



"Linda", the former Presbyterian Babies' Home, Camberwell

April 2023

Uniting Heritage

For past residents, people affected
by adoption, and their families.



Uniting is the community services organisation
of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.

Uniting

Founding agencies

The founding agencies of Uniting Vic.Tas provided out-of-home care in Victoria. Under each agency listed below are the names of orphanages, children's homes, family group homes and foster care providers that were run by the former denominations of the Uniting Church – Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational. Uniting Vic.Tas continues to provide some of these services today.

Connections: Methodist Babies' Home (1929-1974), Presbyterian Babies' Home (1928-1977), Copelen Street Family Centre (1974-1991), Canterbury Family Centre (1977-2000), Copelen Child and Family Services (1991-1998).

UnitingCare Gippsland: Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys, Sale (1923-1978), Kilmany Family Care (family group homes), East Gippsland (1978-2002), Kilmany UnitingCare (2001-2010).

UnitingCare Harrison: Arthur Harrison Boys' Home, Hawthorn (1960-1977), Harrison House Youth Services (also known as Harrison Youth Hostel), Melbourne eastern suburbs (1982-1994).

UnitingCare Kildonan: Kildonan, North Melbourne (1890-1937), Kildonan, Elgar Road, Burwood (1937-1961), Kildonan Homes for Children, Melbourne's eastern and inner suburbs (1961-1993), Kildonan Child and Family Services, office in Whittlesea/Epping (1993-2007).

UnitingCare Lentara: Methodist Homes for Children, Cheltenham (1891-1953), Orana, the Peace Memorial Homes for Children, Burwood (1953-1988).

Wesley Mission Victoria: South Yarra Home (1900-1936), Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm, Burwood (1903-1986), Tally Ho Youth Services, Melbourne eastern suburbs (1986-1990s), Memorial Girls' Home, Fairfield (1922-1984), Moreland Hall, Brunswick (1936-1969), Lincoln House, Central Mission Hostel for Boys, King Street, Melbourne (c1939-1950), Wesley Youth Services, Melbourne eastern suburbs (1986-2017).

UnitingCare Wimmera: Wimmera Family Homes/Wimmera Community Care, Horsham/Stawell (1979-2000), UnitingCare Wimmera (2000-2017).

UnitingCare Wyndham: Werribee Support and Housing (also known as Bridges Foster Care Inner West), Werribee and Melbourne (1982-2017).

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania: Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, Tatura (1951-1964), Regent House Hostel for Girls, Elsternwick (1966-1977).



Bronwyn's message

Welcome to the first edition of Uniting Heritage for 2023.

This year we are offering something new.

Reflecting on how we can better support people in understanding their past or their family's story, the Heritage team have decided to offer tours of the main former sites where out-of-home care and adoption services were provided.

These sites will be chosen according to those who have expressed interest.

I understand that each of these places will have different meanings for every person. Some of you will have lived in these places, while others will have only heard about them.

These tours may help you understand your past or the past of a family member, as well as the broader history of out-of-home care and adoption services during this time.

And for others, such as Uniting staff and Uniting Church members, these tours may be an opportunity to better understand the work of the Heritage Service, or the impact of the past and current work of Uniting.

Whatever your connection to these places, everyone is welcome.

If you're interested in joining or learning more about these tours, please call Catriona Milne.

In other news, last year in October, Catriona was invited to speak at the Here We Are archivists conference in Canberra.

Catriona shared the unique work of the Heritage Service in searching for and adding to our records. Work such as capturing oral histories and partnering with groups such as Scouting Victoria, Public Record Office Victoria, and historical societies.

We understand the destruction of records in the past has had a devastating impact on many.

The Heritage team hope through these partnerships and efforts, we will be able to in part rebuild our records and help to piece together the past.

Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer

Tributes

Since the last newsletter we have learned of the death of the person named below. Our thoughts go out to families and friends.

† Jeannie Drinkell (Bennetts)

If you would like to let us know about anyone who has died, please contact Catriona Milne.



Updates from the Heritage Service

It has been a busy six months for the Heritage Service team. Here are some of the developments since our last newsletter.

Tally Ho reunion – help needed

The Heritage Service is planning a reunion in 2024 for people, and their families, who lived at Tally Ho in Burwood.

We highly value the participation of former residents in reunions and other events. Recognising that living at Tally Ho was a difficult and traumatic time for some people, we are committed to making it a safe, respectful and meaningful event.

If you lived at Tally Ho before August 1986 and are interested in helping with this reunion, please contact us.

Chris Wade Catriona Milne
T 0481 469 899 T 0402 969 621

We would be happy to talk with you about the event as involvement of those who lived there is important in its success.



Do you know these people?

We were recently given a photo from Tally Ho taken around 1963 or 1964 (pictured above). If anyone recognises themselves or others, please let Catriona know their names.

Orana Roses

You may remember that we were hoping to grow new plants from a rose given to a past resident of Orana when the site closed. Unfortunately, COVID-19 halted this project.

Swinburne Horticultural School were interested to see this as a student project, however their resources have been cut and they can no longer work with us. We thank them for their efforts and hope to find another way to grow roses from this surviving plant.

Kilmany Park Commemorative Plaque

This project has been delayed while the current owners of the former Farm Home for Boys are deciding about the plaque.

As the owners are still undecided, we are following up alternative sites with the local Council. Catriona visited Sale in March to discuss the options with a group of former Kilmany Park residents, who have been very patiently waiting. We hope to have some positive news in the next newsletter.



Mum's roots and story

By Glenys J. Rasmussen, daughter.



Several years ago, I received a letter from a long-lost relative.

In that letter she mentioned that “of course you know your mother was adopted”, something I most certainly did NOT know! My mother’s birth name was given and her biological mother’s given name. Nothing further. I immediately contacted my mother and asked her what this meant – was she adopted? Her emphatic answer was “NO, Aunty --- is mistaken”. I had a funny feeling Aunty was not mistaken, but let the issue go for a few years.

On my next visit home to Australia (I live in the U.S.), I broached the subject again and was decidedly told to drop it and that there was nothing to talk about regarding any adoption. I knew it was a difficult subject for my mother and a distinctly taboo one as far as my father was concerned. However, it was important to me to know the truth. It made no difference at all in how I felt about my mother, my grandparents, and the rest of the family I had grown up with and loved dearly. Gradually, as Mum and I had private conversations, she admitted she ‘might’ have been adopted but she knew no details. I asked her if she would consider allowing me to pursue the matter and if she would write a letter of permission to the government agency. She agreed and signed a letter.

I contacted the appropriate government office with the meagre information I had and after a couple more years of back-and-forth letters and a fee paid, I was told I needed to be available for an in-person interview before documents could be released. I requested that my sister

be allowed to represent me as I was too far away. The request was granted, she had her interview, and we received a folder of documents, which included affidavits and a reference to the Methodist Homes for Children, Cheltenham, Victoria (pictured on next page).

The documents were interesting but mostly unhelpful. The one document which gave us the most information was my mother’s birth certificate. It confirmed what my aunt had written all those years before. My mother’s birth name was Daisy Muriel Birch, daughter of Elsie Frances Isabel Birch and unknown father. She was born 23 November 1925 in Ballarat, Victoria. Elsie was 21 years old. Across the face of the certificate the word ADOPTED was stamped and a reference number. Another document referred to was supposed to list the name and consent of the father to Daisy’s adoption. It was missing. Repeated efforts to obtain it were met with not available’ responses. My mother passed away in 2013, making any further knowledge she may have had no longer available. So, I was determined to try another route and contact the Methodist Homes for Children. My father remained adamant that I do not pursue this, so out of respect for him, I tabled it all for a few years. After his death in 2017 I once again began the search for my mother’s biological father and whatever I could find about her adoption.

In February 2019, I learned that the Methodist Homes for Children in Cheltenham was part of the now Uniting Vic.Tas organisation. I emailed Catriona Milne. Almost immediately I received

a response from Catriona and was given instructions on how to proceed with my enquiry with FIND. I worked with a wonderful person at FIND, but somehow all the documents they received were lost. Then I heard nothing for some time thanks to the interruption caused by COVID-19. Then in July 2022 Catriona reached out to see how things were going. When she discovered the problem, she jumped in and explained that Uniting could now handle adoption issues and had me in the capable and great hands of Christopher Wade at Uniting within days!

In August, under his guidance, I completed the required AIS forms, sent all required documents and sat back to wait for what I thought would be another lengthy time. Not so! I received almost weekly emails from Chris checking in and giving me updates as he could on the status of my application. In October 2022, Chris informed me that we could set up our Zoom meeting for the required interview. It was great! Not only

did I get to 'meet' Chris, but he was able to clarify some information for me.

Following the interview, Chris then electronically delivered all the paperwork we had discussed in our meeting. I had a file filled with information and I finally knew who my biological grandfather was – Alfred George Weate, where he came from and how he fit into a family that I had wondered about through DNA testing. These records confirmed so much information for me and I will always be grateful for the support and amazing help of Chris and Uniting.

They also provided me with discoveries that surprised me and gave me moments of reflection and some sadness for my mother. For example, I discovered that not only was she adopted once, but twice! Elsie's brother adopted her first, Samuel Birch and his wife Daisy, through the Children's Court in Ballarat in 1925. I'm sure it was they who gave Mum her name Daisy. Then for an unknown reason, when Mum was 15 months old, Samuel and Daisy surrendered her



to the Methodist Homes for Children through their local minister in 1927. Happily, she only remained in the home for a few weeks when my grandparents, Horace and Isabel Fasham requested to adopt her and were approved.

It's so exciting reading these notes – how did the Fashams know Daisy was there to request her by name? She was then registered with a new name and a new birth certificate was issued. It was from that point on that she became Joyce Muriel Fasham, daughter of Horace and Isabel, born in Koondrook, Victoria. Her adoptive parents became my beloved grandparents and a whole new family was established.

It's been very refreshing and confirming to have the name and family of my grandfather and to learn more about him as I find snippets of information. The notes I've been able to read through and Chris's help has made it possible to learn more and more about Mum, her father and her mother. Still some unanswered questions, and that just makes it more exciting. Just think

what there is still left to be discovered! One of the most interesting things is that a contact I've made with a relative of my biographical grandfather, happens to be from a family I knew as a teenager in Melbourne! What a small world.

Chris and I have worked together now for six months and in that time he and Uniting have answered many of my questions, solved a good many problems, supported me through some emotional landmines and been at the forefront of it all. Their service blesses lives and I'm grateful to say mine was one of them. I no longer have to wonder about my mother's roots and story. She's home.



Former sites visit by Heritage Team

Recently we went on an excursion to visit past Methodist and Presbyterian sites. We reflected on the people who had spent time at each place. It was the first time some of us had visited these sites. The day was enriching and educational.

We gathered first thing in the morning at Lonsdale Street in Melbourne's CBD. Our first stop was 149 Flemington Road in North Melbourne which was the site of **Kildonan** from 1890 to 1937 before the move to Burwood. The house is in a dilapidated state, even the front door has fallen ajar and peering in we could really get a sense of the movements this house must have seen, with its many small rooms and occupants over Kildonan's 42 years at the site.

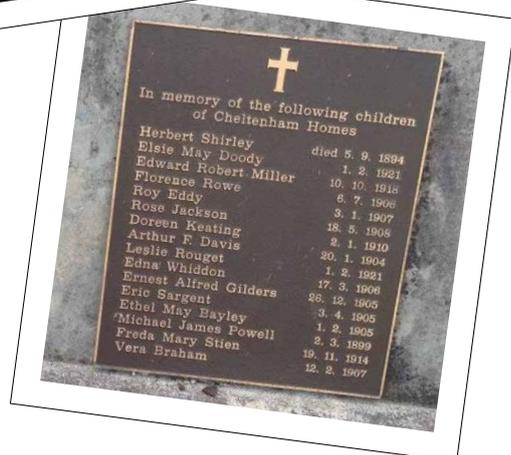
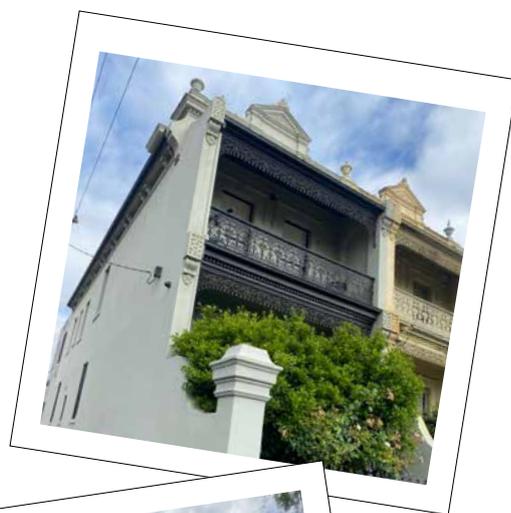
Next was a stop at **Livingstone House** in Carlton (pictured top right). This Home moved after three years to Cheltenham. Staying northside, we drove to the **Girls' Memorial Home** in Fairfield (pictured middle), a Home for Mothers from 1922 to 1973.

After a quick coffee stop, the team met up outside what was once the **Presbyterian Sisterhood** in North Fitzroy. This Home for Mothers operated from 1909 to 1978 and is now a private home but looks almost the same from the outside.

Heading southside our first stop was the location of the **Methodist Babies' Home**. Originally built in 1929, it was demolished in the 1990s, then rebuilt to look very similar. So even though it is not the original building, it is still very reminiscent of the hundreds of old photographs we have of the original building with babies, children and Mothercraft nurses in the foreground.

We have a photo from Orana from 1961 of eight residents and staff having Christmas lunch at Mordialloc Beach. It's a lovely photo with one person wearing a bright red sunhat. So, we took our lunch and picnic rugs and did the same, and quite by chance our volunteer Sally was wearing a red sunhat!

The **Methodist Homes for Children** opened in Cheltenham in 1891 after moving from Carlton and was on that site until 1953. Today it is site to Southland shopping centre and there is a commemorative plaque at Pioneer Cemetery (pictured bottom right).



Continuing our journey across the Methodist and Presbyterian sites.

We wanted to get a sense of the **Tally Ho Boys Training Farm** (pictured top right) area so headed up to Burwood East. Some of the Tally Ho past residents had told us that the old chapel formed part of one of the houses. Tally Ho Court was where we found this building. We stayed here for a while to take in the vastness of the site.

Just a ten-minute drive away in Burwood are some buildings of the **Orana Peace Memorial Home** for Children which were used from 1953 until relocation in 1988. When we arrived the original Rentoul Hall was in use and we were able to go in and have a look – a first time for some of us.

Uniting Heritage Service team at Rentoul Hall Orana, Burwood (pictured second from top).

A short walk down the road took us to the site of **Kildonan**, which is now part of Deakin University (pictured middle). Having moved from North Melbourne in 1937, Kildonan could now accommodate twice as many children – up to 100.

Our last stop of the day was to **Linda, the former Presbyterian Babies' Home** (pictured second from bottom) which opened in 1928 and became the Canterbury Family Centre in 1977. Linda is now an aged care facility.

The Uniting Heritage Service team at Linda (pictured bottom right).

It's hard to describe all the feelings we had over the course of the day, visiting these sites that operated for one hundred years between 1888 and 1988. We learned more of Uniting's history and the children and mothers were at the forefront of our minds. It was certainly a day to remember and was a privilege to be able to have this time and experience together.

We hope at some point to visit country Victoria to visit the other significant sites in Sale and near Shepparton.

Uniting is looking into how we could offer a six-hour version of this heritage tour to past residents and their families. If you think you would be interested in attending, please email Catriona at catriona.milne@vt.uniting.org





Babies' Home gathering

Last edition we wrote about gatherings attended by past Methodist and Presbyterian Babies' Homes residents and former trainee Mothercraft nurses (all attendees pictured). We shared photos, comments, and a story from the 1960's at Methodist Babies' Home.

My time at Presbyterian Babies' Home

The following piece was read by Sue Thompson at the 1970's gathering.

I began my tertiary education as a Mothercraft nurse in August 1973. I was 18 and had been working in administration roles in the city from when I was 15. Other nursing students and I were there because we loved children and wanted to have a role providing care for them.

We experienced every aspect of caring for a child during this time and were able to give you some experiences of life outside of the institution, with family visits, parties, BBQs, picnics, shopping and lots of walks. After three months we were able to choose a child we felt bonded with us and be their 'Nurse Mum'. In this role, we could spend as much time as we chose to (with permission) outside our normal rostered hours with that child.

Our education was broken into segments. The first three months was getting to know the rooms, the rules (which we had to sign), the cleaning routines, the other trainees, the children and the hierarchy. We were rostered on for eight-hour shifts over five days a week in rotation. Typical hours would be 7am - 4.15pm, 8.30am - 5.30pm, 12.30pm - 10.00pm and 10.00pm - 7.00am. The staffing was across three nurseries - Cherubs (six months-two-year-olds), Tod's (two-three-year-olds) or Cubs (three-five-year-olds). We spent a month on night duty in the first six months, attending to any wakeful children, feeding babies, changing nappies, putting clothes together for the next day, making the beds and hanging the washing out. We also prepared supper for staff and

breakfast for the children. Another night shift for two weeks was rostered towards the end of the course.

The 12.30pm shift generally started in the ironing room, where all the clothes were pressed and sorted into various sizes and age groups. Alternatively, kitchen duties, preparing all the meals for the day. As well as serving the children's dinner, bathing and settling for the night. Then came cleaning activities in kitchen and bathrooms. During these times we also were rostered in the milk room, preparing the formulas for all the children.

Other aspects of our training included:

- Two weeks spent in PLF wing, a hospital type area for mothers and babies needing extra assistance (newborn upwards)
- Two weeks attending the local pre-school
- Two weeks attending the Queen Victoria Hospital Maternity Ward where we were able to witness births and attend to new mothers and babies.

We had at least a trainee and a trained staff member known as a 'Staff Nurse' in each room. I assume the Staff Nurse planned the activities from day to day. A trained Sister would oversee the facility. Matron would oversee all the staff including the staff cook. Imagine being responsible for all those hormones!

Every three months, one group of new trainees would arrive whilst another group would conclude their 15-month course. Weekly lectures, homework and exams were also included in the roster. Of these graduates some were selected to become 'Staff Nurses'. As Staff Nurses they would live externally and work rostered hours supervising trainees.

In the final three months of my course, three of us trainees were chosen to run a new initiative which was a 'Family Unit' in a spare storage area. We cleared and cleaned and put up curtains, installed bedding and shelving and made it into a little home which we named Carinya (meaning home away from home in the local language). Two sets of siblings plus an extra child lived as a Family Unit with each of us being a solo 'parent', rostered throughout the day and night - sleeping, eating and playing together. In addition, the children would help cook meals and do dishes, bring the milk in, listen to stories, etc. In an effort to feel more like a family.

My Nurse Child was with me for nine months, going home with me for Christmas and visiting my mother in hospital, shopping and visiting my boyfriend's home. When he was adopted, the way he went straight to his adoptive parents with genuine happiness made it less sad for me. The family wrote and sent photos for years later. Eventually, we met up and my own three teenage children shared in that time.

My mothercraft nursing has to be one of the best times of my life and reading my diaries recently, reinforced the special times we all had as live-in trainees at the Presbyterian Babies' Home. I have since realised how well it was organised and some of the positives experienced by babies and children at that time.

Mothercraft nurses gathering

Recently, we were reminded that we had forgotten to share photos from a gathering of former Mothercraft trainee nurses from the Presbyterian Babies' Home (pictured below).

During this gathering, held in March last year, ten new photo albums were added to our collection.



Other services outside of Uniting



The Care Leavers Australasia Network

The Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) is a support and advocacy group for people brought up in care away from their family as state wards or children raised in children's homes, orphanages, other institutions, or in foster care. CLAN also assists family members of people who were placed in care. The founding members of CLAN are both care leavers who have been involved in awareness-raising and advocacy about the issues facing people who experienced out-of-home care as children.

T 1800 008 774

E support@clan.org.au



Open Place

Open Place is a support and advocacy service that provides direct assistance for people who grew up in Victorian orphanages and homes. This service helps people who identify as Forgotten Australians to deal with the legacy of their childhood experiences and provides support to improve their health and well-being.

T 1800 779 379

E info@openplace.org.au



VANISH

VANISH provides search and support services to adults affected by adoption including natural mothers and fathers, adopted persons and their family members.

T 1300 826 474

E info@vanish.org.au



Collections Corner by Olivia and Ramona

The Heritage Service are looking forward to bringing you this new regular feature, Collections Corner! In each newsletter we will showcase a different collection or project.

The work of the Heritage team, both to provide a service and work with the records, means we manage and preserve historical records. We enable finding records for those who request them, and also ensure the efficient accessibility of our collection to future requesters.

Collection checks are an integral part of every archival practice. As an example, the Records and Admin team, comprised of ourselves and Rebecca, recently inspected and reviewed a precious collection of Registers, Ledgers, Casebooks and Index Cards. These were from the Presbyterian Sisterhood, Presbyterian Babies' Home and the Methodist Babies' Home, ranging from the early 1920s to the 1970s. Our priority was to check the contents of all 26 boxes against the spreadsheets that accompanied them, to update entries, include additional information, then re-box and barcode the records before sending them to secure offsite storage for safekeeping.

See you next time at Collections Corner!

Support our work

The Heritage Service mostly relies on non-government funding. We greatly appreciate any donations that help further our work and secure this service into the future.

You can donate online and specify that your donation goes to the Heritage Services by visiting unitingvictas.org.au/donate

Get in touch

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About Uniting

Uniting Vic.Tas is a not-for-profit organisation working alongside local communities delivering a range of services for over 100 years.

The Heritage Service has been established for past residents and their families who were affected by adoption or who received out-of-home care provided by, Methodist and Uniting Churches. We help people access information about themselves or their family member's time in care and support them in their journey to better understand their past.

We work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

Learn more

unitingvictas.org.au

