Female Orphan School
website text with footnotes

FEMALE ORPHAN SCHOOL

University of
Western Sydney

The Female Orphan School building is a key witness to some of the most significant social changes in Australian history. The building has shaped thousands of lives over the two centuries it has stood on the banks of the Parramatta River.

Whilst something of a hidden treasure, the building is of immense significance to Australia's social history. It is one of the very few surviving public buildings of its size dating from the early colonial period. Predating even Hyde Park Barracks, the Female Orphan School is the oldest three-storey building in the country.

The building stands on the traditional lands of the Darug people, who occupied the western Sydney area and were intimately connected to it.

For most of its life, the building accommodated those who, for whatever reason, were left on the periphery of society. Its first function was to accommodate, educate and train Sydney's 'orphaned' children. After its life as an orphanage, it served as a psychiatric hospital and its changing use over the subsequent 100 years reflected society's evolving understanding of mental illness. By the mid 1980s, the philosophies the building embodied had become obsolete, and the disused building became disused and fell into disrepair.

Recognising its heritage significance, the University of Western Sydney saw to the building's restoration in a series of projects beginning in 2000. The Female Orphan School has now been revivified as the centrepiece of the university's Parramatta campus.

The University of Western Sydney is honoured to be the custodian of this valuable fragment of Australia's past. The university's Whitlam Institute which now occupies the building is committed to ensuring that the building will be accessible as a truly open, public and democratic space for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

The Female Orphan School: 1813 to 1850

The Female Orphan School was built as an expression of the colonial government's policy of providing care for young 'orphaned' girls. The vision for a Female Orphan School was primarily that of Phillip Gidley King, the third Governor of New South Wales and the Reverend Samuel Marsden. Governor King had previously established an orphan school on Norfolk Island and he opened a similar facility in Sydney Cove on August 17, 1801 – only 13 years after European settlement of Australia began.[1] The orphan school replaced the 'boarding out' system instituted by Governor Arthur Phillip.[2] The Sydney Cove building could accommodate up to 100 orphans, but planning soon began for a purpose-built structure in Parramatta to house the children.[3] The orphanage in Sydney Cove was located next to a public works depot and it was feared that the girls' close proximity to workers there, and to other influences in Sydney town put them at risk of 'moral corruption.' The more remote Parramatta site was preferable because of its distance from these corrupting influences. One member of the committee managing the Orphan School wrote:

"...the children are to be entirely secluded from the other people, and brought up in habits of religion and morality".[4]

The involvement of the state in social welfare was very limited in Britain during this time, so the fact that the government accepted responsibility for the care of these children was a significant development. The Female Orphan School was indeed the first welfare institution to be established in New South Wales.[5]

The guiding mission of the institution was to train 'orphaned' girls with the skills they would need to work as domestic servants and escape the life of poverty, idleness, immorality and prostitution that it was thought would otherwise befall them.[6] Whilst it was called the 'Female Orphan School', many of the girls did in fact have parents.

Governor King saw the purpose of the institution as the protection of the next generation of Australians:

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[1] Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257.

[2] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850,* Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 2.

[3] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 65

[4] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 67.

[5] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 39.

[6] Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257; Ramsland, John, 1986, *Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, p. 6

"Finding the greater part of the children in this colony so much abandoned to every kind of wretchedness and vice, I perceived the absolute necessity of something being attempted to withdraw them from the vicious examples of their abandoned parents."[7]

Its founders believed that educating these girls and training them with domestic skills would help create a more respectable working class and that the regimented routines and close monitoring that characterised the girls' lives at the school would produce obedient, productive workers for the growing colony.[8] It was feared that unless the courses of these 'orphaned' girls' lives were corrected, the character of the future Australian society would be tainted. Reverend Samuel Marsden, who was responsible for the development of the school, put it this way:

"Remote, helpless, distressed and young, these are children of the State and though at present very low in the ranks of society, their future numerous progeny, if care is not taken of the parent stock, may by their preponderance over balance and root out the vile depravities bequeath'd by their vicious progenitors. Their numbers will in a very few years increase beyond that of the then existing convicts and what the character of this rising race shall be is therefore an extremely interesting thing."[9]

When did the Female Orphan School move to Parramatta?

Before the Female Orphan School was built, the site was occupied by the Darug people. Governor Arthur Phillip granted a 60-acre portion of this land to Thomas Arndell, the surgeon in charge of the Parramatta Hospital.[10] At this time, the land was known as Arthur's Hill.

When it was eventually decided to relocate the Female Orphan School, and sufficient funding was available, Governor Phillip Gidley King obtained this land as the site for the institution, granting a superior block of land in the Hawkesbury region to Thomas Arndell in exchange for his land at Arthur's Hill. The decision to relocate the school was based on the perception that the Sydney site was inappropriate. [11] As the town of Sydney burgeoned, the position of the Female Orphan School in its centre became increasingly at odds with its founders' desire to protect the girls from the corrupting influence of urban society.[12] Indeed, some clergymen worried that girls leaving the

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[7] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 69.

[8] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 22; Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257; Kyle, Noeline, 1986, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington; Ramsland, John, 1986*, Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, pp. 17-19.

[9] *Historical Records of New South Wales Vol 6*, 1978, Lansdowne Slattery, Mona Vale, p. 401.

[10] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850,* Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 98.

[11] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 1.

[12] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 98

institution fared little better in life once they left it. Reverend William Pascoe Crook for example, claimed that many girls left the institution only to begin working as prostitutes.[13]

Construction of the Female Orphan School building began in 1813, at Arthur's Hill, atop a steep bank of the Parramatta River, just outside Parramatta itself. It is unclear who the building's architect was. The earliest, undated, plan of the new Female Orphan School at Parramatta was signed by James Smith, a Parramatta builder. In August 1813, tenders were called for the provision of 1000 bushels of lime, 20,000 feet of timber in boards, joists and scantlings, and 100,000 bricks.[14] Governor Lachlan Macquarie himself laid the building's foundation stone the following month.[15] The location of this foundation stone within the building remains unknown. Reverend Samuel Marsden oversaw the construction of the school, but day to day construction operations were supervised by builder James Elder.[16] In 1814, Marsden wrote:

"I am now putting the roof on the Female Orphan House at Parramatta which will contain about two hundred girls. It is a noble building. If the young girls are only taken care of and kept from vice the colony will prosper."[17]

Designed in the palladian style, the form of the building was inspired by 'Airds House,' the home in which Elizabeth Macquarie (wife of Governor Lachlan Macquarie) grew up.[18] Although the design of the building has sometimes been associated with architect Francis Greenway, his arrival in the colony of New South Wales came after construction of the Female Orphan School began. However, it is possible that he was involved in the design of subsequent additions to the building.

While the building's external shell was complete within a year, the internal fit out proceeded more slowly.[19] Reverend Marsden blamed the workers, who he described as 'generally drunken, worthless characters'.[20] The delays were also likely due to Marsden's absence after being shipwrecked in New

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[13] Crook, Rev WP to Church Missionary Society, London, 18 June 1813, Bonwick Transcriptions, Box 49 – Missionary, vol 1, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales cited in Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 98-99.

[14] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 99

[15] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 99

[16] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 3.

[17] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 100

[18] Saltmarsh, David,2005, 'Transforming the Female Orphan School', *Creative dissent: constructive solutions: AARE 2005 conference*, 27 November – 1 December, 2005, Parramatta, Coldstream, Vic: Australian Association for Research in Education, p.5; Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 101

[19] 'Rydalmere Hospital Precinct', *Australian Heritage Places Inventory,* available at: <www.heritage.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahpi/record.pl?NSW5000658>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[20] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 100.

Zealand, as well as protracted disputes as to whether convict labour should be used for the project, whether builders should be paid in cash or with goods, and other disagreements over financing.[21]

The building finally opened in 1818 and on June 30, 1818, the girls were taken on government boats along the Parramatta River to their new home at the purpose-built Female Orphan School building.[22]

There were problems with the building from the outset. Rising damp was a significant issue and there were not enough supporting buildings like stables.[23] Work continued on the site after its opening – the necessary improvements and additional buildings were not completed until 1823.[24] In some ways, the building was out of place – its unshaded windows were better suited to the dull skies of the Scottish highlands than the harsh Australian sun.[25]

These issues notwithstanding, the Female Orphan School's imposing, yet elegant appearance won a great deal of praise throughout the young colony of New South Wales.[26] Being the largest building in the colony at the time of its construction, it attracted significant attention. It was a prominent landmark on the river, and was visible on the road into Parramatta itself. The building was accessible either by boat, (landing at a jetty situated where the railway bridge now crosses the river), or by vehicle, using 'Orphan School Lane' (now James Ruse Drive).[27] In accordance with the wishes of Mrs Elizabeth Macquarie, who was Patroness of the school, a fence was erected around it.[28] Over time, the gardens around the building grew, planted with cuttings sent from the Royal Botanic Gardens.[29] There were also orchards, wheat plantations and paddocks for livestock. These were established not only to train the girls in horticulture, agriculture and gardening, but also to supplement the school's food supply.[30] As early as 1818, the school had 12 milking cows.[31]

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[21] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 6; Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 3.

[22] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 105

[23] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 6

[24] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 105

[25] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 6

[26] Saltmarsh, David,2005, 'Transforming the Female Orphan School', *Creative dissent: constructive solutions: AARE 2005 conference*, 27 November – 1 December, 2005, Parramatta, Coldstream, Vic: Australian Association for Research in Education, pp. 5-6.

[27] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 44.

[28] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 44.

[29] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 45

[30] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 45.

[31] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills

Who came to the Female Orphan School?

Whilst it was called the 'Female Orphan School', it has been estimated that fewer than 20 per cent of the girls living there were actually parentless.[32] Two thirds of the girls had one parent living – often a mother who was living in severe poverty.[33] The remaining girls had both living parents.[34] Many children in 19th Century New South Wales were living in desperately poor conditions, and the employment opportunities for female convicts were often very limited. Girls were taken to the school for a range of reasons – because one of their parents had died and their remaining parent was ill, or unwilling to financially support them.[35] Other girls came because one or both parents were convicts.[36] In some instances, girls were admitted because one parent had died and the other had remarried.[37] In other cases, a girl would be admitted to the school after her parents died during the long voyage to Australia from Britain. Some Aboriginal children were admitted having been referred to the school by a clergymen or magistrate. Aboriginal children were also admitted to the Native Institution at Blacktown. When the Native Institution closed in 1822, a number of Aboriginal children were transferred to the Female Orphan School.[38]

Some Aboriginal children were taken there having been referred to the school by colonial clergymen and magistrates.[39] Aboriginal children were also taken into the Native Institution at Blacktown.[40] Indeed, a number of Aboriginal children were transferred from the Native Institution to the Female Orphan School when the Native Institution in Blacktown closed in 1822.[41]

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[32] Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257; Noeline Kyle, 1986, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington; Ramsland, John, 1986, *Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, pp. 17-19.

[33] Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257; Noeline Kyle, 1986, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington; Ramsland, John, 1986, *Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, pp. 17-19.

[34] Snow, Dianne, 1991, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 257; Noeline Kyle, 1986, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington; Ramsland, John, 1986, *Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, pp. 17-19.

[35] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[36] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[37] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[38] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 14.

[39] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 6.

[40] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[41] Ramsland, J. 1986, *Children of the Backlanes*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, p. 5

In many instances, girls were admitted to the orphan school simply because their parents could not afford to care for them, or worked in jobs which made it impossible to do so.[42] Women working as low-paid, live-in domestic servants as well as itinerant male workers and soldiers often found it very difficult to have their children live with them because of the nature of their work.[43] In some cases, the masters of these servants would not allow them to have their children live with them, and so the children were sent to the Orphan School.

Because many sole parents had only recently arrived in the colony, they often had no extended family networks to help care for their children, although there were some informal systems of adoption and care for children.[44] The majority of girls were admitted to the Female Orphan School voluntarily, in fact, most applications for admission into the school were submitted by the child's parent.[45] This was not always possible as spaces were limited, and many applications had to be denied. Substantial paperwork and sometimes petitions were necessary for a girl to be admitted to the institution, and it was at the discretion of the council governing the organisation which girls were deserving of its care.

A number of girls at the orphan school were the daughters of women who worked at the Female Factory, a workhouse for convict women located in Parramatta.[46] Women at the Female Factory kept their daughters until the age of three, or until they had been weaned, after which the girl was sent to the Female Orphan School.[47] To some extent, this was because the authorities felt that convict women would have a corrupting influence on their children.[48] There were clear rules about how a girl could be reunited with her mother, and indeed most mothers and daughters were reunited. However, the process was not necessarily straightforward and in some cases, a girl in the Female Orphan School would never see her mother again.[49]

The age of the girls admitted to the Female Orphan School ranged between about 3 and 13 years old. In a time before universal public education, places at the Female Orphan School were greatly

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[42] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[43] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[44] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 196

[45] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 198

[46] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 198

[47] Hendriksen, Gay, 2009, *Women transported: Myth and reality: Paper presented by at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra on 14 June 2009*, available at: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/publications/papers-and-podcasts/social-history/women-transported.aspx>, accessed: 16/05/2013

[48] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 225-226.

[49] Hendriksen, Gay, 2009, *Women transported: Myth and reality: Paper presented by at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra on 14 June 2009*, available at: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/publications/papers-and-podcasts/social-history/women-transported.aspx>, accessed: 16/05/2013

sought after, and many applications for admission were rejected. Applications for admission to the Female Orphan School can be read below.

What was it like living in the Female Orphan School?

The number of girls accommodated at the school varied greatly over time. In 1821, there were 60 girls living there, but by 1834, there were over 170.[50]

A uniform was designed for the girls to wear which was to be 'suitable to their condition in life - economical, plain and uniform'.[51] The uniform consisted of a blue gown, a bonnet, a white apron and a white 'tippit' - a kind of cape which covered the shoulders and chest.[52]

The girls' daily routine included training in gardening, cooking, domestic work, reading and writing.[53] The girls practised needlework by making their own clothes, and by taking on sewing work from the public – work for which they received some payment.[54] The girls were allocated time to play, and a small library was provided for older girls to use.[55]

A typical daily routine generally proceeded as follows:

- 5:30am: Girls wake up (6:30am in the winter)
- 7:30am: Rooms are tidied, and girls are ready for their morning prayers, at which a psalm is read, followed by a hymn and a prayer reading[56]
- Breakfast consisting of bread and tea[57]
- 9:00am: Reading, writing, arithmetic scripture and other classes supervised by the Master[58]
- 1:00pm: Lunch and play time[59]

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[50] Collison, April, 1986, The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 9; Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 283

[51] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 107.

[52] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 107.

[53] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 107-108

[54] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 221; 'General Rules for the Female Orphan House, June 1825', *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 281-282

[55] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 239

[56] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 297

[57] 'Darling to Bathurst, 5 February 1826', *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 162-163.

[58] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 297

[59] 'Rules for Management, Chapter 5', in 'Clergy and School Lands Corporation, Minute Book 1829-30', pp. 12-14, SRNSW 7/2704.

- 2:00pm: Sewing and other classes supervised by the Mistress
- 3:00pm: Domestic duties, needlework and gardening[60]
- 6:00pm: Supper[61]
- 7:00pm: Evening prayers, scripture reading and hymns[62]
- 7:30pm: Girls go to bed[63]

The education and training provided for the girls was much more limited in scope than that offered to their counterparts at the Male Orphan School in Liverpool. This reflects the social attitudes towards gender roles at the time.[64] Girls too young for schooling were taken to the nursery, and sick girls (which in 1839 constituted a third of the school population) were kept in the school's infirmary.[65]

Religious instruction was intended to be one of the core parts of life at the school, and the girls were reportedly taken by boat along the Parramatta River to church in Parramatta, though they were seated separately from other worshippers.[66] How often the girls were actually taken to services is unclear. They were raised according to the teachings of the Church of England, regardless of their parents' faith.[67] Opposition to this practice was one factor that led to the establishment of a separate Roman Catholic Orphanage at Bellevue Hill in 1837.[68] Another factor was the provision of state funding for religious institutions of this nature.

The freedom the girls had to meet relatives and other visitors from the world outside varied over time. The school's 1825 rules stated that girls could see visitors only on the last Friday of every month, and that they visits must be conducted under the constant supervision of the Master or Mistress of the school.[69]

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[60] 'Rules for Management, Chapter 5', in 'Clergy and School Lands Corporation, Minute Book 1829-30', pp. 12-14, SRNSW 7/2704; Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 297

[61] 'Rules for Management, Chapter 5', in 'Clergy and School Lands Corporation, Minute Book 1829-30', pp. 12-14, SRNSW 7/2704.

[62] 'Rules for Management, Chapter 5', in 'Clergy and School Lands Corporation, Minute Book 1829-30', pp. 12-14, SRNSW 7/2704; Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 297

[63] 'Rules for Management, Chapter 5', in 'Clergy and School Lands Corporation, Minute Book 1829-30', pp. 12-14, SRNSW 7/2704.

[64] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 301

[65] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 298.

[66] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 109-109

[67] 'Bourke to Stanley, 29 September 1833', *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, p. 230; Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 284-287

[68] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 287

[69] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 118; 'General Rules for the Female Orphan House, June 1825', *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 281-282

Living conditions at the school also varied over time. The standard of the girls' education, hygiene and clothing depended on the management of the school, and at times this less than ideal.[70] Despite the size of the new building, space was often limited, with up to three girls sharing one bed.[71] There were periodic insect infestations and outbreaks of disease. Some contemporary reports record that many girls were 'afflicted with inflamed eyes' as well as 'eruptive diseases' on their heads.[72] The cramped conditions and undeveloped understanding of hygiene during this time meant that a significant proportion of the girls were sick at any given time, and deaths from measles and scarlet fever were common in the 1830s in particular. The crowded conditions would only have exacerbated these problems. Whitewashing of the building's internal walls was regularly conducted, and this was intended to combat the spread of disease.[73]

The girls' diet varied during the life of the institution. The school's 1818 rules stipulated that girls should receive a daily ration of one pint (½ a litre) of milk in the morning, and one pint of milk (or tea) in the evening, along with three quarters of a pound (about 340g) of bread, and half a pound (about 226g) of meat with vegetables, or rice or flour pudding once or twice a week.[74] In the 1840s, the normal daily rations for each girl consisted of:

- 340g of flour
- 110g maize meal
- 225g meat
- 14g salt
- 7g tea
- 28g sugar

Extra rations were provided for holidays.[75]

The methods by which discipline was enforced in the school also changed over its history. The school's 1825 General Rules stipulated that 'Corporal Punishment be very rarely resorted to'. The school's Master was to be the only person authorised to inflict corporal punishment and the child's name, misdemeanour and punishment was to be recorded on each occasion. These rules state that

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[70] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 278

[71] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 236

[72] 'Keane's evidence, 24 May 1825', *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XIII*, p. 347; 'FOS Minutes, 14 November 1821, pp. 79 – 81' in Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 244, p. 277

[73] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.

[74] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills

[75] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 299

'no child shall be punished with the loss of food', and that 'punishment shall generally consist of tasks to be performed after school hours'.[76]

Later in its history, punishments were designed to be as public as possible in order to set an example to other girls, and create a sense of shame.[77] Misbehaving girls could be allocated to the 'punishment class' – a group of girls which were made to wear a different uniform, prohibited from playing and made to sit separately from the others during prayers.[78]

What happened to the girls when they left?

Many girls only stayed at the Female Orphan School for a year or two – perhaps sent there by their families during particularly financially strained times. Girls were to leave the Female Orphan School at the age of thirteen. By the time they left, they were to be able to 'read the Bible, write tolerably well and correctly, and work the simple rules of Arithmetic, as well as be competent to make Gowns, Shirts, etc. and perform other domestic duties'.[79] When they left the school, the school's rules dictated that each girl 'shall be presented with a Bible, Prayer Book, dictionary, Grammar, and Arithmetic, and if particularly deserving with such other books as the King's Visitor may approve'.[80]

A significant proportion of the girls were sent to work as domestic servants for 'respectable' families, putting into practice the skills they had learnt at the school.[81] Particularly promising girls went on to work as servants and teachers for the Female Orphan School itself.[82]

Most girls were allowed to rejoin their families after leaving the school, or when their parents ceased to be convicts.[83] Parents applying for their daughters' return had to demonstrate their good character and capacity to provide for their children and sometimes these applications were refused.[84]

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[76] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 118; 'General Rules for the Female Orphan House, June 1825', in *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 281-282

[77] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 254

[78] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 254.

[79] 'General Rules for the Female Orphan House, June 1825', in , *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 281-282.

[80] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 118; 'General Rules for the Female Orphan House', June 1825, , *Historical Records of Australia Vol. XII*, pp. 281-282.

[81] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 200

[82] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 201

[83] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 314

[84] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 211

How was the Female Orphan School run?

At the time the Female Orphan School was established, the colony of New South Wales was largely depended on the British government to fund the construction and operation of large institutions. However, because no specific funding was allocated for the support of children born in the colony, the colonial government had to pay for construction and running costs of the Female Orphan School itself. It raised the revenue for this by charging a range of taxes, levies and duties. These included:

- A vessel registration fee
- A duty paid for permission to sail into Botany Bay or the Hawkesbury River
- A fine for using convict labour without the appropriate permission
- A fine for open vessels carrying grain above the stipulated maximum weight
- A duty paid on the purchase of coal
- A fine paid for using defective weights and measures
- A levy paid on the export of timber
- A fine for polluting the Tank Stream by cleaning fish or keeping a pigsty nearby
- Fines imposed by magistrates and judges
- A duty on auction sales
- Alcohol import licence fees[85]

This provided a revenue stream for the organisation that was independent of the budgetary allocations provided by the British government. It was this that made the construction of such a large building possible. The organisation was also funded through individual donations.[86] In 1828, the Female Orphan School received a total of £2930 in government funding. [87]

Non-monetary support was also arranged by the government. If a stallion was loose and unclaimed by its owner within a week, it could be seized and donated to the Female Orphan School, and any pig found on the loose without a ring and yoke could also become the property of the school.[88]

In its early years, the Female Orphan School was administered by a committee appointed by the Governor, and the daily operation of the institution was the responsibility of an appointed Master and Mistress (or Matron) of the school. The school's 1825 General Rules stated 'That Masters and Mistresses shall be required to treat the Children with kindness'.[89]

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[85] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 63, 75

[86] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 74-75

[87] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.

[88] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 75.

[89] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 118; General Rules for the Female Orphan House, June 1825, in HRA, Vol. XII, pp. 281-282

The school was run with a staff that included teachers, cooks, laundry workers, gardeners and male convict servants who would tend to the farmland and livestock in the fields surrounding the building. When hiring staff, the Female Orphan School gave preference to married men and women.[90]

Personality: Samuel Marsden

The Reverend Samuel Marsden (1765 – 1838) was in many ways, the driving force behind the establishment of the Female Orphan School. Born in Yorkshire, the evangelical Anglican clergyman arrived in Sydney in 1794 and strongly opposed the existing 'boarding out' system that had been used to manage the issue of orphaned children in the colony on the grounds that it was inefficient and often against the interests of the children's upbringing.[91] Instead, he proposed a central, state institution to care for the destitute and orphaned children of the young colony, where they could be "brought up in the principles of morality and industry".[92] He warned that "if some private or public establishment is not instituted for them, they will be more abandoned than their unfortunate parents; at present they are brought up in idleness and uncleanness, and robbery, and scattered up and down in every part of the settlement".[93] He stridently argued that these children should be instructed with a strong code of morality, based on the Christian faith.[94] His vision was realised with the establishment of the Female Orphan School in Sydney, and he later supervised the construction of a purpose-built structure in Parramatta.

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[90] Collison, April, 1986, The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 9

[91] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[92] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[93] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[94] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

Protestant Orphan School: 1850 to 1886

Why was the Protestant Orphan School established?

In 1836, Governor Bourke passed the *Church Act* which allowed the granting of some government funding to Catholic institutions.[95] This allowed the construction of a Roman Catholic Orphan School in Waverley.[96] Since the establishment of the Roman Catholic Orphan School, the number of admissions to the Male Orphan School at Liverpool had been falling, so Fitzroy saw it as more efficient to consolidate the two similar institutions on one site.[97] That the gender division between the orphan schools in the colony eventually gave way to a sectarian delineation between these organisations reflects the deepening sectarian division in Australian society at this time.

By the 1840s, the Male Orphan School had become dilapidated.[98] Performing a similar function to the Female Orphan School, the institution housed about 135 boys during 1844.[99] In late 1846, Governor Fitzroy decided to merge the Male Orphan School and the Female Orphan School because of the remoteness of the Male Orphan School site, and the inefficiency of supporting two similar, but separate institutions.[100]

To accommodate the merger, renovations were performed on the Female Orphan School buildings and in April 1850, the boys transferred to the Female Orphan School. The merged Female Orphan School and Male Orphan Schools became known as the Protestant Orphan School.[101] Dormitories were added to the west wing, and a new hospital facility was added to the north of the building. 77 boys and 82 girls were accommodated there in separate wings of the building.[102] These numbers increased over time, and by 1867, 250 children were accommodated at the school.[103] A stone path was created to link the new carriage loop that was constructed in front of the building to the jetty on the river.[104] New trees were also planted around the building at this time.[105]

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[95] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 5.

[96] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 5.

[97] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 305-309

[98] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 305-306

[99] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 306

[100] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, pp. 305-309

[101] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 309

[102] Bubacz, Beryl, 2007, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools In New South Wales 1801 – 1850*, Ph.D thesis submitted to the University of Sydney, p. 309

[103] *Statistical Register of NSW, 1867*, 1867, NSW Government Printer, Sydney, p. 4.

[104] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 46.

[105] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 48.

What was it like living in the Protestant Orphan School?

Despite the merger of the Male and Female Orphan Schools into one institution, a strict separation of boys and girls was maintained. Segregation between the boys and girls was ensured and interaction was minimised by designating separate classrooms and bathrooms.[106] Even their playgrounds were separated by sandstone walls and timber fences.[107] The building's west wing was where boys had their dormitories and dining room.[108] The east wing housed the girls' dormitories and dining room, as well as the nursery.[109] A reporter from the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote in 1866 that:

"The girls and boys are kept quite apart. They are separately lodge, separately taught, and have separate playgrounds. Their clothing is plain but substantial and neat, and appears to be kept in excellent order – no doubt a very difficult and troublesome business. The food of the children, like their clothing, is plain but substantial. They have soup on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and baked meats on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays…The bread, which is all baked on the establishment, there being five bakings in each week, is excellent".[110]

In 1851, the building included a total of 13 dormitories and sleeping apartments, 3 kitchens, 2 mess rooms, 3 staircases a hospital, teachers apartments, school rooms and a committee room.[111]

Activities were provided for the children. Children could read or play draughts in the recreation room, and an annual picnic was held.[112] In 1880, all the children were taken by schooner boat to Chowder Bay.[113] It has been recorded that Matron Martha Betts arranged fireworks for the children to celebrate the Queen's birthday each year.[114]

By the mid-1860s, the Protestant Orphan School was in a state of disrepair, with collapsing ceilings and deteriorating floors.[115] Repainting and replastering was also necessary, and major renovation

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[106] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[107] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 247

[108] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[109] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[110] 'The Charitable Institutions of Sydney', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 12/11/1866.

[111] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 14.

[112] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.

[113] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.

[114] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.

[115] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

and extension works were carried out in 1870 to improve the living conditions at the School.[116] Over time, boys came to outnumber girls at the Protestant Orphan School.

Why did the Protestant Orphan School close?

Throughout the 1880s, a new 'boarding out' system for managing orphans was increasingly favoured by the colonial government.[117] The policy, which had already been implemented in Victoria and South Australia, saw orphans sent to 'respectable' families in regional areas.[118] Financial incentives were offered to families to house, educate and care for the children.[119] It was thought that the cleaner air, greater variety of diet, and reduced exposure to communicable diseases would see orphans fare better than in institutions such as the Protestant Orphan School.[120] It was also favoured because it meant that orphaned children were no longer accommodated en masse in large centralised institutions.[121] This approached was advocated by Sir Henry Parkes who introduced the *State Children Relief Act* to the New South Wales Parliament in 1882.[122] Within the first 5 years of its operation, the system saw 1,366 children 'boarded out'.[123] This policy shift meant that the Protestant Orphan School and institutions like it became redundant.[124] The Protestant Orphan School ceased operating on September 30, 1886.[125] By that point it was housing only 65 children.[126]

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[116] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[117] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[118] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[119] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[120] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[121] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[122] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[123] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[124] Ramsland, John, 2011, 'Children's institutions in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney,* available at: <www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/childrens_institutions_in_nineteenth-century_sydney>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

[125] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

Personality: Martha Betts

Martha Betts (1811 – 1895) had very close links to the Protestant Orphan School. Not only was she one the longest serving Matron of the school, serving for almost 25 years between 1851 and 1875, she was the youngest daughter of Samuel Marsden who was one of the founding figures of the school.[127] Her husband Josiah served as Master of the school until his death in 1863, after which her son Edward became the school's Master.[128]

[126] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[127] Collison, April, 1986, The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 10.

[128] Collison, April, 1986, The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 11.

Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital: 1888 to 1980s

Why was the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital established?

Up until 1811, 'lunatics' were accommodated at the old Parramatta gaol with male prisoners and female convicts, but over subsequent decades, dedicated asylums were established at Castle Hill, Tarban Creek (Gladesville), Parramatta, Callan Park, Kenmore and Goulburn.[129] By the turn of the century, the number of people in New South Wales deemed to be 'insane' outstripped the number of places in institutions to accommodate them. The Inspector-General of the Insane, Norton Manning attributed this to the economic depression affecting Australian society at the time.[130] After the closure of the Protestant Orphan School in 1886, the building and the site it stood on were transferred to the Department of Lunacy so that a new branch of the Parramatta Hospital could be established there in 1888.[131] By the end of 1890, 120 male patients were accommodated in the building and two years later it became an independent facility.[132]

Facilities like Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital were established with the intention of not just accommodating, but segregating people who had some form of mental illness, out of concern for the character of the population as a whole.[133] Many psychiatrists practicing at the time of the establishment of the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital believed in the theory of eugenics, and saw the isolation of the mentally ill in such facilities as an important way of ensuring that 'mental defectiveness' was not passed on to subsequent generations. [134]

The original Female Orphan School building underwent extensions and renovations in order to house the patients of the hospital – the east and west wings were further extended to provide accommodation, and the verandas of the building were enclosed.[135] Particular emphasis was placed on the natural environment around the building in the belief that this would assist in the recovery of patients. The land around the building was landscaped extensively – in 1893 the Royal Botanic Gardens sent 275 trees and 120 shrubs to improve the gardens on the site.[136]

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[129] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 23.

[130] *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21/02/1893, p.3

[131] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[132] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 23.

[133] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 60.

[134] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, pp. 59-60, pp. 77-78.

[135] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[136] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 50.

Early patients had to periodically move to different parts of the building, while urgent repair and alteration works were conducted.[137] As the facility grew, more ward space was needed, so the central block of the building was extensively remodelled. In 1905 for example, a stairwell was built at the back of the building, so that the main stairway could be removed and more wards installed in its place. Progressive improvements were made to the building over the subsequent decades, with electricity installed for the first time after the First World War. In 1931, the eastern pavilion was extended with a two storey addition in order to provide additional recreation and dormitory space.

No longer alone on its hilltop, the original Female Orphan School building became part of a large campus of wards, medical facilities, and support buildings that made up the psychiatric hospital. The hospital complex gradually advanced northward towards Victoria Road and a new entrance road linking the hospital to Victoria Road was constructed on the north-western corner of the site. This meant that the orientation of the complex turned northward, and the former Female Orphan School precinct became the 'back' of the site.[138] By the 1920s, the site was no longer set amidst a rural landscape – it was gradually becoming surrounded by a developing residential district. The Rydalmere and Ermington Council saw the hospital as an impediment to the prosperity of the area, because potential residents would be reluctant to buy houses close to a psychiatric facility. The council argued that the hospital should be moved to a more isolated location, distant from residential areas.[139]

The facility was known over its life as the Rydalmere Hospital for the Insane, the Rydalmere Mental Hospital and the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital.[140]

Who came to the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital?

The hospital received many different kinds of patients over its century-long history. Patients were admitted for reasons that today seem strange. This is because of changing understandings of mental illness, and evolving approaches to its management. At the time 'lunatics' were first admitted to Rydalmere Hospital for the Insane, understandings of the nature of mental illness, and what should be identified as mental illness were very different from those held today. Moreover, there were few effective treatments available to manage it, and therapies were rudimentary.

The 1878 *Lunacy Act* which governed the operation of facilities like Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital defined insanity very broadly. An 'insane person' was deemed to be "any person who shall for the

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[137] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 28.

[138] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[139] *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, 9/06/1923, p. 8.

[140] School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2011 'Rydalmere Mental Hospital (1891 -)', *Australian Psychiatric Care: A History of Psychiatric Institutionalisation and Community Care in Australia c.1811-c.1990*, available at: <http://www.ahpi.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000573b.htm>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

time being be idiotic, lunatic or of unsound mind and incapable of managing himself or his affairs and whether found insane by inquisition or otherwise".[141]

One of the dominant understandings of 'insanity' defined both 'moral' or 'physical' causes of the condition.[142] The 1900 Statistical Register of New South Wales defined the following conditions as either 'moral' or 'physical' causes of insanity.[143]

Moral Causes	Physical Causes
• Domestic trouble • Adverse circumstances • Mental anxiety • Religious excitement • Love affairs and seduction • Fright and nervous shock • Isolation • Nostalgia	• Intemperance in drink • Intemperance (sexual) • Venereal disease • Self abuse • Sun stroke • Accident • Pregnancy • Parturition and puerperal state • Lactation • Uterine and ovarian disorders • Puberty • Change of life • Fevers • Privation and overwork • Phthisis • Epilepsy • Disease of skull or brain • Old age • Other bodily disorders and chronic ill health • Excess of opium • Previous attacks • Hereditary influence ascertained • Congenital defect ascertained • Other ascertained causes

In the 1880s, most patients were admitted to facilities like Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital by court order, and in many cases this was the result of an arrest by the police.[144] Other patients were referred from general hospitals or charitable organisations, or admitted at the request of family members who felt unable to care for them and in some cases, felt threatened by them.[145]

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[141] Shea, Peter Barry, 1999, *Defining Madness*, Federation Press, Leichardt, p. 37.

[142] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 24.

[143] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 24.

[144] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 30

[145] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 31-32; *The Sunday Herald*, 15/05/1949, p. 6

Sometimes, patients admitted themselves, presenting to a police station or the Reception House for the mentally ill in Darlinghurst to have themselves certified as insane.[146] In the 1880s, most requested admissions to insane asylums came from women, despite the fact that there were more men admitted to the asylums overall by a factor of three to one.[147] This may have been because notwithstanding a man's mental state, his family may have been reluctant to commit a male breadwinner to an asylum and thus forgo the income necessary to support the family.[148]

In the 1880s, single men and women were overrepresented in the populations of Sydney's mental hospitals, as were patients from low-skilled jobs and working class backgrounds.[149] A quarter of male patients had previously worked in skilled jobs, and a tenth were middle class – being bankers, merchants, accountants, clerks and shopkeepers.[150] A smaller group still consisted of clergymen, doctors, lawyers, engineers, graziers and squatters.[151]

Initially the hospital only accommodated male patients, however female patients were later. Female patients were housed separately on the site from 1895, away from the Orphan School building, which only ever accommodated male patients.[152] Most of the early patients had dementia or suffered from other chronic conditions with minimal chance of recovery.[153] However, once the facility became independent of Parramatta Hospital for the Insane, patients with a wider range of conditions were admitted.[154] Patients with schizophrenia were taken there, including the poet Francis Charles Webb. Although patients with epilepsy and the 'mental defectiveness' were admitted, the proportion of older patients remained substantial and indeed grew over time.[155] By 1947, the hospital accommodated 300 epileptic patients, and 300 patients with senility, and together these groups constituted about half of the overall hospital population.[156] Geriatric and dementia patients continued to constitute a large part of the hospital population until the end of its existence. In 1970, the average patient age at Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital was 76. Because most of the illnesses suffered by patients at Rydalmere were deemed to be chronic, they were often regarded as 'hopeless' by the staff.

Whilst the accommodation of patients with epilepsy in a psychiatric facility would today be seen as inappropriate, objections were raised to their detention there even as early as 1923, during Royal

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[146] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 32

[147] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 30 – 33

[148] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 33

[149] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 103

[150] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 103

[151] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 103

[152] New South Wales Heritage Office, *Rydalmere Hospital Precinct (former)*, available at: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=5000658>, accessed: 16/05/13.

[153] Cummins, Cyril, 2003, *A History of Medical Administration in NSW*, New South Wales Department of Health, Sydney, p. 107.

[154] Collison, April, 1986, The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 18.

[155] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 104

[156] *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers,* 13/08/1947, p. 1; School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2011 'Rydalmere Mental Hospital (1891 -)', *Australian Psychiatric Care: A History of Psychiatric Institutionalisation and Community Care in Australia c.1811-c.1990*, available at: <http://www.ahpi.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/biogs/E000573b.htm>, accessed: 16/05/2013.

Commission hearings on the state of New South Wales' mental health facilities.[157] One doctor, highlighting the inadequacy of the government's approach to mental health cited the case of a saleswoman working in a city department store who had an epileptic seizure in front of staff and customers. She was sent home sick, and returned to work without incident for six months before suffering another seizure. This time she lost her job and was taken by her family to a mental health facility, where she was then certified and sent to a mental hospital, and accommodated with people with a wide range of mental health issues.[158]

What was life like in the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital for patients?

It is difficult to describe what different patients' experience of the hospital was like. There are a number of reasons for this. Because each patient's experience of the place was shaped by their own personal history and condition, there was no 'universal' patient experience of Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital. Furthermore, there is little documentary evidence left by patients for us to interpret, and photography in psychiatric institutions such as Rydalmere was prohibited. By law, medical records of the patients accommodated at Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital are sealed for 110 years. More will be known about the experience of patients at the hospital place once these medical records can be accessed by historians.

However, some information can be gleaned from accounts recorded by staff. Even in the 1920s, doctors were concerned by the poor conditions at the hospital. Dr Edwards described his experience of starting at Rydalmere in this way:

> "Rydalmere was an introduction to the 'lunatic asylum' at its worst…With one exception – the
> female convalescent ward – the wards were dingy and antiquated…the wards were even more
> repelling and soul-killing inside. Most of the rooms were painted a dull green or a peculiar
> unattractive shade of brown. Nearly all floors were washed every morning and the damp bare
> boards for hours afterwards added to the asylum smell of urine, faeces and unwashed bodies."

For most of its history, the patients of the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital were given standard uniforms. Men were given shapeless clothes made of coarse grey tweed, a cloth hat, and heavy boots.[159] Women were given a shapeless dress made of strong blue or grey fabric.[160] Dr Edwards noted that this was a source of 'constant shame and hostility amongst the women'.[161]

One of the defining characteristics of life at Rydalmere was overcrowding. For most of its history, the number of patients at the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital was around 1,000.[162] This had a number of

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[157] *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 20/03/1923, p. 9
[158] *The Sunday Herald*, 15/05/1949, p. 6
[159] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 24
[160] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 24
[161] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 24
[162] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 30.

effects. The overcrowding problem accelerated the spread of communicable diseases.[163] The confinement of patients suffering widely varying conditions was recognised by the management of the institution as a problem even early in its history. Indeed, there are numerous newspaper reports of assaults and several reports of murders taking place at the hospital. The overcrowding problem became self-perpetuating. As more patients were admitted beyond Rydalmere's capacity to house them, the standard of treatment declined – and the proportion of long-term patients increased, as did the rate of re-admission for previously discharged patients.[164]

Some former patients have noted inappropriate accommodation practices – such as children and adults being accommodated in the same quarters, and others have reported that they suffered from assault by other patients.

Dr T. A. Edwards, who worked at Rydalmere in the 1920s, concluded that the asylum system itself was actually exacerbating mental illness. For example, accommodating patients designated as 'violent' together provoked violent incidents rather than prevented them. The strict confinement and isolation from visitors and activities was also a contributing factor. [165]

There are records indicating that a number of patients at facilities like Rydalmere complained about the injustice of their being incarcerated, however these complaints were often simply noted by doctors as further evidence of their delusion and insanity.[166]

Meals at state mental hospitals like Rydalmere were often repetitive. A typical daily meal in the 1920s would have consisted of bread, butter or perhaps porridge, with tea of coffee.[167] Dinner usually consisted of meat such as beef, mince meat or mutton with potatoes but few other vegetables. The hospital generated its own supply of fresh food by keeping gardens and livestock.[168]

The age of the former Female Orphan School buildings had an impact on the quality of life for its patients. Even in the late 1960s, the building had no hot running water, and each morning nurses had to carry buckets of hot water to shave the men who were accommodated there.[169]

From the time of the foundation of the hospital, its staff offered a range of recreational activities to patients in the form of trips to the Roxy Theatre in Parramatta, fancy dress parties, dances, concerts, musical performances, fetes and sports matches.[170] Boats were also provided for the use of some

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[163] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/09/1904, p. 3

[164] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 52; p. 86-87

[165] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 33

[166] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness,* University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 31

[167] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 164

[168] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 164

[169] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 30.

[170] *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 1/12/1899 p. 6.

patients on the Parramatta River.[171] Until at least the 1930s, patients were required to be in bed by 5:30 pm.[172]

What treatments were given to patients?

Treatment of mental illness changed dramatically over the life of the hospital. Inspector General of the Insane, Frederic Norton Manning, who was responsible for the operation of Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital at the time of its establishment identified five major causes of insanity – isolation, anxiety, intemperance, sunstroke, and hereditary factors.[173] On this basis, Manning and his doctors practiced a number of therapies. Manning was committed to the 'moral therapy' approach to mental illness, which promoted the provision of work, religious instruction and pleasant surroundings for patients.

For much of its history, the main treatment approach, according to historian Stephen Garton, was to provide 'work, rest, food and sympathy'.[174] Men were encouraged to engage in manual labour in the hospital grounds, and women were encouraged to practice domestic work – helping in the laundry and sewing room.[175] Whilst this work wasn't compulsory, patients' willingness to participate was interpreted as an indicator of their progress and potential for discharge. As an encouragement, extra rations were given to patients.[176]

During the second half of the 19th century, the range of pharmaceutical treatments was very limited – alcoholic dementia was treated with arsenic, strychnine and ammonia, and opium was used to calm patients.[177] Potassium bromide and chloral hydrate were used in facilities like Rydalmere for a long time.[178] It has been suggested that the use of these drugs was more for the benefit of staff rather than patients because it served to calm patients' behaviour and make it easier for the understaffed hospital to control the large population of patients.[179]

Electrotherapy, which involved applying an electric current to different parts of the body, was also employed, as well as a range of experimental treatments. [180] The extent to which patients consented to these treatments is unclear, but the treating physicians had significant authority over patients'

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[171] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 20.

[172] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 24

[173] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 55.

[174] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 165

[175] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 165; 'Reach Out', Vol 1, No. 3, p. 8. Available at the State Library of New South Wales, No.3, p. 8

[176] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 166

[177] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 39; Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 108

[178] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 39, p. 175; Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 108

[179] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 39, p. 175; Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 108

[180] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, pp. 28-30, pp. 37-38; Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 39

treatment regimes. Psychiatrists were authorised to administer any 'essential treatment' to a certified patient, regardless of whether that patient had given their consent.[181]

As greater resources were diverted to patients thought to be curable, conditions for chronic patients such as those at Rydalmere declined, and according to Stephen Garton, there was a 20% increase in the use of patient restraint between 1900 and 1940 in New South Wales' psychiatric hospitals.[182]

What happened to patients at Rydalmere?

The outcomes of the hospital's patients varied over time, as understanding of mental illness changed, and treatments for it developed. In 1908, the Inspector General of the Insane reported that 42% of patients admitted to its care that year had recovered and were discharged.[183]

Generally, the longer a patient stayed in the facility, the less likely it would be that they would ever be discharged. Most of the patients that were discharged as 'recovered' were released after less than a year. Patients who had not recovered but were deemed 'harmless' and non-violent could be discharged to the care of their family.[184]

Some patients in Sydney's mental asylums were allowed out of the institution on 'leave' and given significant freedom of movement.[185] Many of these were discharged as recovered while they were on leave.[186] This would have been the case for some patients at Rydalmere.

Other patients recovered from their initial condition but became so accustomed to life within the hospital, and so dependent on the services that it provided that they were unwilling or unable to leave. These patients were known as 'asylum-sane'. [187]

A significant number of patients died in facilities like Rydalmere. In the 1880s, 13% to 18% died of old age, 10% died of epilepsy and tuberculosis, and between 10% and 17% died of an unexplained disease described as 'maniacal exhaustion'.[188]

Occasionally, newspapers reported on the escape of patients from the hospital, although government records indicate that the vast majority of attempted escapes were ultimately unsuccessful.[189] Curiously, under the New South Wales *Lunacy Act* any escaped patient who was not recaptured within 28 days was deemed recovered and discharged.[190]

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[181] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 170

[182] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 27.

[183] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 181

[184] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 35

[185] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 37.

[186] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 37.

[187] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 24

[188] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 37

[189] *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, 22/12/1923; *Recorder*, Tuesday 16 May; Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 180

[190] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 180

What was life like in the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital for staff?

Just as there was no universal experience of patients at Rydalmere, there was no universal experience of staff. Some were better suited to the demanding work there than others, and whilst there were certainly instances of misconduct by hospital staff, there were also a great many that discharged their duties admirably, under difficult circumstances. At some stages in its history, it was required that members of staff live onsite at the hospital.[191]

The work performed by the staff of the Psychiatric Hospital was demanding. The overcrowding and underfunding the facility perpetually suffered exacerbated this. For much of its history, the range of medications that could be prescribed to patients and incomplete knowledge about the nature of mental illness limited the therapeutic options available. The high rate of staff turnover over the institution's history reflects the difficult nature of the work, and the challenging conditions.[192] In 1945 for example, the nurse's union complained that most nurses at Rydalmere worked 12-hour days, and got only one day off in six, rather than the one day off in every three to which they were entitled.[193] The union complained about the severe understaffing at Rydalmere, which led to 44 nurses doing the work of 70. The union argued that this led to many staff becoming 'ill from overwork'.[194] In August 1945, the staff at Rydalmere enacted a ban on working excessive overtime.[195] The understaffing of the hospital may have compromised the safety of staff there, who were occasionally subject to attacks by patients.[196]

At the 1923 Royal Commission on Lunacy Administration, medical staff praised the treatment of patients by nurses and attendants. One doctor claiming that in nine years at Rydalmere, he had never seen a patient punished or ill-treated, and that nurses had treated patients with tact and kindness.[197] Evidence from former patients differed from this. Several claimed that patients had been 'tortured' as punishment. One claimed that a doctor and nurses had applied electric batteries to the feet and ears of one patient as a punishment.[198] The behaviour of some staff towards violent patients by staff was sometimes criticised. One doctor working at the hospital in the 1920s recalled that "a small proportion of the attendants and nurses got sadistic pleasure out of provoking them".[199]

Despite this, evidence such as internal staff newsletters indicate that the hospital staff included a great many who were genuinely committed to the care and well-being of patients, and the improvement of treatment programs for them. One doctor working at Rydalmere noted that the work of 'mental nurses' was not properly respected or appreciated, and that those who expressed

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[191] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, Volume II, Appendix II.
[192] Garton, Stephen, 1988, *Medicine and Madness*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, p. 170
[193] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7/08/1945, p. 5
[194] *The Daily News*, 13/08/1945, p.7
[195] *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7/08/1945, p. 5
[196] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, pp. 33, 39
[197] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10/04/1923, p.12
[198] *The Advertiser,* 10/041923, p. 11; *Northern Star*, 10/041923. p. 5
[199] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 33.

derision for these workers "had little idea with what devotion many of them looked after their charges".[200]

Why did the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital close?

As early as the 1940s, serious concerns were raised about the treatment of mentally ill patients in large institutional facilities throughout New South Wales. In 1949, the Sunday Herald pointed out that at Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital, there were only three doctors employed to care for over 900 patients, describing the system as 'unscientific, obsolete and inhuman', treating patients like 'convicts and animals'.[201] It was argued that the accommodating patients in buildings that weren't designed for that purpose (such as the Female Orphan School building) meant that patients were treated more like prisoners – an experience that exacerbated their conditions rather than eased them.[202] It was said that the overcrowding, and lack of individual care meant that mental illness was treated simplistically, without an appreciation of the fact that mental illness came in many forms, and was caused by many different factors.[203] Patients with developmental disabilities, epilepsy, mental illness and dementia were treated with a lack of differentiation that was greatly at odds with newer understandings of these conditions.

The management of patients accommodated in facilities like Rydalmere gradually changed over the second half of the 20th Century. By the 1960s, the treatment of psychiatric patients with new medications meant that their detention in custodial environments like the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital was seen as unnecessary.[204] The New South Wales Government eventually responded to concerns about the mental health care system by commissioning the Richmond Report in 1982. This report recommended the closure of large mental asylums in preference to small group homes as well as the provision of more specialised services and community care.[205] By 1986, fewer than 300 patients remained at the hospital, and it closed in stages over the years that followed.

The Female Orphan School building itself had been closed in 1969, as it had become increasingly dilapidated and the patients accommodated there were moved to newer facilities elsewhere on the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital site.[206] The Female Orphan School building was occasionally used as an indoor basketball court for patients throughout the early 1970s, but it was surrounded with wire fencing in 1975 to prevent illegal entry.[207]

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[200] Edwards, Alfred, 1968, *Patients are People*, Currawong Press, Sydney, p. 39.

[201] *The Sunday Herald*, 15/05/1949, p. 6

[202] *The Sunday Herald*, 15/05/1949, p. 6

[203] *The Sunday Herald*, 15/05/1949, p. 6

[204] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution*, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 27

[205] Haurtiz, Margory, 1998, *Justice for People with Disabilities*, Federation Press, Sydney, p. 171; Palmer, George Rupert, *Health Care & Public Policy: An Australian Analysis*, Macmillan, Melbourne, p. 284

[206] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital*, 1986, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 23, p. 27

[207] Tanner & Associates, 2000, *Female Orphan School, Rydalmere : conservation management plan prepared for University of Western Sydney*, Tanner & Associates, Surry Hills, p. 31.

Personality: Sylvester Minogue

Sylvester Minogue was Superintendent of the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital for five years, until his resignation in August 1947.[208]

Minogue had previously served at Kenmore Mental Hospital, where he aimed to improve the living conditions of patients by increasing the amount of recreation space for patients in the hospital, and reducing the number of padded cells, locked doors and barred windows.[209] He also experimented with new forms of treatment including group therapy, hypnosis, electro-convulsive therapy and new medications.[210] His methods were not embraced by the New South Wales Health Department.[211]

Following his move to Rydalmere, he became interested in the Alcoholics Anonymous organisation, and established the first branch of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia, which held its first meeting in 1945 at his residence a short distance from the Female Orphan School building.[212]

In 1947, he resigned from his position in frustration at the way in which mental health patients were treated. At his farewell party he told his staff that:

 "Stupid rules and regulations enforced by the Government and lack of modern facilities, equipment, space and staff made treatment of the insane a hopeless and impossible task. I have been criticised because of my unorthodox views. Every idea I have advanced was neither new or radical, but was based on common-sense and normal developments in other countries…Conditions in mental hospitals in New South Wales are 100 years behind those in other countries. Indeed we have lagged so far behind that I believe we will never catch up. Rydalmere Mental Hospital has space for approximately 800 patients, yet at present, there are over 900 here…Only 34 doctors are attending the 12,000 certified insane people in the whole of New South Wales."[213]

He explained that "I have realised that the things I have striven for can never come about so I decided to get out."[214] One of his major disagreements with the Health Department was his belief that patients were unnecessarily confined – many patients were kept behind barred windows and locked doors, even though it was safe for them to have greater freedom of movement: "I have always determined that the only way to govern patients is by knowing and understanding them. I

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[208] 'Dr. Minogue Resigns Because of "Impossible Task"', *Goulburn Evening Post,* 18/08/1947.

[209] Mellor, Lise, 2008, *Minogue, Sylvester John,* Faculty of Medicine Online Museum and Archive, University of Sydney.

[210] Mellor, Lise, 2008, *Minogue, Sylvester John,* Faculty of Medicine Online Museum and Archive, University of Sydney.

[211] Mellor, Lise, 2008, *Minogue, Sylvester John,* Faculty of Medicine Online Museum and Archive, University of Sydney

[212] Mellor, Lise, 2008, *Minogue, Sylvester John,* Faculty of Medicine Online Museum and Archive, University of Sydney

[213] 'Dr. Minogue Resigns Because of "Impossible Task"', *Goulburn Evening Post,* 18/08/1947.

[214] 'Pain in the Neck Doctor Gives Hopeless Fight For Mental Patients', *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate,* 13/08/1947.

don't think they should be locked up".[215] The press reported that epileptic and senile patients were kept in these conditions.[216]

Dr Minogue was held in such high esteem that a petition was circulated amongst the staff calling on him to reconsider his decision to resign.[217]

He left the hospital to establish his own private practice in Macquarie Street.[218]

[215] 'Pain in the Neck Doctor Gives Hopeless Fight For Mental Patients', *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate,* 13/08/1947.
[216] 'Dr. Minogue Resigns Because of "Impossible Task"', *Goulburn Evening Post,* 18/08/1947
[217] 'Dr. Minogue Resigns Because of "Impossible Task"', *Goulburn Evening Post,* 18/08/1947
[218] Mellor, Lise, 2008, *Minogue, Sylvester John,* Faculty of Medicine Online Museum and Archive, University of Sydney

Dereliction and Restoration: 1980s to Present

Dereliction: 1989 to 2000

The Female Orphan School building was unused for the last twenty years of the existence of the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital. Over this period, the building suffered significant deterioration and vandalism.

Some measures were undertaken to prevent its degradation. In 1976, the Federal Government's National Estate Program spent $60,000 sealing the building's roof to prevent water damage.[219] Its windows were boarded up, and it was protected with barbed wire.[220] The Department of Public works conducted emergency repairs to the building between 1988 and 1991 to stall its decline.[221] Whilst the building remained basically structurally sound, its brickwork and stonework deteriorated. Internally, the building's plastered walls broke up and were vandalised with graffiti, water damage occurred and its floors rotted.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that during this period, the building was occasionally inhabited by squatters who were former patients of the hospital, who also lived under the railway bridge across the Parramatta River.

Restoration and reuse: 2000 to present

Background

With the closure of the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital in 1989, the campus of buildings on the site was vacated and left unused for several years. In 1993 however, the University of Western Sydney approached the New South Wales Government with a proposal to redevelop the site as its new Parramatta campus.[222] The land was transferred to the university in 1995, and the restoration of a number of the buildings on the site allowed teaching to begin at the site in early 1998. The University of Western Sydney recognised the heritage significance of the Female Orphan School building from the outset and a condition of the University of Western Sydney's acquisition of the land was that the building be restored. Because of the fragile nature of the building's heritage elements, the University was advised not to use the building for purposes that would bring high levels of traffic, so the building was not used for teaching space.

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[219] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 25

[220] Collison, April, 1986, *The Female Orphan Institution, 1814, Rydalmere Hospital, 1986*, Rydalmere Hospital Parents and Friends Association, Riverwood, p. 25

[221] Liston, Carol, 2004, 'Open Air History at UWS Parramatta', *Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association Inside Newsletter,* Summer 2004, p.25

[222] Liston, Carol, 2004, 'Open Air History at UWS Parramatta', *Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association Inside Newsletter,* Summer 2004, p. 25

Restoration Stage 1

The restoration of the building began in 2000, made possible by a grant of $1 million from the Heritage Council of New South Wales. The University of Western Sydney also invested significant funds in the project. A Conservation Management Plan was prepared for the University by Tanner Architects, who conducted the restoration work.

The Stage 1 restoration project rehabilitated the Central wing of the building. The work required extensive research, and delicate treatment of the building's fragile heritage elements. During this project, the building's stone and brick exterior was restored, much of its flooring was reconstructed, and the central stairwell that had been removed in 1905 was recreated. Some of the more recent and unsympathetic additions to the exterior of the building were removed, and the verandas that ran along the building's northern façade were reconstructed.

Significant attention to detail was paid to the restoration of the building. Gaps in the building's brick structure were filled using locally made bricks that had been sourced from an excavation site near the wharf at Charles Street, Parramatta in order to complement the building's original brickwork. Interior walls were stripped back to reveal their original paintwork and the resulting surfaces now present a fascinating pastiche of patterns and colours that reflect the evolving uses of the building. The interior colour scheme was designed to complement what remained of the original paintwork. The newly installed corrugated ceilings and external window hoods replicated the original designs. As far as possible, the building's remaining internal fittings were conserved and left in place. For example, wash basins and a shower cubicle from the building's use as a mental hospital were left intact on the first floor landing.

The Stage 1 restoration works were completed in 2003, and university offices and meeting rooms, as well as exhibition spaces were established there from that time. The building was officially re-opened by the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO – 190 years after her predecessor, Governor Lachlan Macquarie had laid the building's foundation stone. The restoration project received a UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award Honourable mention in 2004. The East and West wings of the building, however, remained derelict and unoccupied.

Restoration Stage 2

Stage 2 of the building's restoration was made possible by a grant of around $1 million from the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts to the University in late 2009 and again, the University itself contributed a significant funding the restoration project. This work concentrated on the West wing of the building, and was carried out with an approach that was respectful of the building's heritage fabric, with the building's internal layout largely preserved. This second stage of the restoration was completed in 2011. The Margaret Whitlam Galleries were established in this wing and are now used to present art exhibitions as well as exhibitions related to Australia's social and political history. The ground floor of this wing is now used for seminars, concerts, large meetings, and other events.

Restoration Stage 3

Stage 3 of the building's restoration was made possible by a grant of $7 million from the Federal Government in 2012. As part of this project, the last remaining derelict section – the East wing – was fully restored. Further work was also completed on the Central and West Wings to enhance their amenity. The north and south precincts of the building were landscaped, including the carriage circle in front of the building, which was restored to its pre-20th century appearance with precise attention to detail.

Similarly to the Central and West wing restoration projects, the building's existing internal layout was preserved, and the heritage fabric of its walls and floors were kept as intact as possible. Like the earlier two stages of the building's restoration, the work included the introduction of disabled access, new air-conditioning and communication services, as well as other modern amenities. The walkway atop the two linking passageways was roofed to allow a covered passageway to link the three wings on the first floor.

This work involved the removal of lead and asbestos, as well as enough pigeon droppings to fill two skip bins.

The work was completed the following year, leaving the Female Orphan School complex fully restored and occupied. A building which had been boarded up and guarded with barbed wire for years is now open to members of the public for a range of uses. Visitors can enjoy a free exhibition exploring the history and significance of the building on the ground floor. The building is now home to the Whitlam Institute, which presents a free exhibition on Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his government. A reading room on the first floor of the East wing provides allows researchers to access the Whitlam Prime Ministerial Collection – the archive of documents and ephemera associated with the history of the Whitlam Government. A dedicated learning space caters to school groups, and allows the presentation of the Whitlam Institute schools program. The Margaret Whitlam Galleries in the West Wing were upgraded with improved audio-visual technology, to gallery to present a greater range of exhibitions to the public.

The East wing now houses the Whitlam Institute, a permanent exhibition exploring the life and achievements of Gough Whitlam, the archives preserving the Whitlam Prime Ministerial Collection, a reading room, and a new education space for school and community groups. The building's heritage is interpreted for the public in a visitor's space on the ground floor of the central wing.

On 24 September, 2013, the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Quentin Bryce AC, officially reopened the Female Orphan School building after the completion of the third and final stage of its restoration. The event took place 200 years to the day since the building's foundation stone was laid by Governor Lachlan Macquarie.