk through the great sandstone gates on Pennant Hills Road and join hundreds of other children playing in the open air, is shown as a happy ending for the children, and the film goes on to show children at school, in their dormitories and enjoying living, working and playing on the spacious grounds. The film is idealistic, but is truthful in that many families chose Burnside for their children during hard times. Although never ideal, Burnside was rather less bleak than many other children's institutions at this time.

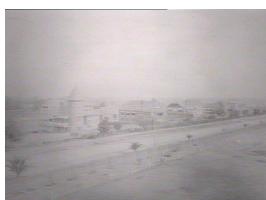
During World War II (1942-1945) the children and teachers of Burnside were evacuated to a number of locations in Springwood, to ensure the safety of the children and free up the land for the war effort. A short newspaper article from February 1942 states that the boys were to be accommodated at Beverley Park and the Buckland Hospital, the girls accommodated in The Oriental Hotel and 'Greenheys', and younger children accommodated at 'Heatherbrae'. The farm and buildings at North Parramatta were used by the Australian Army throughout the war, and children did not return until 1945.

Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes changed its name to Burnside Presbyterian Homes for Children in 1955, in recognition of the fact that most children in the home were not orphans.

Gallery



Burnside Orphanage, Parramatta



Burnside Orphanage, Parramatta: general view



We were Burnie kids

Description: This silent footage was produced by Burnside Homes to promote the work of the Homes and raise funds. It shows the Homes' association with the Presbyterian Church and how some children from poor families in the inner suburbs of Sydney were taken to Burnside Homes by Reverend Scott of the Presbyterian Metropolitan Mission. It shows children playing and learning in the Burnside Homes, and the grounds and buildings. The recent preservation of this footage was the result of a partnership between Uniting Care Burnside, Parramatta Heritage Centre and Anne Matthews. The footage dates from the period 1937 to around 1940, because it shows 1930s renovations to Wynyard Station, the Scots Church building (1934), a Plymouth PE Deluxe car (manufactured in Australia by Holden from 1934) and a set of traffic lights in Sydney CBD (1937). This URL was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 30 March 2018.



More info

Chronology

- **Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes (1911 – 1955)**
 - Burnside Presbyterian Homes for Children (1955 - 1978)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Blairgowrie \(17 June 1911 - 1952\)](#)
Blairgowrie was one of the cottages at Burnside Orphan Presbyterian Homes
Date: 1911 - 1952
- [Cumbrae \(1912 - 1987\)](#)
Cumbrae was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
Date: 1912 - 1955
- [Dunkeld \(1913 - 2000\)](#)
Dunkeld was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Airlie \(1914 - c. 1971\)](#)
Airlie was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Eskdale \(1915 - 1953\)](#)
Eskdale was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Novar \(1916 - 1952\)](#)
Novar was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Margaret Harris Hospital \(1917 - 1982\)](#)
- [Glencoe \(1918 - 1949\)](#)
Glencoe was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Robertson \(1919 - 1977\)](#)
Robertson was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Ivanhoe \(1919 - 1984\)](#)
Ivanhoe was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Son of the Rock \(1920 - 1979\)](#)
- [Blackwood \(1921 - 1984\)](#)
Blackwood was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [War Memorial Home \(1922 - 1982\)](#)
War Memorial Home was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Reid Home \(1922 - 1977\)](#)
Reid was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Ritchie Home \(1928 - 1941\)](#)
Ritchie was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Lincluden \(16 February 1931 - August 1989\)](#)
Lincluden was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Troup \(1933 - 1976\)](#)
Troup was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes

- [Ross \(1935 - 1985\)](#)
Ross was one of the cottages at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Christina Campbell Farm Home \(1941 - 1952\)](#)
Christina Campbell Farm Home was a residence for children at Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Murdoch Holiday Home \(1954 - 1990?\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Presbyterian Metropolitan Mission \(1900 - 1973?\)](#)
Presbyterian Metropolitan Mission was the charitable arm of the Presbyterian Church and was responsible for referring many families in hardship to Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
- [Presbyterian Church of Australia \(1901 - current\)](#)

Related Concepts

- [Child Migration \(1800s - 1970s\)](#)

Resources

- Community Affairs References Committee, [Lost Innocents: Righting the record - Report on child migration](#), 30 August 2001
- Shayler, Kate, *The Long Way Home: The Story of a Homes Kid*, 2001
- Shayler, Kate, *Burnished: Burnside Life Stories*, 2011
- Wingrave, Fred and Jansen, Alice, *Outside Burnside*, 2003
- Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, [The Forgotten Australians, Business of the House, Speakers Horner Ms Sonia; Goward Ms Pru; Ashton Mr Alan; Maguire Mr Daryl; Morris Mr Matthew](#), Hansard, 25 November 2010
- The Hills Shire Council, [Hills Voices Online: Heritage Sites](#), The Hills: Sydney's Garden Shire, No date
- Herbert, Harry (Rev), [Address to Uniting Church Historical Society](#), September 2011
- Uniting, [Burnside: Photos and Stories of the 20th Century](#), No date
- Australian Heritage Council, [A thematic heritage study on Australia's benevolent and other care institutions](#), 2016
- [Children Arrive](#), Nepean Times, 19 February 1942
- [Facing Future with Confidence at Burnside](#), The Cumberland Argus, 3 November 1954

Other Resources



Title: War Memorial

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

[Details](#)



Title: Airlie

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

[Details](#)



Title: Blackwood

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

[Details](#)



Title: Blairgowrie

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

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Title: Burnside Primary School

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Date: c. 2013

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Title: Cumbrae

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Date: c. 2013

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Title: Dunkeld

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Title: Eskdale

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Title: Ivanhoe

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Title: Lincluden

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Title: Reid

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Title: Robertson

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Title: Ross

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

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Title: Troup

Type: Image

Date: c. 2013

[Details](#)

Records

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

Records

- [Records held by Burnside Archives \(1911 - current\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, single number series with 'B' \[Child Endowment\] prefix \(1904 - 1974\)](#)
Item B125 of the Child Endowment correspondence files relates to Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes
 - [Correspondence files, class 1 \(general, passports\) \(1892 - 1970\)](#)
Correspondence files, class 1 (general, passports) contains a file on child migration to Burnside Homes
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/burnside-presbyterian-orphan-homes/>