



November 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, foster care and adoption 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 second edition of *Uniting Heritage* for 2023.

Our Heritage Service team provides a valuable service which supports people in understanding their own, or a family member's, past. It also helps those who spent time in out-of-home care connect to people from their past.

Importantly, it also has a key role in enabling us to take accountability for when we caused distress and pain to individuals and families who were in out-of-home care and adoption services in Victoria that were run by the former denominations of the Uniting Church: Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational.

I am heartened that many of the people impacted by those damaging experiences seek to connect with us, giving us the opportunity to help them gain a sense of their past.

When speaking with Catriona and the team I am often struck by the strength and resilience of the people who seek our services. Their journeys of discovery – of self through their past, and of their families' stories – are often so complex and challenging. And it is our absolute privilege to walk alongside these people as they piece together the fragments of their past, uncover truths, debunk assumptions, and connect in with their own sense of belonging.

The stories shared in this issue shine a light on the level of personalised support our Heritage Service team provides to those who are seeking to discover their place. Not only is the team meticulous in managing historical records, but they also guide people on what can be.

Our Records and Administration Officer Rebecca Liston's story 'Our Photographs' is a wonderful example of the personalised service provided by our Heritage Service team. I am proud of the team's work and dedication – and as they say, "We're always learning from the people we help."



Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer

Tributes

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

† Glenys Fisher † David McIlwraith

† Garry Pearson

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 gathering, March 2024

A lunch gathering is being organised by the Heritage Service team for those (and their families) who lived at Tally Ho's original site in Burwood until 1986. Past residents of Tally Ho are helping to plan the event to ensure it's a respectful and meaningful occasion.

Date To be advised – March 2024

Location Level 4, 130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Photos and other records documenting Tally Ho over time will be available for viewing on the day. And during the gathering, past residents and their families will have the opportunity to share their memories and learn more about Tally Ho.

We recognise each person had a unique experience at Tally Ho and have their own perspectives on how it influenced their lives. We also acknowledge that some past residents experienced neglect and / or abuse while living there. This gathering provides past residents and their families the opportunity to reflect on how they came to be the people they are today.

We've already received interest from people who lived at Tally Ho from the late 1940s through to the mid-1980s. We hope former residents from across those decades will join us at the March gathering along with their families and support people.

If you lived at Tally Ho at its original site in Burwood and are interested in attending, please contact:

Chris Wade: 0481 469 899

Catriona Milne: 0402 969 621

Uniting can help locate your friends from Tally Ho, and we can also support your travel and accommodation costs.

The Orana Rose project

Thank you to those who called with ideas about the Orana Rose following our last newsletter.

Devika, the social work student who's been working with us, has been in contact with the Victorian Rose Growers' Society to seek their help in propagating these roses so we can give them to people who lived at Orana, and their families. They have expressed some interest, and we're hopeful their volunteers will support this project.

Update on The Kilmany Park commemorative plaque

Since our last newsletter the Kilmany Park commemorative plaque has been designed and the stone chosen.

Unfortunately the project has been delayed due to factors beyond our control and a site had not yet been determined. Despite this setback, we hope to hold a special event to unveil this significant plaque early next year and invite all those who have enquired about the records from Kilmany Park.



Pictured: Tally Ho Village, from the air, 1985

KILDONAN
HOMES
2.6

Presbyterian and Scots Church
Neglected Children's Aid Society
Bank Accounts
Society

Absconded; returned same day
Absconded: Police informed
Father informed Miss Stewart that
come from West Australia & stay
back with him... address

Florence's Story: Filling the gaps

By Tonya Lamborn, daughter-in-law of a past resident of Kildonan.

My mother-in-law was adopted. She had always known this, but it was not until she was elderly that she sought her Western Australian adoption papers which showed the names of her birth parents – Florence and Henry, but little more. A few years after she died, I began the quest to find them, to discover the heritage of my children.

I was able to find the families of both her parents and trace them back for several generations, discovering a great deal of background information. Florence's mother came from an extended family of well-to-do, influential people and her father was the son

of a Scottish minister who helped form the Free Church of Scotland in 1843 in the 'Disruption'. So how did Florence, coming from such a respectable background, end up giving up an illegitimate child?

When Florence was 11 years-old her mother died in their Port Melbourne home from septicaemia after childbirth. The baby was adopted out almost immediately, and this is where Florence's story stopped – until she appeared as a domestic servant in Cottesloe, Western Australia (WA) in 1909, pregnant with my mother-in-law.

Image of some of Florence's records that were found

Florence was deeply troubled. She gave up her child and within a year had married a wharf lumper with whom she had four children. The last died as an infant. Within four years Florence had abandoned her family and taken up with an American man with whom she had another child. He returned to America and their son died in a foundling home in what is now Leederville, in WA. Florence's husband then divorced her. Eventually, she remarried and appears to have finally found some happiness – but what happened between the death of her mother and the birth of her daughter, my mother-in-law?

I couldn't find any records for her father before those of his death in 1911, by which time Florence was married in WA. His death notice lists each of his children – including the baby who was adopted out – and his stepson, giving no indication the family was fractured. How did Florence come to be in WA? And why was her baby brother given away?

A discovery in a 1912 issue of the Victorian Police Gazette led me to Uniting's Heritage Service. This snippet mentioned Florence's sister, who had absconded from her place of employment, and stated that she was a ward of the Presbyterian and Scot's Church Aid Society. A quick Google search and an email to Uniting and I received a phone call from Chris Wade asking how he could help.

Chris listened carefully to all known details of the family and then scoured the records kept by Uniting, keeping me well-informed of his progress by email and phone. He found details of Florence's sister in the archives, along with some unexpected ones for Florence. We then met online to go through every record he was able to find, which was quite a few.

Over two hours Chris explained the context of the records and, discussing information and deciphering handwriting, we pieced together the story of the sisters who had been admitted to Kildonan in 1903. Along with family names and addresses, there were details of the homes where Florence and her sister had been placed, and even records of the girls' bank accounts. It seems their father was 'a great drunkard' and the girls were removed with his consent from his care, as he was incapable of looking after them. Florence must still have had some regard for her father as she once ran back to him but was discovered and returned the same day. She had been put with a man who (I was able research later) was a young accountant whose wife was pregnant with their second child, and for whom Florence was 'to be generally useful'.

Thanks to Chris, I now know how Florence came to be in WA; she was brought there by her mother's brother, who lived close to Florence's future place of employment in Cottesloe. Clearly, there was at least a semblance of communication with other family members after the children were relinquished, and the death notice of Florence's father described him as a loving father, so it can only be hoped that things were not as bad as could be imagined.

“

Though I am much further removed from the story than most who seek information from Uniting, it made no difference to Chris. I offer him my sincere thanks for the care and interest he has shown, and the time he spent helping me discover Florence's story. Uniting's Heritage Service is a truly valuable gift to the community, for which I am very grateful.”





Orana reunions

By Lisa D'Acri, Case Worker.

It was again a privilege and honour to be a part of this year's Orana reunion where we saw many familiar faces as well as new ones. At the reunion people looked at photographs of the Orana cottages which sparked memories and sharing of their lives spent there. People also gave the Heritage Service team helpful feedback about the accuracy of the photographs and placement of the cottages.

One of the attendees was the daughter of a past resident – her mother had died when she was young. The reunion gave her the opportunity to meet two women who knew her mother as a young person. It was an emotional and significant meeting which helped her better understand her mother and learn more about who she was.

Next year's Orana reunion is shaping up to be an event of extra celebration as a past resident has asked if their significant birthday could be acknowledged on the day. This has sparked conversation about whether other past residents would like their birthdays or other significant life events acknowledged at the reunion. If you have such an event that you'd like to be acknowledged, please let the Heritage Service know.

At next year's reunion we'll offer past residents the opportunity to share a memory of their stay at Orana. We understand and respect that many people may not feel comfortable sharing in a large group so there's no expectation on anyone to share, however if you would like to speak, please let Lisa D'Acri in the Heritage Service know.



Where are you, Dad?

By Elaine Walton, daughter of a past resident of Dhurringile.



Some of you may remember Elaine, who wrote about her long search for her father. Her story ended with her wish that she could find exactly where he was buried.

I write this follow-up to my story 'Where are you, Dad?', featured in the Uniting Heritage newsletter. (November 2021, pp 10-11).

The story ended with me still not knowing where Dad – Richard Walton, who as an 8-year-old Irish orphan, child migrant was brought from Belfast in Northern Ireland to Dhurringile Training farm in country Victoria in 1950 – was.

After searching for him for more than 40 years with countless setbacks, I now know he is buried in the public area of Springvale Botanical Cemetery (SBC). The article ended with me waiting on a response from SBC.

I had requested they let me bring a surveyor in to find Dad's exact grave with SBC documents showing grave and row numbers. I also requested permission to have a cemetery approved plaque on Dad's grave.

Good news, I found Dad! On 20 January this year I attended SBC and met with the Operations Manager Simon, who had organised for the Springvale Botanical Cemetery surveyor to find Dad. Simon met me at the café, bringing with him two bunches of flowers and two cemetery vases, and then took me to Dad's grave. Operations staff had marked out Dad's resting place in yellow paint. I stayed at Dad's grave for a long time (pictured), deep in thought and experiencing many emotions, including relief, joy, sadness and closure that the search for Dad was over.

Collections Corner

By Olivia Harsan, Archives and Records Coordinator.



In this edition of Collections Corner, I want to share the details of a digitisation project Rebecca Liston and I recently undertook at the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) in North Melbourne (pictured).

We scanned six large Admission and Cash and Receipts and Expenditure Registers from the Presbyterian Babies' Home and South Yarra Home ranging from 1900-1970, five foolscap Executive Minute books from Kildonan ranging from 1934-1942, and three photo albums from Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm. 1172 high-resolution images were captured.

Our main priority was to digitise names and dates of births, however records such as cash books and minutes are also important to capture as they may include staff names, locations, and other contextual clues that can help searchers locate former residents. Additionally, the spine of each register was suffering from 'red rot', a degradation process found in vegetable-tanned leather, meaning we needed to prioritise digitisation of these records.

A special thanks to the staff at PROV for helping us along the way, in particular, Digital Projects Manager Daniel Wilksch who set up the studio and showed us how to make best use of the software and equipment. Thanks also to Anna Nottle and Grace Kinrade for their assistance with this project. See you next time at Collections Corner!

Our photographs

By Rebecca Liston, Records and Administration Officer.

The collections held by the Uniting's Heritage Service have been created through varying avenues. While the bulk of the records were given to us by the preceding agencies, we've also had records and photographs donated to us by past residents, their family members, past staff, and people whose lives have intersected with these homes in some way.

We're constantly acquiring new records, which keeps our Archivist Olivia incredibly busy. And we have a backlog of donated digital photographs requiring organising and indexing from before Olivia joined the team.

This year I began to tackle some of these digital photo collections. The aim was to discover photographs we may have overlooked and to make the collections easier to search through. While the photos had been saved with donation information, without a consistent filing system they take much longer to search through.

I started with our Kildonan folder. While most of the photos were of Kildonan, there were also photos of Presbyterian homes, with many duplicates to delete. There were also many named photographs of past family group homes and other buildings with their addresses, which I grouped together for better accessibility.

Next, I replaced our low-quality images of the building and grounds of the Methodist Home for Children in Cheltenham with photos found in old Methodist Annual Reports from the years 1910-1947. This meant scrolling through reports, some of which were up to 100 pages long.

I then tackled our Kilmany Boys Farm photograph collection. I wasn't as familiar with this collection, so I spent a long time looking through them and gaining an understanding of everything we had. The following week we received a records request from a Kilmany past resident who spoke of a specific memory of someone photographing him while he was in the workshop building a boat.

This immediately sounded very familiar to me – I went to the folder and found the exact photograph! It wasn't named but it did appear in a newspaper report (Pictured right: Page from Outreach 1973) that was saved for the separate names that appeared in the accompanying article. Not only was I grateful for the impeccable timing of organising this photo collection in relation to this request, but I was also reminded of the invaluable benefit of the time taken to familiarise ourselves with our collections.

My sights are now on our Tally Ho photo collections, which have both digital images and extensive physical albums. While these albums house incredible photographs showing life at the Tally Ho Training Farm throughout many decades, most aren't inscribed and don't list the names of those who appear in them. This collection will be one of the biggest projects for me so far, with the aim to bring organised photobooks to the upcoming Tally Ho reunion next year so past residents can help us name and properly date the photos. This will help make the collections easier to search and share with the people featured in them.

Do you know anyone in this photo?

We have a photo from Tally Ho entitled '1958 Sports Day tug-of-war' (pictured).

If you recognise yourself or anyone else, or know anything about the event pictured, please contact

Catriona Milne: 0402 969 621

Chris Wade: 0481 469 899



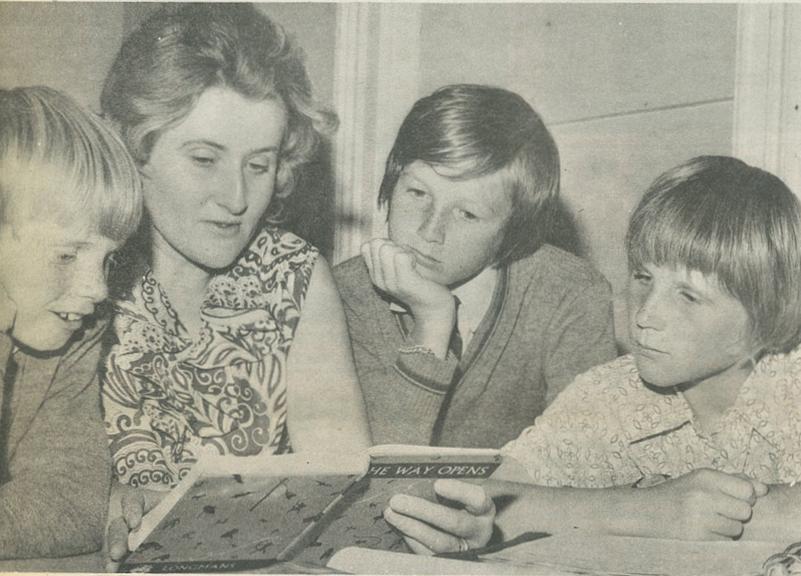
NY STORY



WILLING HANDS help load the hay on the tractor-drawn carrier.



SKILLS in many fields develop under the guidance of volunteer experts. Even boat-building and repair is included. Canoeing popular in the boating pool, a recent amenity.



...the one at left choose their own education. Any who need it get instruction from visiting teachers, above.



VIEW through the trees towards the new sports oval which the Moderator (Rt. Rev. R.C. Russell) will open on February 24th.

NOW?

The three boys were immediately brought to Kilmany Park. The oldest is retarded from an accident as a baby and the youngest is an officer in the RAAF. The middle one completed his apprenticeship as a panel beater. For a while he drove a taxi "because he liked meeting people". He married a girl who never knew her parents and they have two children. They keep in touch with the convener, superintendent and matron.

Philip had a murky family background and came to Kilmany Park as a state ward. He proved an outstanding athlete. He left to join the RAN. He is now a petty officer and happily married.

Another is now personnel manager of a large biscuit manufacturing firm, with 250 employees in his charge.

A number of earlier boys have gone on the land, first as farm laborers, then as share farmers and some have acquired their own properties. Few go on the land nowadays.



A FEELING FOR THE SOIL, above left, has inspired many past Kilmany boys to make a career on the land. But at the end of the day, whatever the preferred activity, there's always a happy community spirit, fostered by Mrs. Edna Frith, wife of the Superintendent.

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

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

T 0402 969 621

E catriona.milne@unitingvictas.org.au
unitingvictas.org.au

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

