

# Bindoon

1936 – 1966

**Other Names:**

- St Joseph's Farm and Trade School
- Boys' Town

## Details

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Bindoon was established by the Christian Brothers in 1936 near Bindoon, north of Perth. It began as a 'farm and trade school' for boys aged 12 to 16 years from various backgrounds, including Australian-born boys who were wards of the State and those who had been admitted privately, and (from 1947 to 1966) child migrants from Britain and Malta. Boys' labour built most of the buildings at Bindoon. Since 1967, Bindoon has been a Catholic agricultural high school.

Bindoon, as it became known, was established by the Christian Brothers in 1936. In its early years, it became known as St Joseph's Farm and Trade School. It was located on the 'Mount Pleasant' property, around 10 kilometres north of Bindoon, donated by Mrs Catherine Musk in 1936. On 4 September 1936, one Christian Brother and two older boys from Clontarf were the first residents of the existing homestead. By August 1938, there were seven boys and two Christian Brothers at Bindoon and by that time there was a dairy to look after as well as the farming property to establish as a going concern. Coldrey (*The Scheme* 1993, p.267) said the conditions at that time were described in official reports as 'primitive', with a shortage of food and heavy work being undertaken.

In 1938, according to Coldrey (p.268) child welfare authorities began to send a few boys ('five to tend at any one time'), aged 14-16 years, to Bindoon. Boys were also sent from Clontarf (p.273) to labour on buildings that were being constructed at Bindoon. In October 1941 (p.271), Bindoon was gazetted as a subsidised institution that would admit boys who were wards of the State. At that time, the boys who were already at Bindoon were transferred back to Clontarf. Coldrey (pp.268-276) categorises Bindoon as an 'industrial school' and writes (p.276) that Bindoon after October 1941 was 'for the delinquent, the intellectually handicapped, the difficult and the most deprived Catholic boys in care'. This description overlooks the complexity of issues faced by children who might have been referred through the Children's Court or directly from child welfare authorities. In any case, Bindoon accommodated a broad range of boys during its period as a subsidised institution, with no more 'delinquent' boys sent exclusively to Bindoon after 1944 according to Coldrey (p.289).

From 1942, (*Signposts* 2004, pp.452-453) government admission and discharge figures are available, though may not be reliable. Boys who were placed out at 'service' (working-age boys placed with employers) are also included. Reports in some years show 'abscondings' or the number of children who ran away. These figures show that Bindoon was relatively small, with between 7 and 16 boys resident at year end in the period up to 1946. This does not include the forty 'working boys' that Coldrey (pp.275-276) reports were transferred to Bindoon when the defence forces took over Clontarf in 1942. Nor does it seem to include other boys who were transferred from Tardun (p.276) during the war years.

Any history of Bindoon must make mention of Br Keaney, whose tenure in leadership there has left a lasting legacy on the boys for whom he was responsible. Coldrey (pp.39-41, 45, 462-463) writes that Br Francis Paul Keaney, better known as Paul Keaney, was appointed as 'Superior' of Bindoon in 1942. Previously, he had been at Clontarf (1919-1929; 1936-1942), at the Christian Brothers College, Fremantle (1930-1936) and at Tardun (1929-1930). Keaney had a background in the Irish Constabulary and the Queensland Police Force before joining

the Christian Brothers in 1915. He had worked at St Vincent's Boys' Home in South Melbourne in 1918 and came to Clontarf in 1919. In 1929, Keaney moved to the wheatbelt parish of Mullewa to help establish the Tardun Farm School. In 1930 (p.95), Keaney was transferred from Tardun to the Christian Brother College, Fremantle (a day-school). By 1936, Keaney was again the 'Superior' at Clontarf and Coldrey (p.49) says that during the 1939-1941 period 'Keaney's relations with the Child Welfare soured because of his casual attitude to rules and regulations (other than those of his own making) and his excessive punishment of certain inmates which resulted in a long-running dispute with the department'. In 1941, Keaney apparently had what Coldrey (p.50) describes as the 'first of his nervous breakdowns'. Bindoon, which in 1942 was meant to accommodate a maximum of 'twenty to thirty' boys, according to Coldrey (p.275) was seen as a 'relatively light assignment for a man recovering from a nervous breakdown' where the 'pleasant rural atmosphere and glorious weather' would help restore Keaney to 'full strength and vigour'.

The outcome of Keaney's restoration: an immense building program undertaken in large part by boys who should have been receiving schooling; his enthusiastic encouragement of child migration; his widespread public acclaim; and the support of child welfare authorities for the building program at Bindoon are described by Coldrey (pp.277-288). Coldrey (p.277) has described Keaney, probably accurately, as having a profile in Perth akin to American actor Spencer Tracy's 'Father Flanagan' character in the 1938 movie, 'Boys' Town', which was shown regularly at Bindoon during the 1940s. Coldrey reports (pp.283-284) that Keaney 'actively and shrewdly cultivated visitors' and potential donors. It is possible that Keaney 'groomed' community perceptions and thus averted criticism of the experiences that were actually harming many of the boys at Bindoon.

In 1944 (Coldrey, p.290), Keaney was not reappointed as Superior and requested to be moved rather than remain at Bindoon in a non-leadership role. He was sent to Tasmania and Victoria and returned to Bindoon in 1948. A former resident of Bindoon at this time, Laurie Humphreys (2007, p.21) wrote about Keaney's return: 'We were warned that Brother Keaney was tough and we expected things would change. We weren't wrong! We were called together and told that we would be taught a trade and work would begin on a two-storey technical school. We were to be the labourers, to be trained in building skills.' This involved dangerous and difficult work for the boys. Humphreys continued (p.22): 'When rocks were required up to ten boys would pile onto the truck to enable the heavier rocks to be heaved up as best we could onto the truck...No matter how late it was', Br Keaney would 'send us out for a decent load and sometimes even come with us, to point with his walking stick at the ones he wanted loaded'. Humphreys (pp.24-25) also remembers being given more than one 'thrashing' as well as fun times in the bush, and swimming at Moore River where the boys went for holidays.

The era described by Humphreys began on 22 September 1947, when as Coldrey (p.307) reports, 20 boys arrived as unaccompanied child migrants from Britain with another 67 boys being placed at Bindoon by the end of that year. By 1953, the Child Welfare Department (*Signposts* p.453) reported that 220 boys who were unaccompanied child migrants could be accommodated at Bindoon and in 1954, the presence of child migrant boys from Malta were also placed at Bindoon. By 1957, there were 87 boys at Bindoon, with 13 boys classed as 'private admissions' (boys placed by family or others, who were neither child migrants nor boys who were Australian-born wards of the State). By 1964, there were four boys who were child migrants, and 32 boys who were admitted privately.

At the end of 1966, Bindoon's role in out of home 'care' ceased and the facility became an agricultural boarding school. It was called 'Keaney College' at that time, but was later renamed. In 2014, the boarding school continued as the Catholic Agricultural College, Bindoon.

The Christian Brothers' institutions Bindoon, Clontarf, Castledare and Tardun first received widespread publicity about child abuse in the early 1990s. In 1993, the Christian Brothers in Western Australia issued an apology and from 1995 have funded independent services to help with family tracing, counselling and remedial education for men who had suffered in their institutions. Many former residents of these institutions have shared their experiences and memories (bad and good) at government inquiries, in books and in oral histories.

Bindoon was investigated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Case Study 11: Christian Brothers.

## Gallery



### Construction of the administration building at Bindoon, Western Australia

**Description:** This photograph shows a boy shovelling building material within the half-constructed walls of the administration building of Bindoon. Another boy is standing above him on some scaffolding. This webpage this photograph was published on is no longer in operation. This URL was taken from The Wayback Machine and is dated 22 November 2012.

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### Bindoon Boys' Home [Western Australia] [picture]

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### Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon - Building

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### Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon - Path

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### Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon - Sir James Mitchell Plaque

**Description:** The inscription on the plaque reads "The Foundation Stone of this building was laid by His Excellency, Sir James Mitchell, K.C.M.G., Governor of Western Australia on the 15th October 1944."

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### Catholic Agricultural College Bindoon - Entrance

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### Quarters of the sisters, Boys Town Bindoon, 1952

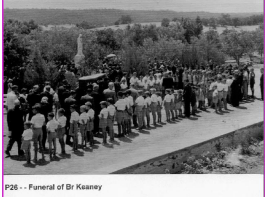
**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the Government Photographer collection held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows the outside of the building where the Sisters' lived at Bindoon.

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## Bindoon Slideshow

**Description:** This is a slideshow of photographs from the archives of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province. It was created by 'old boys' Peter Bent and Michael Hogan, with assistance from Ed Butler, using images from 'Institution Albums 1 and 2' (Holy Spirit Collection). It shows all sorts of scenes from life at Bindoon from the 1940s and 50s. Many people assisted with the identification of boys, brothers and staff to create captions for the images in this slideshow. DVD copies of this slideshow are available from Tuart Place.



## Funeral of Brother Keaney, Bindoon

**Description:** This photo shows boys lining up in a guard of honour for the funeral procession of Brother Paul Keaney. Part of Christian Brothers Institution Albums 1 & 2 (Holy Spirit Collection).



## Child Migrants at Bindoon

**Description:** In this photo, a group of boys are gathered in the recreation hall at Bindoon. Part of Christian Brothers Institution Albums 1 & 2 (Holy Spirit Collection).



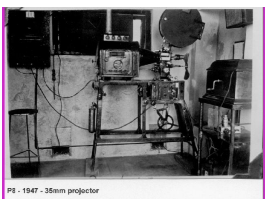
## Group of Boys, Bindoon

**Description:** Boys are grouped under the gum trees at Bindoon in this photo. Part of Christian Brothers Institution Albums 1 & 2 (Holy Spirit Collection).



## Group of Child Migrants at Bindoon

**Description:** Dogs and rabbits can also be seen in this group of child migrants on the steps at Bindoon. Part of Christian Brothers Institution Albums 1 & 2 (Holy Spirit Collection)



## Film Projector, Bindoon

**Description:** Movie nights at Bindoon are well-remembered among men who were there as boys. This photo shows the projector set-up.



## Boys and Visitors, Bindoon

**Description:** The formal suits worn by the group of men seen here with boys on the steps suggest they had some 'official' reason for visiting Bindoon.



### British Child Migrants, Bindoon

**Description:** In this photo are a group of boys who came to Bindoon as child migrants from Britain.

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### Seven Child Migrants from Britain, Bindoon

**Description:** Seven boys from Britain who came to Bindoon as child migrants are seen here in a happy group.

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### Deputy Director of the WA Education Department at Bindoon

**Description:** Laying the foundation stone for a new building at Bindoon was Mr TS Edmondson, Deputy Director of Education in WA. In addition to his work in education, Thomas Slater Edmondson (1886-1980) was involved in starting the Gould League of Western Australia.

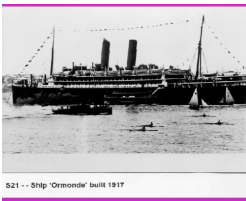
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### Governor's Visit to Bindoon

**Description:** Sir James Mitchell, the Governor and a former Premier of Western Australia, is shown here visiting Bindoon in the year before his retirement. The Governor is third from the left in the photo.

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### Departures from Britain and Malta Slideshow

**Description:** This is a slideshow of photographs from the archives of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province. It was created by 'old boys' Peter Bent and Michael Hogan, with assistance from Ed Butler, using images from 'Institution Albums 1 and 2' (Holy Spirit Collection). The slideshow has a small number of photos of groups of children about to depart from Britain and Malta in the 1940s and 1950s. DVD copies of this slideshow are available from Tuart Place.

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### Making Bricks, Bindoon

**Description:** This photo shows a boy working at Bindoon, making bricks.

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### Boys Town, Bindoon, new classroom, 1957

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the group of eight images titled 'Boys Town, Bindoon [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The images shows the new classroom building with boys standing on the balcony.

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### Bindoon buildings opening, 1953

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the group of six images called 'Opening of the Central Administration Building and the Technical School, Bindoon [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows lots of people on the lawns and pathways in front of the new buildings at Bindoon.

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### Buildings, 1952

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photoprint and is part of the group of five images called 'Building construction at Bindoon Boys Town [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows boys helping with the construction of the new buildings at Bindoon.

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### Motor mechanics, 1952

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photoprint and is part of the group of five images titled 'Boys at Bindoon Boys Town [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows boys in a motor mechanics class at Bindoon.

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### General view over Boys Town, 1952

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the group of four images titled 'General view over Boys Town Bindoon [picture]' held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows the grounds and buildings in the distance at Bindoon.

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### Dormitory [Dormitory], Boys Town Bindoon,1952

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the Government Photographer collection held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows of the outside of a dormitory at Bindoon in 1952.

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### Construction of Administration building, Bindoon, 1952

**Description:** This is a digitised copy of a photographic print and is part of the Government Photographer collection held at the State Library of Western Australia. The image shows young men constructing the new building at Bindoon.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Australasian Province of the Christian Brothers \(1885 - 1953\)](#)  
Date: 1936 - 1953
- [St Patrick's Province of the Christian Brothers \(1953 - 1967\)](#)

#### Related Events

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

Ross Fact-Finding Mission [British child migration] was interested in the welfare of British child migrants sent to Bindoon.

- [Case Study 11: Christian Brothers, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(2014\)](#)

## Related Organisations

- [Clontarf \(8 September 1901 - 1983\)](#)

Bindoon was established with one Christian Brother and two older boys from Clontarf. Some boys were returned to Clontarf in October 1941, when Bindoon began to admit boys who were wards of the State. Boys from Clontarf were also sent to Bindoon during its first years as labourers on the early buildings.

- [Father Hudson's Society, United Kingdom \(1902 - current\)](#)

Father Hudson's Society was one of the Homes in Britain that sent child migrants to Bindoon.

Date: 1947 - 1957

- [Tardun Farm School \(1928 - 2008\)](#)

It was not unusual for boys to be transferred between Bindoon and Tardun Farm School.

Date: 1936 - 1966

- [Catholic Child Welfare Council, United Kingdom \(1929 - 2003\)](#)

Date: 1947 - 1957

- [Castledare \(1934 - 1983\)](#)

Boys sometimes went to Castledare from Bindoon.

Date: 1936s - 1966

- [Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association \(1947? - 1970\)](#)

Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association [CEMWA] coordinated the placement of child migrants to Bindoon.

Date: 1947? - 1966

## Related Concepts

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

## Resources

- Community Affairs References Committee, [Lost Innocents: Righting the record - Report on child migration](#), 30 August 2001
- Hill, David, *The Forgotten Children: Fairbridge Farm School and its betrayal of Australia's child migrants*, 2007
- Humphreys, Margaret, *Empty Cradles*, 1994
- Immigration Museum, [Stolen childhoods](#), 2012
- Coldrey, Barry, *Good British stock: child and youth migration to Australia*, 1999
- [On their own: Britain's child migrants](#), Australian National Maritime Museum website, 2010
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, [Report of Case Study No. 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School](#), December 2014
- [Bob Taylor interviewed by Rob Willis in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 27 June 2011
- [Laurie Humphreys interviewed by Bill Bunbury in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\] 2010](#), 28 July 2010
- [John Walsh interviewed by Hamish Sewell in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 28 March 2011
- [Tony Costa interviewed by Rob Willis in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 11 May 2010
- [Carol Taylor interviewed by Rob Willis in the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project](#), 27 June 2011
- [Catholic Church schools and homes with the most child abuse claims revealed](#), ABC News, 17 February 2017
- Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse, [Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report](#), March 2018
- [Child Migration](#), National Archives of Australia, No date

- Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, [A piece of the story : national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for children separated from families](#), November 1999
- Coldrey, Barry, [Submission No 40 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 19 April 2003
- Walsh, John, [Submission No 41 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 23 July 2003
- Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia, [Submission No 55 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003
- Congregation of the Christian Brothers WA and SA, [Submission No. 65 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), July 2003
- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 4 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 4 June 1998
- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 11 June 1998
- The International Association of Former Child Migrants and Their Families, [Submission No 129 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
- Family Care Society, [Memorandum by the Family Care Society](#), Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998, 11 June 1998
- [Boy Migrants](#), The West Australian, 10 August 1938
- Welsh, Lionel P, *Geordie: an incredible story of the human spirit*, 2004
- Welsh, Lionel P, *Geordie: orphan of the empire*, 1990
- Welsh, Lionel P and Byth, Bruce and Welsh, LP (eds), *The Bindoon file*, 1990
- Bent, Peter, [Submission No 365 to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care](#), 25 March 2004
- [Forgotten Australians: Laurie's story - A child migrant story](#), Forgotten Australians: life stories, 2011
- Coldrey, Barry, [Submission No 15 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
- [Aunt Mary says...\[Bindoon\]](#), Western Mail, 22 April 1954
- Taylor, Robert Bernard, *Who am I?*, 2011
- *Bob breaks silence on sad Bindoon past*, Community Newspaper Group, 2 June 2011
- *Remember: Bob Taylor*, ABC local, 30 June 2011
- [Motion - youthful delinquents, detention conditions](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 2 March 1943. Relevance: p.2609
- [Address-in-reply \[Royal Commission on Child Delinquency 2\]](#), Hansard Archive 1870 to 1995, 26 August 1943. Relevance: p.136
- [Laurie Humphreys \[audio\]](#), ABC Perth - Australian Broadcasting Corporation website, 18 September 2007

## Other Resources



**Title:** The Christian Brothers' Agricultural School, Tardun, Western Australia  
**Type:** Image  
**Date:** c. 1936  
[Details](#)

## Records

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

### Records held by other organisations

- [Child Migrants Oral History Project \(2001 - 2006\)](#)
- [Tuart Place Historical Photos Collection](#)
- [Records of child migration to Western Australia, National Archives of Australia \(1947 - 1959\)](#)
- [Father Hudson's Society, Records \(1902 - current\)](#)

- [Records of Christian Brothers Children's Institutions in Western Australia \(1888 - 1983\)](#)
- [Catholic Archdiocese of Perth CEMWA and CMC Files \[Former Child Migrants\], Catholic Archdiocese of Perth \(c. 1928 - 2008\)](#)
- [UK fact finding mission 1956 part 2, National Archives of Australia \(1955 - 1956\)](#)
- [John Moss C.B.E. U.K. Child Welfare Expert. Visit to Australia. Part II, National Archives of Australia \(1951 - 1952\)](#)

There is information about Bindoon in the John Moss Visit to Australia file Part II, please see pp.29, 110, 121, 128, 137, 140

- [PHIND Personal History Index \(1938 - 1965\)](#)
  - [Bindoon boys town \[videorecording\] \[with scenes from Clontarf\], State Library of Western Australia \(1941 - 1941\)](#)
  - [Correspondence files, multiple number series \(policy matters\) \(1922 - 1968\)](#)
  - [Files - Community Welfare \("A" Series\), State Records Office of Western Australia \(25 August 1908 - 23 December 1990\)](#)
  - [Former Child Migrants Blue Index Cards \(1947 - 1968\)](#)
  - [Files - Aborigines Departments \(1 January 1926 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
  - [Files - Child Welfare, State Records Office of Western Australia \(1 January 1917 - 16 June 1972\)](#)
  - [Indentures \(Guardianship\) \(1947 - 1960\)](#)
  - [Former Child Migrants Referral Index \(1913 - 1968\)](#)
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