



June 2021

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 and adoption services in Victoria. Below under each agency are the names of orphanages, children's homes, family group homes and 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 UnitingCare: Methodist Babies Home (1929- 1974), Presbyterian Babies Home (1928-1977), Canterbury Family Centre (1977-2000).

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), Wimmera UnitingCare (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

In February, Heritage Service Manager, Catriona Milne and I were called to present to the Victorian Inquiry into Forced Adoptions.

The inquiry heard how individuals and organisations, such as Uniting Vic.Tas, have responded to historical forced adoptions and the support being provided to those who were adopted and to their families.

We take the issue of forced adoption very seriously and acknowledge they caused significant grief, pain, and trauma over many years.

We are committed to ensuring every person who was adopted and their families have full access to their records and information from that time. We provide all the support they need through this often difficult and very emotional process.

We support the inquiry as an opportunity for everyone to better understand the enduring and long-lasting impacts of forced adoption.

As part of our submission, we told the inquiry about the work we do at the Heritage Service. The service has become a national leader in providing those who went through forced adoptions and their families with access to their information and records while also offering them support and care.

Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer

Tributes

Since we started work on the gathering for past residents of Dhurringile, we have learned of several people who have died.

We have been asked to share the following names:

† David Anderson † John (Jock) Eric Anderson
† Andrew (Andy) Barclay † James (Jim) Barclay
† Norman (Nuts) John Brown † Raymond (Ray) Brunton † Gerrard (Gerry) Frederick Cobban † Leslie (Les) Ferguson † Martin Hall † Terence (Terry) James Hawes † Terry Imray † Brian John Johnson † John Leighton † Alexander (Sandy) Maclean † Richard (Ricky) McAllister † Michael McCulloch † Manson Reid † Matthew Robert Smith † Robert (Rob) John Derrick Tremlett † Richard Walton † Kenneth (Ken) Yeates.

Other people whose deaths we have learned of are † Alastair Reid and † Vincent Brown.

If you would like to record a tribute, please let Catriona Milne know.



Updates from the Heritage Service

It has been a busy 6 months for the Heritage Service team. Here are some of the developments since our last newsletter.



Kilmany Park Memorial

Since the last newsletter, work has started on the memorial to men from Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys.

We met with 3 past residents in Sale to discuss their ideas and wishes. The idea is for a simple plaque to be placed outside the property.

Next steps are discussions with local government and deciding on the wording.

We hope to hold an event to mark the memorial and remember all of the children who lived at Kilmany Park.

Others who have expressed interest in the memorial will be contacted for their ideas.

The tentative plan at this stage is to place a simple plaque on a rock close to the original site. A gathering will be held in 2022 to mark the occasion to which all past residents of Kilmany Park and their families will be invited.

Brochure

We have created a new brochure about the Heritage Service, largely written by one of our consumer consultants.

You can view the brochure at unitingvictas.org.au/heritage-service/ along with past newsletters, updates from the service and contact information.

Indexing work

A new volunteer has joined the Heritage Service.

Judy is working on indexing the committee minutes from the Methodist Homes for Children.

She is about to start going through the names in nearly 4000 photographs that we now have from the Presbyterian and Methodist Babies Homes and putting them on indexes so we can find them more easily when people request records.



Since our last newsletter

Staff changes

Lisa D'Acri joined the team at the end of last year and is working 3 days a week.

Some of you will already have been in contact with her.

Lisa is a social worker who has experience in giving records to people who have been adopted and their families.

Victoria Lavery is due to have a baby in June and we have just appointed Christopher Wade to fill her position for 12 months.

Chris has worked at the State Library with records and is a counsellor. He will work full time as a Case Manager.

Victoria wanted to share a message with you all.

"After 3 years in this role, I start maternity leave in April 2021.

Looking back, it's been a wonderful journey.

I have received so much support and encouragement from you and always learnt something.

I have cherished my time as the Heritage Coordinator and have fond memories of getting to know some of you.

There have been many laughs and also moments of sadness that I have been privileged to witness and share.

Many of you continue to inspire me with your courage, your ability to forgive or to keep going through life's challenges.

Please continue to keep doing this, as I believe your story can inspire others.

Looking ahead, I'm excited about the next chapter in my life.

While I'm sure motherhood brings many ups and downs, I aim to meet the challenges head on and the good times with open arms.

I intend to return after 12 months of leave and look forward to hearing about what you have been up to when I'm back.

Wishing you all the very best over the next 12 months."

Orana Reunion

We held a reunion for past residents, families, and former staff of Orana on Sunday 25 April. We will have a report and photos in the next newsletter.

Operating Plan

As part of our planning each year, the Heritage Service develops an Operating Plan.

The plan for the current year includes such things as indexing records, the Memorial for Kilmany Park, 2 reunions and improving our responses to people who have experienced abuse in the past.

If you have any ideas about projects or services that you think we should consider, please contact Catriona Milne or speak with your personal contact in the Heritage Service.

We also plan to have a box for ideas at every reunion and gathering in the future.

Searching at the Heritage Service

By Rebecca Liston,
Administration
Support Worker.



An important part of the service we provide is conducting searches to locate family members not known before or where contact may have been lost.

Sometimes we also look for other residents or significant people at the request of those who contact us.

I took over these searches last year, spending days navigating websites and databases such as Ancestry.com and Birth, Deaths and Marriages while working from home.

Fortunately, this has been a service that we could continue remotely during COVID, despite some limited access to searching records in person at the time of tighter restrictions in Victoria.

Every request has been unique in its aims and outcomes, ranging from a simple search for a relative whose name and circumstances were known to the requester, to searching for any living relatives of a newly discovered branch of a family tree.

Ancestry.com is an amazing resource for records and information, but it is the family tree function that I have found most helpful.

Members of the public can create their own trees, adding in names, dates and sometimes even attaching images and articles of a person. These are then accessible for anyone.

One person can appear on many different trees, with information sometimes varying between

each, such as a nickname being preferred over a full name.

I recently did a search for a woman who immigrated to Australia from the UK.

Her three older brothers immigrated earlier than her and were put into care. The family was then interested in locating this sister.

Through Ancestry.com we were able to find her and her second husband on an electoral roll, as well as on a couple of family trees, one of which even had an image of her.

We could also see there was no date of death listed for her, which was confirmed through a search at Birth, Death and Marriages. We were also able to confirm her registered name against her husband's death certificate.

The last search was through the electoral roll, which listed an address to someone matching her name.

We wrote to this address and got a reply that she was the person we were looking for.

As a searcher, it is always disappointing when there is no new information found through these processes.

However it has felt particularly rewarding over this last year during times of isolation that we have been able to support people to connect with those they have asked us to find.



Dhurringile gathering

On 15 April this year, a gathering was held in Shepparton for past residents of Dhurringile.

Dhurringile was a home that operated from December 1950 until 1964.

About 100 boys lived at Dhurringile over that time.

Most of the young people and children who lived there came from Scotland and arrived by ship.

One of the participants sent in the below note following the gathering.

“Just a short note to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you, the Uniting committee and the many helpers who put the Dhurringile reunion together.

Whilst it’s 57 years since our days in Dhurringile, it seemed in many respects that we’re all the same kids now as we were back then.

Whilst our weathered appearances underline the years, I sensed much of the mischief is still there!

I particularly enjoyed reviewing the images and albums on display and the sharing of the memories of those past and present at Dhurringile and the later life experiences.

I congratulate you and the Uniting team who planned and arranged this event and wish you, and all, the very best in your future work.”



One of the men brought a trunk from his time at Dhurringile to display on the day.



Kilmany Park memories

Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys operated from 1929 to 1977 and was the only home that kept a register of names from the first boy who lived there, to the last.

That is how we know 967 boys lived there. Darryl has written a detailed and fascinating story of his time at Kilmany Park, near Sale.

The story is over 49 pages in length.

He writes about school, the staff, the work, the meals, and the life outside Kilmany Park in the towns of Sale and Maffra.

With Darryl's consent, we have chosen several segments to share.

Darryl's insights show the value of gatherings and reunions and the importance of records in understanding each person's story.

Darryl and his brother Neville lived at Kilmany Park from May 1948 to July 1950.

Darryl first contacted the Heritage Service in 2017 when he responded to a notice advertising a gathering for past residents.

Below are excerpts from Darryl's writings, a photograph, and a hand drawn map of the ground floor of the home.

This may be of particular interest to those reading this who lived at Kilmany Park, or had family members who lived there.

"We arrived at Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys, herein after just called Kilmany, on or about 25 May 1948.

I don't know who took us there from Maffra, but I remember that we had just one suitcase each and I had my push bike, with one pedal missing.

Summer holidays

At Lakes Entrance we stayed at a place called Whiter's Camping Ground that had some cabins, but mostly camping.

The adults stayed in the cabins and the kids stayed in big old canvas army tents that we had to erect ourselves.

It was a bit hard as first the frame had to be erected, then the heavy canvas and fly were put over it.

We slept on straw palliases that were just big hessian bags that we filled with straw, with no sheets just a couple of blankets.

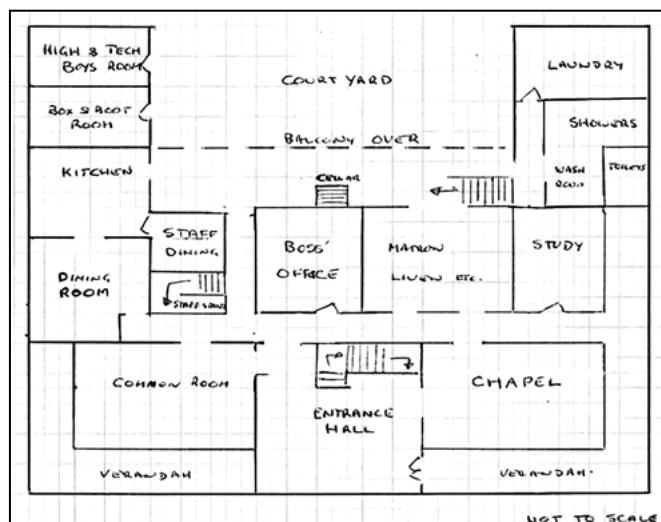
I have a feeling that we brought the straw with us as hay that we had baled the previous month.

Cooking was done in a communal kitchen that fed the adults and 45 kids.

Most of the time during the day was free, except we were forbidden to go over the bridge to the ocean beach and had to be content with the lake beaches.

They were OK for swimming as the lake was shallow.

Well, it would have been OK except for the little crabs that nibbled at our toes when we put our feet down. But we also found sea horses, lots of shells and other things.



The (handmade) drawing above is how I remember the ground floor



In 2017, I learnt that there was to be a 'reunion' of Kilmany boys held at the home, which now had been turned into an upmarket B&B.

My wife and I attended and while there were one or two boys from my time, most of the men were younger.

Interestingly, while those from my time were able to share our experiences in full on that day, like me, they and none of the other boys had recounted the 'bad' or ugly times to anyone else.

It was obvious that they also had buried those experiences in the depths of their memories.

At a later meeting in Melbourne I received a packet containing information, which to a large extent, changed my opinion of what had happened that resulted in Neville and my being at Kilmany.

While I am not sure of the exact details, from various sources I have pieced together the whole story of how we came to be at Kilmany Park.

With all the information that I now have before me, it appears that I, and I think the whole family at the time, sadly misjudged Mum for what she did by sending us to Kilmany.

She decided to put us into Kilmany, so I could stay in the area and still attend Sale Tech, even though it involved considerable financial hardship for her."



Darren's story

Darren* is a former resident of Orana – Methodist Peace Memorial Homes for Children.

Darren and his sister, were placed into Orana shortly after his seventh birthday in the 1960s.

“Mum was struggling to care for two young children without the support of Dad,” he recalls.

“Mum was spending a lot of time at the hospital looking after Dad, and didn’t have any family support to help care for my sister and I.”

Darren and his sister spent time living between the family home and Orana as their mother juggled the increasing needs of her husband and the care of her children.

During his time at Orana, Darren endured abuse at the hands of some fellow residents, causing significant trauma that he has carried with him in his adult years.

This caused drug and alcohol issues and anti-social behaviours as he tried to deal with the trauma.

Darren credits his late wife, who sadly passed away in 2019, with helping him through some of his darkest days.

With her support, Darren reached out to the Uniting Heritage Service in late 2017 to access his records from his time at Orana.

While hesitant at first, he has also sought support from the Heritage Service team – and it’s a decision he is thankful he made.

“There needs to be more services like this for survivors of institutional abuse,” says Darren.

“The team at the Heritage Service have been marvellous. I didn’t know what to expect when I made contact, but the support I have received since has been life changing.

“By accessing my records and meeting the Heritage Service team, it’s opened the door on a dark time in my life, but it let the light in and helped me address those issues that had held me back in the past.”

Darren attended his first Orana reunion on ANZAC Day 2018.

“Leading up to the reunion I was in two minds about going. I wondered if there would be anyone there that I knew, but when I got



there I was made to feel like I was a long lost member of the family and, I suppose that was exactly what I was,” says Darren.

“And I still feel that way.

“People wanted to know about me and hear my story.”

And he is now working towards using his lived experience to help others, recently completing a Certificate 3 in Community Services.

“If I can help just one person who suffered institutional abuse, it will be worth it.”

“The key is to letting people know there are services out there to help, like the Heritage Service, and that they are not alone.”

Several people travelled great distances to attend the Orana Reunion on the 25 of April 2018. The oldest person there had lived at the Methodist Homes for Children in Cheltenham in the 1930s and 40s. The youngest attendees had lived at Orana Peace Memorial Home in Burwood in the 1980s

Support 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 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 supports adults who have been separated from their family of origin including people affected by adoption and donor conception.

T 1300 826 474
E info@vanish.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 received out-of-home care provided by the Presbyterian, 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

Get in touch

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If you would like to receive event updates and future editions of Uniting Heritage, please contact Catriona Milne.

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