

St Giles' Home

1937 – c. 1995

Other Names: • St Giles' Home for Crippled Children

URL: <http://www.stgiles.org.au/>

Details

St Giles Home, run by the Society for the Care of Crippled Children, opened in Newstead in 1937. It provided residential accommodation and schooling to children with physical disabilities, including wards of state. The Home closed in the 1990s.

St Giles Home provided accommodation and treatment for children who had contracted polio during the 1937 epidemic. It also ran an outpatient service and a special school. Over time, its services widened to include children with osteomyelitis, cerebral palsy, and injuries from accidents.

St Giles was a progressive institution. The staff attended interstate and international conferences and invited experts to Tasmania whenever they could. A *Launceston Examiner* article, published on the day that the Home opened, emphasised the modernity of the purpose built dormitories:

The big wards where the children spend most of their hours, are very modern, with lofty ceilings, modern lighting and so many windows that they almost have the appearance of glassed-in sunrooms. At the end of the boys' ward a huge window extends almost over the entire wall... Gay sun blinds are attached to the windows and give an added note of colour to the wards, into which has been introduced the modern idea of colour ... Vivid tangerine and green painted woodwork outline the glass doors.

When the Home opened 18 children lived there. All except one came from the country. They attended school from 9:30 to 12 and 1:15 to 3:30. One boy was apprenticed to a shoe repairer and went to work from the Home. Another child went to the local high school.

The children spent as much time as possible outside. One day, the boys had their classes on the tennis court and the next, the girls. To improve muscle control, the staff placed an emphasis on learning handcrafts, weaving for boys, and knitting, crocheting, and fancy work for girls.

A film made in 1958 shows that the children at St Giles Home had their own band. They had treatments at the home for various disabilities. They did extensive exercising, including swimming in a heated pool, to build up muscle control. The aim of education was to enable children to fit into the local school system. They spent their leisure time as they wished.

In 1966, the physiotherapy department was advised by Miss V Irwin from the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. The senior physiotherapist at St Giles, AS Gee, had been to that Hospital's physiotherapy department twice to study the treatment of cerebral palsy. That same year, management at St Giles established a nursery room where children could be brought in four mornings a week by their parents. A nurse from the Home staffed it

and parents provided voluntary help.

Crippled was a term commonly used until around the 1970s to describe people with conditions including muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, paraplegia and poliomyelitis. It was also common to refer to a person with a physical disability as a 'cripple'. In Australia, from around the 1930s, the term crippled was taken up by a range of organisations and institutions for people with disabilities. The polio epidemics in Australia during the 1930s may have been a factor in the emergence of Societies for Crippled Children and Homes for Crippled Children during this period. As the twentieth century progressed, the term became less common, and even pejorative. By the 1970s crippled was replaced by other terms such as handicapped or disabled.

At the 1968 AGM, AS Gee, asked that the term 'cripple' be dropped from the name of the home. According to the *Launceston Examiner*:

Mrs Gee said: 'The other day an eight-year-old boy told me he wished he could go to school with his brother'. Then he added, 'But I've got to come here because I'm crippled'.

Mrs Gee pointed out of the window to St Giles children playing on the lawns in the sunshine and said: 'You can see that they are not the halt, the maimed and the blind.

I don't think the word crippled has a good effect on the children'.

In 2013, St Giles no longer provides residential care or special schooling. Instead it offers support and services to families so that children with physical disabilities can live at home.

Gallery



St. Giles Home, Launceston, typewriting class



St. Giles Home, Launceston, typewriting class

More info

Chronology

- **St Giles' Home (1937 – c. 1995)**
 - St Giles Society ()

Related Entries

Run by

- [Society for the Care of Crippled Children \(1937 - 1988\)](#)

The Society for the Care of Crippled Children ran St Giles' Home for Crippled Children.

Related Organisations

- [St Giles' School \(1959 - 1985?\)](#)

St Giles' School was on the site of St Giles' Home for Crippled Children.

Resources

- Paterson, Jai, *70 years of Tasmania's St Giles, 1937-2007*, 2007
- Green, Anne, *Billycarts & wheelchairs : 75 years of St Giles*, 2013

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [St Giles Society Records \(c. 1937 - c. 1995\)](#)
 - [Films and Videos Produced and Acquired by the Agency \(1950 - 1985\)](#)
 - [General Correspondence, Department of Public Health \(1920 - 1956\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files \(1919 - 1998\)](#)
 - [General Correspondence-Hospital and Health Administration \(1932 - 1987\)](#)
 - [Ministerial Files-Unregistered \(1982 - 1985\)](#)
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