

Ormond Training School

1962 – 1980

Other Names:

- Ormond School
- Ormond
- Ormond Thornleigh
- Thornleigh Training School
- Thornleigh Girls' Home
- Ormond School, Thornleigh

Details

Ormond Training School in Thornleigh, or Ormond School, was officially proclaimed and gazetted in October 1962. It had previously been called Ormond, Thornleigh, and had been an annexe to Parramatta Girls Training School. Ormond Training School was a facility for up to 104 girls, mostly school aged, and was a School for Specific Purposes. From April 1976, Ormond School became a coeducational institution, and began to admit boys. Ormond Training School closed in December 1977. From February 1978 until 1980, the former privilege cottages at Ormond were used to accommodate 22 school-age wards of the state. In 1980, Ormond School, a juvenile justice facility, opened on the site. (The Duffy Avenue area later became known as Westleigh.)

From 1946 to 1962, the site at Ormond had been a relatively small 'privilege' home for girls at Parramatta who were either ending their sentences, or who had behaved well. In 1961, however, reacting to a series of riots and disturbances at the Parramatta Girls Training School, the Child Welfare Department greatly expanded the Ormond/Thornleigh site from two cottages housing 28 girls, to a large complex housing 104 girls.

The new Ormond School was a 'closed' institution. Quinn (2006) has written that: 'Ormond contrasted with all the large institutions for boys built in the twentieth century (except the high security Institution for Boys at Tamworth) which were open institutions' One reason for Ormond being a closed institution was its location. In 1947, it had been in a sparsely settled area, but by the early 1960s, Ormond was surrounded by residential development (Quinn, pp.299-300)

Quinn also states that Ormond 'was supposed to have the same age range as Parramatta, the intention being to provide for the 'less sophisticated' girls, although it soon became the practice for older girls to be kept at Parramatta and younger ones at Ormond' (p.301).

The Department wanted to divide up the girls at Parramatta into groups, with the better behaved housed at Thornleigh, away from those at Parramatta and the new institution at Hay. The 1961 Child Welfare Department Annual Report described the planned new system:

When the main institution at Thornleigh is in use, there will be much greater opportunity to segregate those girls whose previous behaviour has indicated that they are likely to respond quickly to the educational, social and cultural programmes that are available, from the more sophisticated girls for whom a more rigidly disciplined training is essential for the development of stability and self-control.

The new buildings were costly. The Child Welfare Department Annual Report of 1966 stated:

Completed in 1962 at a cost of almost \$1,000,000 to a unique design which combines security with a sense of space, freedom and graciousness, Ormond School accommodates delinquent girls, mainly in the 12 to 15 age group.

The Ormond Training School was itself divided. Most of the girls were under the age of 15, and attended an internal school, while the older cottages were used as a 'Privilege Section' within Ormond. The Child Welfare Department report stated that girls selected to live in these privilege cottages and who were over school age went out 'to work in one or two local stores, and so prepare better for eventual discharge'.

The curriculum seems to have been deliberately designed to effect personality changes. There was an arrangement with the Hornsby and District Hospital for tattoo removal, and the school was described by the Child Welfare Department in a 1962 pamphlet as 'a practical expression of modern conception in re-education of delinquents'. It went on to describe the school's content:

General education is continued with courses in dressmaking, cookery and other Home Science subjects. Under specialist teachers training is correlated with the many aspects of home life. ... Through dress, deportment and cultural activities, opportunities are provided for personality adjustments.

From 1962, the new Ormond School had isolation cells, and the incidence of this punishment was 'much the same there as it had been in Parramatta' according to Quinn (2006).

A former resident of the home in this time described the institution in a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care:

At Ormond the punishment there for being disobedient, such as talking when you weren't supposed to consisted of scrubbing cement courtyards on your hands and knees with a tooth brush (I have always been curious, with the amount of girls scrubbing courtyards with toothbrushes, why the department never wondered why so many were needed).

Other forms of punishment were 24 hour periods of isolation, hours of bed drill, which consisted of stripping the bed and each sheet and each blanket would be inspected by an officer and if it wasn't correct with envelope corners and no wrinkles you would be instructed to remove it and put it on again until the bed was completed, then start the procedure over again and this could go on for a few hours at a time.

The shower cubical consisted of half doors where an officer would be continually watching you; again you were given no privacy. Every Saturday morning we would have to go into a cubical, undress, wrap ourselves in a towel and an officer would instruct us one at a time to come out of the cubical and she would look over our bodies, legs, arms then we would be instructed to drop the towel for further inspection.

We attended school on the grounds of Ormond two to three days a week the rest of the time we were washing, cooking, cleaning and mending.

Quinn writes that the opening of Minda Remand Centre in 1966, a new large new facility for boys and girls, had the effect of relieving pressure on Ormond and Parramatta. From 1966, Minda was where all girls were sent for medical examinations. It had a specialist facility for diagnosis and treatment of venereal disease in girls. (p.301)

According to Boyle (1996), by 1968, numbers at Ormond were beginning to increase, necessitating additional classrooms. 'There was also an increase in girls committed for absconding from proper custody and as being uncontrollable' (p.450)

Louise Ellis, who spent time at Ormond in 1971 or 1972, contacted Find & Connect looking for information about it, and agreed to share her memories of her time there. She paints a vivid picture of the buildings and the regime, including the distress girls suffered:

Standing in front of Ormond on the outside was a building we called Privileged Cottage as that is where the girls on their last part of their stay lived and ate. Then there was the administration offices in middle at front, down the left hand side were a hall for movies and stuff, school rooms and then laundry.

Working their way down to the bottom of property, still on [the] left were isolation cells, horrible cement rooms with the air vents that you get in walls but down near the floor. You had a bed like a camp bed, one blanket and maybe there were three or four cells, not sure, but not very nice to be locked in there and forgotten about for 48 hours like [an officer] did to me for singing in line once. Yes I realise I can't sing but that really was an over reaction I think. Anyway the bottom fence was a tall wire fence, there was a swimming pool down that end but I only remember using that once.

On the other side were the three separate dormitories, I can't remember the names for them off hand. The dormitory was a building that consisted of kitchen and dining room, a hall down to the recreation room opposite that was the bathroom toilet area, then the dormitory was three sections of six beds or eight beds with lower wall partitioning each section, with a glass window from rec room where officers could check on you without entering. At the far end was a section the size of a normal doorway with those bessemer bricks, not the solid ones. That was the breezeway into the dormitory, it could be close[d] off in bad weather. Of course all doors to all rooms were always locked.

Then [there] was the entrance they brought new girls in. Just near the door was another room they locked you in before processing & don't know why but that was dark. I was locked in with this girl I didn't know who arrived with me. We both sat there quietly not knowing what each other was like & when they came to get us she had pulled all her eyelashes out reek. Anyway right near that room was the office they processed you in then next to that they had other rooms for dentists and doctors and hair cutting.

Then you're back up to the admin offices at front. I can't remember if we had a nickname for Ormond itself. I hope this helps with your description of Ormond, it was mostly red brick and wire or bessemer bricks all round.

Louise Ellis also told Find & Connect her recollections of the scrubbing she had to do:

Yes we did have to scrub the cement outside, even in the rain but I remember using a normal wooden scrubbing brush and a rag to wipe the area, in 12 inch squares. The toothbrush was only when you were really bad LOL.

The opening of Reiby Training School in 1973 helped ease the pressure of overcrowding at Ormond and Parramatta, according to Quinn (2006, p.301).

From April 1976, Ormond School became a coeducational institution, and began to admit boys. According to the Department's annual report for 1975-76, this change was due to a 'continued decline in resident populations' in girls' training schools. The report stated that admitting boys as well as girls to Ormond made it possible for 'younger boys and girls (in some instances brothers and sisters) to share schooling and recreational facilities' (p.48).

In December 1977 Ormond's official departmental function was changed from 'training school' to 'establishment'. From February 1978, the former privilege cottages at Ormond were used to accommodate 22 school-age wards of the state. According to the annual report 1977-78, the unit 'operated for siblings of normal intellect who attend community schools' (p.61).

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse held a public hearing in Sydney from 26 February to 3 March 2014, inquiring into the experiences of women who were sexually abused as children, between 1950-1974 while committed in the Parramatta Girls' Training School and the Institution for Girls, Hay. At the hearing, witnesses gave evidence about having been sexually abused while at Ormond Training School.

Gallery



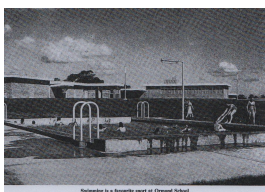
A dormitory at Ormond School, Thornleigh, with outlook on the School's swimming pool and tennis courts

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1966.



Morning assembly at Ormond School. The new classrooms adjoin the Recreation Room (showing on extreme left)

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1968.



Swimming is a favourite sport at Ormond School

Description: This is a copy of an image that appeared in the Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1963.

More info

Chronology

- Ormond, Thornleigh (28 October 1946 - 1962)
 - **Ormond Training School (1962 – 1980)**
 - Ormond School (1980 - 1984)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, State Government of New South Wales \(1970 - 1973\)](#)
- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1973 - 1975\)](#)
- [Department of Youth, Ethnic and Community Affairs, State Government of New South Wales \(1975 - 1976\)](#)
- [Department of Youth and Community Services, State Government of New South Wales \(1976 - 1988\)](#)

Related Events

- [Case Study 07: Parramatta Training School for Girls, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(2014\)](#)

Ormond Training School was briefly mentioned in Case Study 07: Parramatta Training School for Girls, but was

not the primary focus of the study.

Related Glossary Terms

- [School for Specific Purposes - New South Wales \(1923 - current\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Parramatta Girls Training School \(1946 - 1974\)](#)
Ormond Training School was an annexe of Parramatta Girls Training School
Date: 1962 - 1977
- [Mittagong Training School For Boys \(1947 - 1976\)](#)
When Mittagong Training School was closed the boys were sent to Ormond.
Date: 1976 -
- [Reiby Training School \(1973 - 1991\)](#)
Reiby Training School became a coeducational institution for school-age children following the closure of the Ormond Training School in 1977.

Resources

- Djuric, Bonney, *Abandon All Hope: a history of Parramatta Industrial School*, 2011
- Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, *Child Welfare in New South Wales*, No date
- Green, Christina, [The Life of Riley](#), 2014
- Boyle, Brian, *The Child Welfare Schools: Recollections of these unique schools and the men and women who taught in them often under considerable difficulty*, 1996
- [Marie Wood interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]](#), 13 May 2010
- [Effie Ray interviewed by Joanna Penglase in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\]](#), 28 November 2010 - 29 November 2010
- Jessamine, Sandie, *Borderline*, 2021

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)

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