

OUR CHILDREN, THE ORPHANS

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Introduction

The history of the Orphan Schools in Hobart in the 1800s could be written in one of two ways. Either it was an integral part of the 'Benevolent Empire' providing for children in need, or it was an example of a total institution; the institutionalisation of the body, mind and spirits of non-productive members of society contained and trained to be useful members of the emergent colonial community. Or it may have been a complex blend of the two. Benevolent concern demanded the establishment of an orphan school.

Assessments of it have been mixed. In 1852 John West wrote:

But the establishment of the King's Orphan School (1828) was successful. It was chiefly designed for the numerous children whose parents had deserted, or who were dead. It was placed under the guidance of a committee, and afforded protection to many children who must have sunk under the influence of a vicious example. In this island, the fatherless have found mercy. In the absence of natural ties, the settlers have often displayed a parental tenderness in education the children of the outcast and the stranger.¹

His comments exemplify the ideology of the time: firstly, that orphan schools were to give protection to orphaned and destitute children; secondly that they provided a way of saving the children from the bad example set by their parents; and thirdly that the settlers, led by the Governor, were willing and able to provide a surrogate 'parental tenderness' in protecting and educating orphaned children.

The following description of the Orphan Schools by Clifford Reeve is similarly idealistic.

When sufficiently educated the boys were apprenticed, under sanction of the committee, to some trade, the girls put out to service. Free persons were employed to teach the boys useful trades and the girls needlework, washing etc. Most of the clothes and shoes were made in the establishment. A farm worked by the boys provided useful produce and helped make the institution self-

¹ John West, *History of Tasmania*, Henry Dowling, Launceston, 1852, p. 125

supporting. The Rural Dean performed divine service every Sunday, the singing led by the children.²

Like West and Reeves, Shurlee Swain argues that orphan schools were a philanthropic extension of colonial Government initiatives.³ However, Dianne Snow⁴ counters this with the revisionist argument that it was an issue of social control, to supply the colony with a compliant labour force. This is an argument that is supported by the new understanding of convict labour in Eastern Australia. Since the publication of Convict Workers⁵ it has been generally recognised that convict labour was in demand during the assignment period. As the work of Kirsty Reid⁶ has demonstrated, this is particularly true of female convict labour. The establishment of orphan schools can be seen as a crucial adjunct of the convict labour market in that they allowed convict women to return to the workforce unencumbered by children. Viewed in this light, the founding of the King's And Queen's Orphan Schools in Hobart Town can be seen as another chapter in the post Bigge report institutional construction program that included:

- 1821 George Town female factory
- 1822 Macquarie Harbour
- 1825 Maria Island
- 1827 Cascade female factory, Hobart Male Orphan School
- 1828 Hobart Female Orphan School
- 1829 Submission of plans for new Orphan Schools
- 1830 Port Arthur

² Clifford Reeves, *A History of Tasmanian Education*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1935, pp. 18-19.

³ Shurlee Swain, *Derivative and Indigenous in the History and Historiography of Child Welfare in Australia*, Australian Catholic University, www2.h.net.msu.edu/~child/conference/swain.htm

⁴ Dianne Snow, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol 22, issue 2, Autumn (1991), p. 262

⁵ Stephen Nicholas (ed.), *Convict workers: reinterpreting Australia's past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988.

⁶ Kirsty Reid, '"Contumacious, Ungovernable and Incorrigible": Convict Women and Workplace Resistance, V.D.L., 1820-1839', I. Duffield and J. Bradley, (eds), *Representing Convicts: New perspectives on convict forced labour migration*, Leicester University Press, London (1997), pp. 106-123

1833 Buildings for Orphan Schools completed

1834 Launceston female factory, Point Puer juvenile establishment

Like the Orphan Schools, it is widely recognised that many of these institutions also functioned as retraining schools with the aim of turning recalcitrant convicts into productive, submissive workers.⁷ The Orphan Schools operated according to 1818 regulations of educating inmates 'only in view to their present condition of life and future destination, namely as wives and servants of common settlers, mechanics and labouring people.'⁸ There was no focus more important than this and no intention that the inmates should aspire to anything other than membership of the working class. Although there was a genuine concern expressed by the community at the increasing visibility of vagrant and destitute children, an analysis of the daily running of the Orphan Schools reveals that the need to contain a marginal group of people took precedence over more noble motives. They operated as a form of social control in that they removed an unproductive group of inhabitants, soothed outrage by appearing to be benevolent by removing children from dangerous influences and in so doing, were able to supply servants and labourers as an end product.

However, the Orphan Schools occupied a liminal period in Van Diemen's Land. It was an interim approach to an urgent problem by a distracted government. An examination of the records of admission, committee reports and public comment of the schools from the inception of the first temporary building in 1827, through until 1862 when the Orphan

⁷ S. Nicholas (ed) *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1988); K. Reid, ' "Contumacious, Ungovernable and Incurable": Convict Women and Workplace Resistance, V.D.L, 1820-1839', I. Duffield and J. Bradley (eds) *Representing Convicts: New perspectives on convict forced labour migration*, Leicester University Press, London (1997), pp 106-123 and H. Maxwell-Stewart, 'Convict Workers, "Penal Labour" and Sarah Island: Life at Macquarie Harbour, 1822-1834', I. Duffield and J. Bradley (eds) *Representing Convicts*, pp142-162

⁸ Robert Van Krieken, *Children and the State: Social Control and the Formation of Australian Child Welfare*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1991, p 57, John Ramsland, *Children of the Back*

schools became the Queen's Asylum indicate that it functioned primarily as a factory as did other post Bigge institutions previously mentioned. While not denying the influence of benevolent concern, the best that could be said is that it paved the way for later philanthropic endeavours, such as the Girls Industrial School.

Chapter 1: Colonisation and Institutions.

The definition of an orphan is a child whose parents are both dead. However, the working definition of an orphan in Van Diemen's Land not only included children without parents, but also extended to children of convicts, poor settlers, single mothers and Aborigines.⁹ Several factors, moral, social and legal, were involved in the classification of an orphan. By British law, the father was the legal guardian of any children born to himself and his wife.¹⁰ Therefore, if the father died but the mother survived, the child was still regarded as a legal orphan. Children of unmarried mothers also fell into this category. Despite this law, convict mothers were transported with their dependent children, most likely because the mother was the principal nurturer and it was viewed as her role to raise the children. The end result though, was a surplus of children for whom nobody held a legal responsibility. Children under the age of three were allowed to stay with their mothers in the Female Factory but this was looked upon as a reward and considered to be inconsistent with the aim of punishment.¹¹ The Government therefore created a paradoxical position for itself as despite its laws, it effectively annulled the father's obligations and rights.

Those whose mothers were single due to the death or desertion of their partners were seen as deserving objects of charity. In contrast, the children of other single mothers needed 'rescuing' from moral contamination.¹² Children whose parent/s were judged as

⁹ *Minute Book of the Committee of Management of the King's Orphan School*, SWD 24, Archives of Tasmania.

¹⁰ Dianne Snow, 'Family Policy and Orphan Schools in Early Colonial Australia', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol 22, issue 2, Autumn (1991), p. 262

¹¹ J. Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convict Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1997), pp. 116-9

¹² For arguments regarding the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' Poor, see Joan Brown, *Poverty is Not a Crime: the development of social services in Tasmania, 1803-1900*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association. Hobart, (1972). Robert Van Krieken, *Children and the State: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Allen & Unwin Sydney (1992).

being unfit for reasons of morality, sickness or poverty were then admitted into Orphan Schools. Obviously, parentless and destitute children qualified as well. As for the Aborigines, they were judged as being unfit to raise children and the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal parents occurred. Abducted by settlers as labourers,¹³ and orphaned by the genocide that occurred, they were more often objects of curiosity than of assistance. Those not collected as 'pets' ¹⁴ were moved around at the whim of Commandants and Governors from one institution to the other.

The government also had a *de facto* duty of care to the children of free settlers, who because of circumstances beyond their control found themselves financially unable to provide for their children. Free settler families arrived together but conditions in the colony made it extremely difficult for many to remain together. Often the father was forced by limited labour opportunity to leave the family in the hope of finding work elsewhere, often in New Zealand, New South Wales or in England.

Traditional social networks, such as the extended family, that assist in times of hardship did not exist in the colony. Such networks extend, over a long period of time, as successive generations are born. 'The extended working-class family household could include grandparents or other relatives, young people apprenticed to the household, or neighbours in crisis. Kinship and neighbourhood relations formed an important network for placing children in apprenticeships and for providing support in times of financial or other crisis.'¹⁵ Van Diemen's Land was an artificial community, in the sense that it consisted of transported fragments of traditional English society.¹⁶ Convict women who arrived with their young children were often soon separated. It was usually only a matter

¹³ *Hobart Town Courier*, October 28 1828.

¹⁴ PL Brown,(ed.), *The Clyde Company Papers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (1956), p. 68

¹⁵ Snow, *Family Policy and Orphan Schools*, p. 260

¹⁶ *ibid* p. 261.

of days from their arrival until the time the children were removed to the Orphan Schools.¹⁷

In Van Diemen's Land the administrative strata¹⁸ valued diligence, prudence, sobriety, thrift and initiative. What they did not like was idleness, improvidence and intemperance. These three attributes were perceived not only as defects of character, but also the cause of poverty.¹⁹ Therefore they reasoned that poverty was caused by character flaws and was self inflicted. It was feared that these characteristics would be transmitted to the next generation. To prevent this it was deemed necessary to remove children from such parents and train them to be good productive servants, in the same way that Aboriginal children were. The social environment of Hobart Town, described as 'a perfect sink of debauchery and blackguardianism, [with] hardly any respectable ladies in this place...and [where] he is the greatest man who can drink most'²⁰ was no place for destitute children.

Van Diemen's Land had a need for a compliant and large labour force, to build the necessary roads, buildings and bridges in the infant colony, while Britain had a surplus of convicts. Therefore, a mutually beneficial situation emerged where the colony was populated largely by a group of people whom the government had transported but now were required to maintain. In addition to feeding, clothing and housing prisoners, the

¹⁷ This information is deduced from an analysis of records of the date of arrival of Convict ships supplied in James McClelland's, *James McClelland's convict pioneer and immigrant history of Australia. Book no. 1; Names of convict and immigrant ships known to me arriving Australia 1788 to 1899*, Silverdale, NSW: Glenbrook, NSW, James McCelland Research (1981). The admission register of the Orphan School, SWD 24 AOT and Joyce Purtscher, *Children in Queen's Orphanage, Hobart Town, 1869-1863*, I. Schaffer, New Town, Tas. (1993).

¹⁸ Stratification is defined as the unequal rights and prerequisites of different positions in a society. Attention is given to the system of positions, rather than to the individuals who occupy those positions. A stratified society is linked with social hierarchy, where people are ranked according to class and authority. Class is defined according to how society organises production; a combination of Marxian (stratification) and Weberian (organisational) understanding. www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/5889/index.htm these definitions are particularly relevant to life in Van Diemen's Land, where these structures had to be created from scratch.

¹⁹ Joan Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime, the development of social services in Tasmania, 1803-1900*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart (1972)

Home Government also needed to provide the same services for the military that guarded them. This duty of care extended to the larger population, as it was dependent on government assistance in the early days of settlement. In fact this dependence was encouraged. Trade with foreign ships was forbidden and independent tradesmen were not encouraged to supply blankets, or clothing, or shoes.²¹ These were supplied directly from Britain, or produced by convict labour in the interests of minimising government expenditure. A centralised Government Store administered by the Commissariat was established and supplied by shipments from Britain. From the beginning the relationship between colony and Home was a paternal/infant dichotomy. References to the 'infant colony' are prolific in historical literature.²² Britain was not only 'Home', but also the parent, dispensing both rations and authority. Van Diemen's Land was the dependent colony, reliant on the parent to take care of its needs and the orphan schools were a microcosm of this relationship. Guardianship passed from the parent to the Governor, who assumed the paternal role, assisted on a daily basis by the Headmaster and Matron.

Because, or in spite of this reliance, extreme poverty existed in the colony. Government stores were overburdened, the number of independently wealthy settlers few and the convict population continued to grow rapidly. Because the foundling colony was dependent on supplies from Britain, and given the time it took to sail from Britain to the colony, many experienced extreme hardship. Similarly, when the Orphan Schools were established, they also had interminable waits for supplies to filter through. When Collins arrived at Risdon Cove in February 1804, the settlers were on one-third of their daily rations and the Government hogs were starving for want of supplies.²³

²⁰ *Colonial Times*, January 6 1826

²¹ Historic records of Australia [henceforth HRA] series 3, volume 2, p 327

²² See for example, HRA, Series 3, volume 1, pp 69, 237

²³ HRA series 3, volume 1, p 10

The overall picture of the colony's development then includes a disproportionately large number of children without support. The patriarchal role of the Government and the dependence of the population on it, led to a public demand that the Government act to relieve suffering.

There was a substantial delay before the Government opened a Male Orphan School in 1827 and a Female Orphan School in 1828. Apart from benevolent concern, and pressure exerted through the media for the government to take action, there was a form of class-based ideology within the colony that may well have contributed to its establishment. Free settlers above many things desired respectability and those in the community, who were not considered to be respectable therefore, presented a problem. Visible signs of poverty, degradation, or immorality were offensive to those who sincerely wanted to rise above 'the hated stain' of convictism.

Snow discusses the impact of the adoption of the middle-class bourgeois family as the ideal model on the society of Hobart Town.²⁴ It was disastrous for those who fell outside the ideal, because middle-class morality and social control make unpleasant partners. The end result of this partnership, following the recommendations of Archdeacon Scott and the Bigge inquiry, was the removal of large numbers of children to the Orphan School. In 1828, Scott identified ninety-one boys and one hundred and twenty three girls under twelve who were suitable for admission but was not sure that parents and guardians would hand them over willingly.²⁵ Aboriginal children also came into this category. The findings in the Stolen Generation Report could be said to relate equally to both European and Aboriginal children whose parents were coerced into relinquishing them. 'Forcible removal of innocent children from caring parents by government or

²⁴ Dianne Snow, *Family Policy and Orphan Schools*, pp255-284

²⁵ HRA series 3, volume 7, p 151

church officials is indefensible in a liberal democratic society.'²⁶ This was, however, neither a liberal nor a democratic society. It was in fact the opposite. While the removal of children may have been motivated by the best intentions, the human side of the story is absent. How many parents unwillingly gave up their children?²⁷ How were they persuaded to do so? The orphan schools certainly promised economic relief for families in need, but at what cost?

I'm afraid my wife will commit suicide if the boy is not back soon, for she is good for nothing, only crying day and night...It did not take long for him to go, but it takes a long time for him to come back.²⁸

²⁶ *IPA Backgrounder*, Vol. 10, Number 1, February 1998, www.ipa.org.au/pubs/background_docs/BG10-1.html/;

²⁷ HRA series 3 volume 7, p. 151

²⁸ Radio National Transcripts: *Background Briefing*, Sunday 11 February 1996. Missing. www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/bb960211.html

Chapter 2: Why were there no Orphan Schools in Van Diemen's Land prior to 1828?

The time between settlement and the establishment of the first Orphan School in New South Wales was thirteen years, when Governor King opened an Orphan School for girls. It was another eighteen years before a similar establishment was opened for the boys. In Van Diemen's Land the first Orphan School was not opened until twenty-four years after the founding of the colony. The long wait for the Male Orphan School in new South Wales has been attributed to a lack of funds.²⁹ One has to wonder why it took so long for orphan schools to be established in Van Diemen's Land when the need for such a place had been recognised in New South Wales.

Dianne Snow argues that unlike Britain, 'the British settlements in Australia were a totalitarian state, where the governor had complete authority and operated with the legitimate support of an extensive military.'³⁰ If this view is correct then the blame lies with the colonial government. However there is no basis for her assumption, with the possible exception of the years under Arthur, when martial law was introduced. At all other times her description fails to take into consideration the hierarchical structure of command. The Home Government dictated the terms and conditions for all aspects of colonial life which were enforced by the Governor-General. He in turn, corresponded with the authorities in Van Diemen's Land. Within the structure there existed a considerable amount of leeway because of the time it took for communications to be received. The reality was that each stratum had a degree of autonomy. The distance between Britain, New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land and the fact that Van Diemen's Land was a subsidiary colony produced an administrative nightmare. Despite the specific orders given, it was nearly impossible to know at that distance what was

²⁹ Robert Van Krieken, *Children and the State: Social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney (1991), p53

really happening. Corruption, self interest and the abuse of power was rampant within the government spheres up until the time of Governor Arthur's administration and seems to be a primary reason for the delay in establishing an orphan school in the colony. The government cannot then be held entirely to blame for the delay. The fact that education was not the primary goal of the orphan schools also needs to be included in any analysis of the delay.

It would seem that education of the poor and convict children was not the principal aim of orphan schools as schools already existed in the colony with education of the children of convicts and poor settlers provided at no expense to the parents. Private education also, was available for those who could afford it.³¹

It is however significant to note the sources of funding for education, because as it becomes clear, if these funds were pilfered or misappropriated there would not only be a shortfall for existing schools but a real likelihood that any plans for an orphan school would have to wait. The Schoolmaster and Superintendent of schools in the Colony, Mr Thomas Fitzgerald, received part of his salary from the Colonial Fund while his wife, who ran a school for girls, received an annual salary of 15 pounds from the Police Fund.

³² The government also paid Thomas McQueen, the schoolmaster in Launceston in 1820 from the Police Fund. By 1821, eleven schools operated in the colony.³³ Lt. Gov. Collins in 1806 purchased a house for the education of the children of the colony to be funded in the same way as the New South Wales Orphan School.³⁴ Jackson has assumed it was to be an Orphan School.³⁵ This assumption is based on the recommended source of funding,

³⁰ Snow, op. cit., p258

³¹ See for example, advertisements in the *Hobart Town Gazette*, June 1818, cited in Reeves, p9

³² Clifford Reeves, *A History of Tasmanian Education*, p 7.

³³ C. Reeves, *A History of Tasmanian Education*, p12-15

³⁴ HRA series 3 volume 1, p 817,

³⁵ Skye Jackson, *From Orphan School To Point Puer: a study of the care of vulnerable children in Van Diemen's Land (1828-1833)*, B A History Honours Thesis, University of Tasmania (1998), p 18

which was to be the same as that of the Orphan School at Port Jackson.³⁶ However there is no mention of this intention in the records. It was much more likely to have been a school for the children of settlers, which is more consistent with the recommendations put forward by Bigge in his report on the State of the Colonies.³⁷ No recommendation is made there regarding the need for an orphan school.

Education then, was not the motivation for the establishment of orphan schools. Instead, the rising number of poor and convict children in conjunction with the growing need for a trained labour force were the motivating factors behind the establishment of orphan schools. These conditions were not apparent from the beginning. Ironically, the cycle of lack of economic opportunity and rapid social change caused for example by industrialisation and enclosure which led to poverty and the associated rise in crime levels in Britain, was reproduced in Van Diemen's Land. With the rise in crime came the problem of containment. The empirical solution had been mass transportation. This in turn created another severe case of community poverty, exacerbated by the destruction of social networks, and the lack of economic opportunity and again the problem of containment occurred. Philanthropy played a role in the introduction of orphan schools in so far as public pressure forced the government to find a solution. Once again containment proved to be the chosen path. However much a benevolent concern may have influenced individuals, it was not the force behind the creation of orphan schools. They, like other Total Institutions, looked to the 'coercive education into the habits of industry', to create 'docile bodies' who would go on to become productive members of the lower strata of society.³⁸

³⁶ HRA series 3 volume 1, n 182, p 378

³⁷ Bigge JT, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the state of the colony of NSW*, London, 1822

³⁸ Michel Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: the Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*, Pantheon Books, Random House Inc, Great Britain (1978), p. 214, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Penguin Books, London (1977), pp. 138-169

The overriding factor however behind the delay was not ideological, but economic. The situation in the colony was such that funds were simply not available for establishing an Orphan School prior to 1827. One can not assume that the colonies were thoroughly governed, particularly while Van Diemen's Land was a subsidiary colony, and neither can we assume that the orders of the Lieutenant Governor were followed. As for the Government 'having the full support of the military,' corruption existed within those ranks as well. Hardship escalates self-interest and no group was exempt from temptations. Historical records show that there was significant and sustained corruption which impacted on the provision of relief to the needy. The following accounts are of particular relevance to the lack of relief available for the needy, particularly to the funding of orphan schools, because it was the money raised from taxes and duties and paid into the Police Fund which was to fund the school.³⁹

The lack of funds available for both establishing and maintaining orphan schools in Van Diemen's Land can be explained by the self interest of the civil classes, wide spread poverty, overburdened Government Stores and the endemic mismanagement and pilfering of these stores. Deliberately poor recording practices also did not help matters. Government stores were the only source of food, bedding and clothing for many and the Home Government was intent on economising as far as possible.⁴⁰ On February 8th 1812, Macquarie instructed the Commandant of Hobart Town, Major Andrew Geils of the 73rd Regiment as follows:

I must recommend to you in the strongest manner to observe the strictest and most rigid economy in the expenditure of the Publick Money, Stores and Provisions, at the

³⁹ HRA Series 3, Volume 1, p. 473,

⁴⁰ The following dispatch from Lieutenant Governor Collins, on the twenty-ninth of October, 1803 gives strict instructions as to the level of thrift expected by the Governor, with the settlers instructed to make the issue of clothing last for the ensuing six months. HRA series 3, volume 1, p. 70

settlement under your command; and that you will most carefully avoid putting Government to any useless and unnecessary Expense of any sort whatsoever.⁴¹

Geils was also given responsibility for the moral, spiritual and fiscal well being of the colony. This was a particularly demanding request, because Geils appeared to be more concerned with his own well being than the well being of the colony. He made exorbitant requests for land grants, stocked with government herds for his wife and six children.⁴² He also had his eye on Government House for his own use, had prematurely brought himself land in Hobart Town and had designs on another large grant in Risdon Cove for his wife. Geils also made free with slops and bedding from the government store, giving them to friends and marines when they had been intended for settlers relocated from Norfolk Island and convicts in Government employ.⁴³ It seems he was continuing a practice instigated by Captain Murray, who 'omitted' to send the Account of the Police Fund of Hobart Town to Macquarie. Murray also failed to answer requests by Macquarie to produce documentation explaining what the money was used for.⁴⁴ For instance, on January 28 1813, Governor Macquarie demanded explanations for an amount of 1,259 pounds 3 shillings and 2 pence, which had been drawn from the Police Fund.⁴⁵ Bearing in mind that the Orphan Schools were funded from the Police Fund,⁴⁶ this level of misappropriation showed a stunning lack of concern for the needy. It also explains why funding for orphan schools in Hobart was unavailable.

Governor Macquarie was aware of the problem of corruption and saw fit to warn Davey to be on guard against Reverend Knopwood, Anglican chaplain for the colony, Leonard Fosbrook, who was in charge of the Commissariat, Robert Loane, a merchant and settler, Dr. Bowden, the assistant surgeon and Thomas Kent, a shipping merchant who was in

⁴¹ February 8th, 1812, HRA series 3, volume 1, p 473

⁴² *ibid*, p476

⁴³ *ibid*, pp475-7

⁴⁴ For complaints against Captain Murray, see HRA series 3, volume 1 pp483-6.

⁴⁵ HRA series 3, volume 2, p 486

partnership with Loane. These were prominent men and the fact that Macquarie was suspicious of their activities suggests that corruption existed within the upper echelons of colonial society. Fosbrook was later court marshalled for fraud in 1814. Fosbrook in turn brought charges against Geils who was exonerated by a Court of Inquiry.⁴⁷ It is little wonder that Macquarie was distracted from the call to establish an orphan school.

The frustration of long-distance governing is evident in Macquarie's letter to Geils when he admonished him for conduct that had been 'highly reprehensible and incompatible with those strict military principles...a complete abuse of the Authority invested in you.' Geils was known also to have been helping himself to supplies of building materials 'to the detriment of public works.'⁴⁸ Public works also included building an Orphan School. However, Davey continued the misuse of Government House, and Government Stores. He also has the dubious honour of being in charge at the time when spirit smuggling in the Derwent River reached its all time high. This would have been particularly onerous as duties on imports were to be paid into the Police Fund.

In response, Governor Macquarie set about the complete reorganisation and administration of the Commissariat Department and the Police Fund, 'due to the prior great neglect and irregularity.'⁴⁹ It was from the Police Fund, as well as the Colonial and Orphan Fund that money for colonial schools were to be drawn. Considering the amounts that had been illegally removed, it is not surprising that insufficient funds remained for establishing orphan schools.

Governor Sorell who replaced Davey on April 9 1817 and remained in charge until May 14 1824, may well have been able to attend to the matter but for the problems caused by

⁴⁶ HRA series 3, volume 1p 378, 473

⁴⁷ HRA series 3, volume 2, p. 16, note 21, pp. 24-54

⁴⁸ HRA series 3 volume 2, pp. 53-54

⁴⁹ HRA series 3 volume 2, pp.157-161

the attention focused on his private life, and the depth to which corruption was embedded within the colony. (Sorell took another man's wife as his own while neglecting the one he already had and for this received severe censure). As an example of the low regard some held him in, it was stated in the Bigge Report that it would be highly improper to have a Female Orphan School in Van Diemen's Land 'while Sorell is in charge.'⁵⁰

Sorell did manage to carry out Macquarie's orders regarding the stores. The first task Macquarie charged Sorell with was to 'take a regular and exact Account and Survey of all Naval and Military Stores, Provisions, Spirits and Grains belonging to the Crown. His second task was to settle, liquidate, close and publicly declare no liability for debts and demands incurred under Davey. Amongst other instructions, he was commanded to 'document and guard the King's Stores from misappropriation, and to submit regular quarterly returns and reports to Macquarie.'⁵¹

Despite his public reputation as 'immoral', Sorell won the trust and support of Macquarie by his punctuality with sending the requested reports.⁵² However, Sorell faced a difficult situation with regard to provisions. The situation had been worse than Macquarie realised. Sorell found that the prisoners were miserable and ill from the cold as no blankets had been issued to them 'since the period at which prisoners became entitled to it.'⁵³ Despite lack of supplies from England, trade with foreigners was prohibited.⁵⁴ Supplies of shoes, slop clothing, bedding, stores and stationery were all inadequate.⁵⁵ Prisoners were freezing in the winter of 1817 as there were no blankets in the Store and some prisoners had not been issued with jackets for three years. However,

⁵⁰ Kemp to Inquiry, HRA series 3 volume 3, p.221.

⁵¹ HRA series 3 volume 2, pp. 184-200

⁵² HRA series 3 volume 2, p.261

⁵³ HRA series 3 volume 2, p. 233

⁵⁴ HRA series 3 volume 2, p. 327

⁵⁵ HRA series 3 volume 2, pp. 233, 259

Macquarie approved the purchase of 3000 gallons of spirits for members of government and Indian Blankets for the troops.⁵⁶

The same situation occurred at Port Dalrymple in the North, and Sorell admitted that he was unable to control Lt. Colonel Cimitere, who made the most of his isolation both from Hobart Town and from New South Wales. Sorell wrote to Macquarie complaining that 'Cimitere [was] exceeding the power which belonged to his office in ordering without reference to me Location and allotments for building and cultivation; in restoring Tickets of Leave cancelled by the Magistrates; in very large and unauthorised Expenditure from the Store, especially in giving Slops, Bedding etc., to people as for extra Services, and in many Cases without any specification of claim whatever.' He was also 'transferring' cattle from the Government herds to select private landowners.⁵⁷ Sorell at least was able to make Macquarie aware of the magnitude of the problem, and on October 13 1818, Macquarie ordered a complete audit of the Police Fund, and one naval officer was subsequently dismissed.

It would seem that no one class was responsible for thieving from the stores. In July 1819, the Government Store was robbed and two soldiers, five convicts and one free man were tried for the crime. One of the soldiers subsequently shot himself.⁵⁸ Two factors of particular interest are the cooperation across rank and class divisions and the degree of remorse or despair evident in the soldier's suicide. Taken together these two factors point not only to corruption, but also to a situation of desperate need. It can not be overlooked, though that the degree of corrupt self-interest which evidently existed within the ranks was a major reason for the delay. The Colonial Times exposed it as such:

⁵⁶ HRA series 3 volume 2, p. 352

⁵⁷ HRA Series 3 volume 3, pp. 22-47

⁵⁸ HRA series3 volume 2, p. 414

Oh but says the hireling, the "Gentlemen must live as becomes them." They cannot keep up "proper appearances" for less than the sums they receive...misery and distress should prevail, in order that certain persons should live in luxury.⁵⁹

The paper also attacked the priorities and attitudes of the civil classes:

And yet with all the hypocritical whinings about devotion and morality, there are few who stand forth to hold out the hand of relief! To offer the morsel of bread, or the cup of water!...What infinite happiness could have been conferred upon numberless miserable beings by a different appropriation of half of the money which is expended in the shape of salaries.⁶⁰

The church was not in a strong position to give aid either. Until 1819, the colony had only one Chaplain, the Reverend Robert Knopwood and the population was scattered. Reverend Youl arrived in the North in 1819, and a Methodist Minister joined them in 1821. However, in his capacity of Chief Magistrate, which occupied much of his time, the Reverend Knopwood ordered offenders to pay fines into the 'orphan fund.'⁶¹

While Governor Arthur has been credited with kind and humanitarian aims,⁶² it seems that government had until then taken little interest in the plight of needy children. The opening of the Orphan Schools was more in response to moral pressure from the public and to the need to train a future generation as labourers and domestics. If the main concern were for the education of the children, then the eleven schools already operating and admitting children of convicts at no expense, would have sufficed.⁶³ The aim was not merely to offer education to the underprivileged, because schools in the area already admitted convict children without charge. Therefore the motivation had to come from another source. That source may have been the desire for respectability. Large numbers

⁵⁹ *Colonial Times*, January 6 1826

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ R. Knopwood, *The Diary of Robert Knopwood, 1803-1838: first Chaplain of Van Diemen's Land 1761-1838* Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Sandy Bay, Tasmania (1977).

⁶² Skye Jackson, *From Orphan School to Point Peur* p 23

⁶³ C Reeves, *A History of Tasmanian Education*, pp 12-16

of destitute children threatened that desired aim. An inadequate supply of trained labour made it difficult for families to find and employ servants, yet the attainment of servants was a highly desirable mark of respectability. The convict class was proving to be resistant to the attempts to reform and refine them. they continued to live and procreate outside the confines of matrimony and it was feared that they would morally contaminate the next generation. The solution to all these problems was to make the poor and destitute 'disappear', to remove the children from the care of parents judged unfit to raise them properly and train them to supply the higher classes with servants and skilled labour for which they were not required to pay for the duration of the child's apprenticeship. It had long been the practice to take any idle but healthy beggars off the streets in England and apprentice them to masters to learn a useful trade or craft.⁶⁴ In England the boarding out scheme operated quite successfully, but it required a number of wealthy families to take in the children of the poor. In Van Diemen's Land, not only was there was a scarcity of wealthy families, but also a reluctance to take in children when the real demand was for skilled labour. For these reasons a form of public confinement was required, hence the establishment of the orphan schools which functioned as asylums, school and prisons.⁶⁵

There were of course individuals who were genuinely concerned both within and without government. Reference is made to Arthur's close and detailed application to the minutes of the committee running the Schools as proof of his benevolent concern.⁶⁶ While this is not disputed there are very few entries from Gov. Arthur, which do not relate to economic issues.⁶⁷ Therefore government interest as expressed by Arthur was largely pecuniary and directed to the formation of a compliant work force, rather than to the education of the poor and the destitute.

⁶⁴ The English Act, 1536, in Van Krieken, *Children and the State*, p 46

⁶⁵ Robert Van Krieken, *Children and the State*, p 5

⁶⁶ Jackson, op cit., p 24

⁶⁷ SWD 24.

Chapter 3

The Orphan Schools

The community of Hobart Town saw the need for an orphan school long before one was opened. Perhaps one of the intentions of the orphan schools was to replace the functions of the working-class extended family. Certainly the apprenticing of children was one such aspect. However, the removal of children into institutions was in no way similar to life in a family unit. They suffered from overcrowding, with children at times sleeping four to a bed in unheated buildings. There was an insufficient supply of food and clothing. The children rose early and worked hard. Their lives can hardly have been worse had they stayed in their former situations. However, the public demanded that something be done to ameliorate the suffering of destitute children and the orphan schools were the answer. When finally news leaked out that the Government had applied to the British Government for a grant of 10 000 pounds for buildings and stock for an Orphan School, media reaction was thus:

*An Asylum for the protection of destitute children has been long wanted in this Colony: and we hope that the projected Orphan School will prove in every respect what it ought to be...Our earnest desire is, that the Orphan School of Tasmania may flourish amid the wreck of time in future ages.*⁶⁸

Despite the enthusiasm of the media, it was over a year before the King's Orphan School opened in its temporary setting.

The Administration.

The Clergy and School Lands Corporation, which was established in New South, Wales in 1826 was responsible for the administration of the orphan schools there. It was to

⁶⁸ *Colonial Times*, Friday, December 15, 1826

receive one seventh in value and extent of all lands in each county in New South Wales. The Corporation was to be responsible for the payment of salaries of clergy, catechists and schoolmasters, the building and maintaining of churches, schools and ministers residences.⁶⁹ Until such time as such a corporation was established in Van Diemen's Land, a temporary Committee was established.⁷⁰ Control of the Orphan Schools passed from the Government of Van Diemen's Land to the Convict Department in 1844. Lt. Governor Eardley Wilmot decided that 'the Orphan School had become an asylum for lodging, clothing, maintaining and educating the children of convicts' and so it was more appropriate that the control be handed to the Convict Department. The colonial government agreed to pay the Home Government a fee for non-convict children who were admitted. By 1847, no more neglected children or children of single parents were admitted into the Orphan Schools. Brown says that at this point, the government disclaimed authority.⁷¹ However, the Committee retained guardianship of the children.

The first meeting of the Committee of Management of the King's Orphan School was held on the 24th April 1828.⁷² The Committee of Management of the King's Orphan School had five members: Archdeacon Scott, Major Kirkwood, Joseph Hone Esq. and Reverend Bedford. The secretary was G.T.W.B. Boyes. A Ladies' Committee was also appointed to be responsible for the oversight of the Female Orphan School. Governor Arthur saw the minutes of all Committee meetings, which were held weekly. While the Committee could and did make recommendations as necessary, they were dependent on the Governor's approval before they could act. The children admitted to the schools became the legal responsibility of the Government. Those parents who could afford to pay for the support of their children were expected to make a payment six months in advance. Those who had no guardian able to contribute to their keep were admitted 'on

⁶⁹ [www.records.New South Wales.gov.au/publications/aboriginalguide/aboriginal guide-04.htm#1011-72374](http://www.records.New South Wales.gov.au/publications/aboriginalguide/aboriginal%20guide-04.htm#1011-72374)

⁷⁰ SWD 24, 26 April-23 Oct 1833

⁷¹ Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 38-57

the Foundation' which meant at the expense of the Government. The funds paid into the Police Fund were used to subsidise the schools in the absence of a division of the Clergy and School Lands Corporation.

The children were admitted from the age of three and were discharged between the ages of twelve and fifteen, when they were apprenticed out to settlers in the colony. Children whose parent or parents found themselves in improved circumstances could apply to have their children returned at any age, but only with the consent of the Committee. Occasionally children were released at their own request upon reaching adulthood. The only other way to leave was to abscond, or die.

The Staff.

The staff of the Orphan Schools consisted of a schoolmaster and matron, assisted by convict servants and a beadle. The structure was hierarchical but its efficiency depended on the vigilance of each level on those directly beneath them.

The Buildings.

The first Orphan Schools were located in temporary rented accommodation, which had hurriedly been acquired to house a growing number of destitute and needy children. There were two buildings at first. The Male Orphan School was located in what had formerly functioned as Gilhern's Distillery and Hume and Peck's bark manufacturing factory.⁷² The accommodation was ironically appropriate to its function of manufacturing the children into workers. The Government rented 'Belle Vue' in upper Macquarie street for the Female Orphan School. However, because the Government rented the buildings, there was little incentive to repair and maintain them. The general condition of the temporary Male Orphan School was severely neglected. It was described

⁷² see Appendix A

⁷³ GTWB Boyes, *The diaries and letters of GTWB Boyes, 1787-1853*, P. Chapman (ed) Oxford University Press, Melbourne (1985)

as so poor that it 'tended to injure the health of the children.'⁷⁴ The situation was no better at the Female Orphan School. At the committee meeting on the 13th September 1828, it was noted that the hall ceiling of the Female Orphan School had fallen down and there was still no table so that the children could sit down to eat.⁷⁵ When discussing the possibility of getting a bullock for the Male Orphan School, it was casually mentioned that the place was 'infested with vermin,'⁷⁶ and that the interior of the Male Orphan School roof was in a 'highly dangerous state.'⁷⁷ We can deduce more about the conditions in the temporary accommodations by looking at the requirements listed for the new buildings which were designed to replace the temporary Orphan Schools. Required were two new buildings that, while separate from each other, were also in close proximity to each other for ease of administration. Most importantly, they had to be within easy reach of the church for Divine Services. The recommended solution was to build the Male and Female Orphan Schools as identical wings either side of St John's Church. Comfortable accommodation for the Master and Mistress and family were required while the rooms for the children should be large with 'the sleeping rooms being of good width and height.' An infirmary, a nursery, kitchen, and washhouse, were wanted. Somewhere for the children to exercise, which was fenced, a stable and of course, a garden for vegetables and herbs made the wish list, as did a requirement for adequate ventilation.⁷⁸ By comparison, the rooms in the temporary accommodation were small, overcrowded⁷⁹ and poorly ventilated.⁸⁰ There were no facilities for washing either, at least for washing large items, such as blankets.⁸¹

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p. 56 2 August, 1828

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 84-5 13th September 1828

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p. 98, 8th November, 1828

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 129, 31st January, 1829

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 188, 6th December, 1828

⁷⁹ Both the male and female schools suffered from desperate overcrowding.

⁸⁰ Three tin ventilators were ordered for the Female Orphan School at the Committee meeting held on the 9th of May, 1829. SWD 24, p. 152.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 124 31st January, 1829,

Lee Archer, the penal architect for the colony, designed the new buildings that replaced the temporary schools in 1833. As in other penal structures, the design facilitated surveillance and the central role played by religion was symbolised by placing the church in between the wings that were to accommodate the inmates from each of the Schools. The new buildings were an improvement on the former accommodations. However, the physical descriptions of children released from the Queen's asylum,⁸² as pale and weak eyed etc, would suggest that living conditions did not improve.

Living Conditions

Conditions for the children were worse than Spartan. The diet of the children was not particularly healthy.⁸³ Although their daily rations were minimal, even these were at times withheld. Under the supposed care of Mr and Mrs Chorley, the children were being starved.⁸⁴ Their soup, which was supposed to be thickened with oatmeal was not, their porridge was served without milk and it took the complaints of a convict servant that the children were being starved before the Committee acted. One might suspect that if this matter reached the pages of the committee minutes, it may well have been a regular, not an intermittent occurrence. The Committee did not appear to have kept a close eye on the accounts, or they would have queried why Chorley drew 645 pounds of flour between May 10 and July 24, when the usual amount would have been approximately 100 pounds. When questioned by the Committee 'the pair bickered and passed the blame from one to the other.'⁸⁵

The Committee was supposed to be attending to all aspects of the running of the schools, but there were several documented cases of mismanagement and corruption. GTWB Boyes who was appointed to the position of Secretary to the Church and School

⁸² J Purtscher, *Apprentices and Absconders from the Queen's Asylum*, Hobart Town, I. Schaffer, New Town, Tasmania (1993)

⁸³ See appendix B for the daily menu.

⁸⁴ SWD 24, pp59-69,92

Committee with a salary of one hundred pounds per annum⁸⁶ was aware of this corruption and mismanagement. The following excerpts from his diary reveal his concern regarding the administration of the School. In relation to a discussion as to what age girls should be sent into service, Boyes noted 'it appears probable that the Girls would be quite as safe with respect to Morals and much better off in temporal matters in a respectable family than they would be in the School.'⁸⁷

On February 10 1832 he made the following entry: 'At the Church Committee, Bedford promised to call upon me and pay six pounds which he had received a long time ago for the maintenance of some Child at the Orphan School, Thrupp I think he said/ and which money ought to have been paid over to the Government as soon as it was received.' Obviously it had not been paid over at that time. Did Boyes exert any pressure on Bedford? One of the worst cases of mismanagement was one that related directly to the duty of care that should have, but did not exist. 'Thomas the treasurer called upon me and spoke about the little girl in the Female Orphan School, who possessed two tenements at the end of Macquarie Street, which would bring a rent of forty pounds a year if tenanted—that Hone [a member of the Management Committee] had all the papers showing the little girl's right, but through his indolence and apathy, the houses were unoccupied and going to ruin. ... I have in the last 18 months lost all faith in Hone's trust, sincerity honesty or humanity. I have no belief whatever in the goodness of his heart, and hold his principles and rules of conduct at a very low price.'⁸⁸

While Reverend Bedford's predecessor, Reverend Robert Knopwood was not universally liked, or approved of, Bedford's character was also questionable. G.W.T.B. Boyes, the secretary to the Committee of the King's Orphan Schools described the Reverend

⁸⁵ SWD 24, pp. 19,59-69

⁸⁶ Boyes, *The Diaries*, p 333

⁸⁷ *ibid* p 336

⁸⁸ Boyes, *The Diaries*, p. 430.

Bedford as 'a liar, a mischiefmaker, a backbiter and a drunkard.'⁸⁹ Boyes suspected Bedford of fraudulently taking for himself a sum of three guineas, given by Captain Davey for the Widow Laughton and her family after her husband drowned at sea.⁹⁰ These were all entries in a private diary, and reflect a degree of disillusion and disgust with the running of the schools which as secretary, he may not have been able to express publicly. The salary was also much needed for the support of his family back in England. Despite good intentions,⁹¹ the Committee seemed unaware of the reality of daily life within the schools. In fact, it is noticeable how frequently there are only one or two members present at the regularly scheduled committee meetings.⁹²

The children were in dire need of clothing and their ragged state precluded them from being sent to church.⁹³ The subject of shoes illustrates not only the shortage of supplies, but also the drive for economy at the expense of the children's needs. It also illustrates the dominance of governmental authority, and the levels of dependence that existed within the colony.

There was a chronic shortage of supplies in the Government Stores, particularly of shoes. Despite this, Government refused to sanction the supply of shoes from a local shoemaker because this was an expense it hoped to avoid by employing convicts to make them. The Committee politely pointed out to the Government on different occasions that they considered shoes to be 'a very necessary item', particularly with winter arriving. When the shoes were not supplied, the Committee presented the Government with an application from a Mr William Raines to supply shoes to the Orphan Schools for 5 shillings and sixpence a pair.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 430

⁹⁰ Boyes, *The Diaries*, pp. 446-7

⁹¹ See Appendix A

⁹² SWD 24

⁹³ SWD 24, pp. 46, 93.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p. 82

Shoes had been ordered on the 22nd of May, 18th October, and 25th October 1828, with apparently no success, because on the 13th November, 1828, the Committee, powerless to act without Government sanction again submitted Mr Raines tender of the 6th September to supply shoes and boots. The Government finally responded by saying 'The Commandant of Macquarie Harbour has been directed to make a quantity of shoes for the Orphan Schools, and any additional quantity required might be purchased from Mr Raines on the terms approved by the Committee.'⁹⁵ They still had to wait for the convicts to produce these shoes and supply them before they knew how many extra pairs to order privately. The wait was a long one evidently. The Rev. W. Norman reported the want of clothing for the men and women servants and the necessity of an immediate supply of shoes on December 27, 1828. He requested Government sanction of the Minutes in Pages 96 and 100.⁹⁶ By February the 14th, 1829 stamps were finally issued for shoes because none were in the Stores and the Committee had sourced some locally for 'no more that 21 to 24 shillings'. On the 4th July shoes were sent from the Ordinance Stores with Mr Raines providing an extra 70 pairs.⁹⁷ The interminable wait for such a basic necessity as shoes would seem to indicate a severe lack of genuine benevolent concern on the government's part. However, for at least one child in the Orphan Schools, the lack of shoes was a 'blessing in disguise'. On the pretext of taking his son out of the school to buy him a pair of shoes, the pair absconded.⁹⁸

The convict servants fared as poorly. 'School servants are and for some time past been in want of necessary clothing.' The committee recommended to Government, that the school servants should receive the same allowances as the servants in private families.

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p. 100, 13th November 1828

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 114, 27th December 1828

⁹⁷ *ibid*, pp124-172, 14th February-12 September 1829

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p 92

This request was ignored, despite being repeatedly made.⁹⁹ Perhaps the institution was not of equal concern. It certainly seemed to occupy a peripheral area of government concern.

One might imagine that the Committee may have been in a position to successfully liaise between the government and the Orphan Schools. Unfortunately the Committee did not appear to be keeping a close eye on the books, the staff, or the supplies. On March 13 1830 the overcrowding at the Male Orphan School was so bad that the Committee decided to 'meet there and inspect it themselves.'¹⁰⁰ This was part of the original commission yet it had been neglected until now.

While there were problems with the Chorley's, conditions under the 'care' of the schoolmaster Mr Giblin, did not improve.¹⁰¹ At least one of the parents managed to remove his son. 'Mr Giblin reported that Mr Butcher of Bagdad had removed his son under pretext of purchasing him a pair of shoes, and instead of returning with him sent a letter expressing dissatisfaction, and requiring the boy's clothes, which were delivered up.'¹⁰² Conditions under Mr Giblin were bad enough that an eleven-year-old boy ran away, back to his father, after being at the School for four months. The father did not return him until the next day. However, the Committee refused to have him back, probably viewing him as ungrateful. They described the boy as being of 'so vicious a character as to endanger the moral welfare of every other Lad.'¹⁰³ Nobody, however, appears to have inquired why the boy ran away. Eventually, Mr Giblin was dismissed for his cruel treatment of the boys.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ SWD 24, p. 96 8th November 1828, p. 114, p. 122,

¹⁰⁰ SWD 24, p. 202

¹⁰¹ Boyes, *The Diaries*, p. 434, SWD 24, pp.281-94

¹⁰² SWD 24, p. 92

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 88

¹⁰⁴ GWTB Boyes, *op. cit.*, p. 434, SWD 24, pp. 239, 281-94

The prioritising of economies was one reason for the poor living conditions faced by the children at the Schools. In comparison to the lack of regard for the children, we have the attention to the comfort of Ladies Committee members. As stated in the minutes of the first meeting, weekly meetings of the Committee were to be held at 10 am each Saturday in the vestry of St. David's Church. However, on the 22nd of May, 1828, the Ladies' Committee asked for 34½ yards of carpet, 8 chairs, a tablecover, 1 fender and irons, and two window curtains for the Ladies' Committee Room. If the Committee met in the vestry, why did the Ladies' Committee have a Room, and why was it to be so comfortable when the conditions in the Orphan Schools were far from it? Perhaps this is one of the first examples of the discrepancy between professed and actual care. The maintenance of a certain level of appearance was evidently important to the ladies who became involved in the 'charitable' business of supporting the Orphan Schools. Their priorities were questionable, particularly when children at the Male Orphan School were still barefooted and so badly in want of clothes that they did not attend church.¹⁰⁵ It was an inditement of the state of affairs at the School that it was worthy of comment when the Master was able to send boys to church.¹⁰⁶

The intervention of a paternalistic government fractured the family permanently in many cases. Once guardianship of the child had been relinquished, it could only be reclaimed at the discretion of an equally interventionist Committee, who judged whether the parent was 'fit' and economically able to support the child. The issue of 'fitness' also influenced the Committee when they met to consider applications for the Orphan Schools. For example, when a Mr Windsor, of Launceston applied to have his wife and five children 'put on the stores', the Committee instead recommended that two of his four daughters should be admitted to the Orphan School. By recommending this course,

¹⁰⁵ SWD 24, p. 19 20th April 1828

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.93 18 October 1828

it was hoped that the girls would be saved 'from ruin'.¹⁰⁷ The Committee probably feared that if the family was in too great hardship, the eldest girls might turn to prostitution, the most common path to 'ruin' in the colony. When Jane Hanyan, an unmarried mother with five children applied for the admission of her twelve-year-old son, the application was approved because his mother was 'living in a very immoral manner' and he had recently 'lost a Brother by the hand of the Executioner'.¹⁰⁸ By inference, the mother received the blame for the sentence passed on one son and the Committee was determined to 'save' the twelve-year-old son from a similar fate.

Even when the Female Orphan School was experiencing severe overcrowding and the Committee were looking forward to assigning some of the elder children,¹⁰⁹ they did not easily relinquish a child to its parent. For example, there is the case of Elizabeth Woods, who had received an indulgence from the government. Now that she was in a position to support her children, she applied for their return. The Committee met first to assure themselves that she had indeed been granted an indulgence and that she was in a position to be able to support her children. They also had to be sure that the children were going into the care of a 'proper' person.¹¹⁰ Fortunately for the family, the application was accepted in this instance.

Holding in my hands the Minute Book of the Orphan Schools and reading the last two entries was a chilling experience. The empty pages that followed the final entry resonated with the disappointment and frustration felt by the Subcommittee across the years to the present time. The penultimate entry in the Minute Book of the Orphan Schools is a report by the subcommittee to the Board of Management, April 2 1861.

¹⁰⁷ SWD 24, p. 86

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p 101

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, April 3 1830

¹¹⁰ May 8 1830, SWD 24, p. 214

They note that none of the recommendations that they made in 1860 had been attended to.¹¹¹

‘In conclusion, we may be allowed to remark that it appears to be useless for subcommittees to spend their time in visiting the Establishment, and reporting upon various improvements, many of which, are so much required unless their recommendations meet some attention and be as far as is practicable carried out. Almost every subject alluded to in this Report has been once, and in some instances several times brought before the Board and met with approval, but with exception of one or two matters, these Resolutions of the Board have to the present been unattended to.’

The last entry is written three months later (July 9, 1861) and is a record of recommendations for the appointment of officers for its future as the Queen’s Asylum. It is such a quiet end to what was trumpeted in earlier, more optimistic times as being a shining light into the future.

¹¹¹ SWD 25, Reports of Decisions of Subcommittees of the Board of Management, May 1860-1861, AOT

Chapter 4

The Children

Who were they?

There were several different categories of children admitted into the Orphan Schools of which only a small proportion were technically orphans: ¹¹²

- a) Orphans
- b) Destitute Children
- c) Children with two Parents living
- d) Children of single fathers
- e) Children with both parents in prison
- f) Children of single Mothers
- g) Children of Immigrants
- h) Children of Aborigines

Sometimes it is impossible to know with any certainty, what a child's situation was, neither is it easy at this distance, to imagine the lives they had. However, from existing records, it is possible to piece together their various circumstances. The stories that follow have been compiled from data presented in SWD 24, Records of Convict and Immigrant ships and the work by Joyce Purtscher, Children admitted into Queens

¹¹² See Appendix C.

Orphan School.¹¹³ For the purpose of analysis, the first two categories have been defined as follows:

a) **Orphans**- Children with both parents recorded as deceased.

b) **Destitute Children**- Children abandoned by both parents, or abandoned by one parent with the status of the other parent unknown or children admitted with the status of parents not recorded. These children have been counted as destitute, rather than as orphans because it is more likely they had been abandoned than orphaned, as when a child is admitted as an orphan the parents are recorded as deceased.

An interesting example is that of a family of three children admitted together, and discharged within a day of each other. The three Coleman children, Denis, nine years and eight months old, Mary, six years and nine months old, and Timothy, eleven years and two months old, were all admitted into the Orphan Schools on February 21, 1863. No parents are recorded yet oddly enough, they were all discharged that same year, on September 29 and 30, 1863. As none of the children were of age to be apprenticed, it could be speculated that the parents might have deliberately allowed the children to be thought destitute, so that they would be admitted, reclaiming them later when they had established themselves.

c) **Children with two Parents living**- A surprising number of the children admitted to the Orphan Schools had two living parents. There is a slightly higher percentage of children admitted whose parents are recorded as having different surnames. According to the moral rules of the eighteen hundreds, such unions were not recognised nor legally sanctioned. The significance of the high proportion of such children admitted is that the

¹¹³ SWD 24, AOT, Joyce Purtscher, *Children in Queens Orphanage, Hobart Town*, James. McClelland, *James McClelland's convict pioneer and immigrant history of Australia. ; Names of Convict and immigrant ships known to me arriving Australia 1788 to 1899*, Silverdale, NSW (1981).

economic climate must have been one of extreme hardship, for such a large number of couples to surrender their parental rights and relinquish their children to the institution.

On the other hand, the orphan schools provided a means by which a family could address the problem of childcare while they sought employment. The masters preferred to employ single people, probably because of the expectation of Government that once a person was employed, it became the duty of the master to provide for that person. Long-term dependence on the Government Stores was actively discouraged. Therefore, it was more difficult for a man with a wife and children to support to gain employment.

Parents sharing common surname:

Economic hardship was often the reason for the admission of children in this category, rather than underlying assumptions or immorality. The following case is a typical example.

Lucy and Thomas Ball had five children admitted over a period of four years. Mary Ann (five years and eleven months), was admitted January 20 1859, William (eight), and Thomas, (nine), were both admitted September 9, 1861. Their younger brother George (six years and three months) was admitted November 11, 1861 and his sister, also called Mary Ann was admitted a month later. From the time lapses between Mary Ann's admission and that of William and Thomas it would appear that the family was experiencing significant hardship over an extended period of time. The boys were at home longer than Mary Ann was, perhaps because they were old enough to provide useful labour. Within two years though, they joined their sisters at the Orphan Schools.

Parents not sharing common surnames:

While there were many children who fell into this category, one case is particularly interesting. It relates to sisters, Sarah and Hannah O'Malley and a very busy Samuel

Cummins, who was the father of all their children. 1847 must have been a particularly difficult year for them, because on July 26, 1847, four of Sarah's and Samuel's children were admitted into the Orphan Schools, while on the 25th and 26th of July, Hannah and Samuel's two children were admitted. Another woman, Violet White, mother of twins, Eliza And William, aged nine, had both children admitted on March 2, also in 1847. Again the father was Samuel Cummins. Many questions suggest themselves such as whether or not Samuel died, and whether the children knew they were related when they were in the Orphan Schools.

d) Children of single fathers- Single fathers, like single mothers were not easily able to work and care for their children, neither were there many employers who were prepared to employ a person with dependents. In these cases, admission into the orphan schools was the only solution available, which enabled a father to leave to find work. There were other fathers who abandoned their children, leaving them to be admitted as destitute. The following example could fit either explanation.

There are entries in the admission registers for a William Allen and a William Allan, who appears to be the same person. In both entries, the father is recorded as being in Port Phillip, while the mother is deceased, and the children in each of the entries was admitted on April 25, 1854: William (seven years) and Eliza, (nine years). Neither was reclaimed by their father as they both were released from the Orphan Schools into apprenticeships in 1860, when William would have been 13 and Eliza 15. Even though boys were apprenticed at a younger age than girls were at times, with them both being released in the same year, it is possible that their father, who would have been contributing to their keep, may have died.

e) Children with both parent in prison- those children, whose parents were both incarcerated, were admitted into the Orphan Schools as a matter of course.

f) Children of single Mothers- There are several sub-categories within this group.

Father not recorded:

Ann Armstrong, was a single mother who had her six children admitted on January 23, 1835. Five of the children were discharged, all on either December 3 or 4, 1838. The one child not discharged at this time was Robert. He had been nine years old when he was admitted, so in 1838, Robert would have approximately thirteen, and may have been considered of age to be apprenticed. He was however not discharged until November 18, 1845, when he would have been nineteen. Perhaps, then he served in the school as a monitor for the younger children until this time.

Sometimes a convict woman gave her name as a hyphenated conjunction of both her name and the name of the children's father, who may or may not have also been her de-facto husband. This may well have been the case with Ann Barnes/ Morris also given as Ann Barnes /Morrisby. It is likely that there were not two women with such similar names arriving on the same day, on the same convict ship; the '*John Calvin*' but that the records may have been inaccurate. Perhaps the father's name was not known. However, the interesting aspect of her situation is that her son John, born in May 1844 and admitted to the Orphan School when he was four, on May 22 1848, has his father recorded as Patrick Barnes. His brother, Patrick was born in 1846 and admitted to the Orphan School aged six years and four months. Patrick is recorded as having no father. Because the second son has the same Christian name as his brother's father, perhaps it means that this was a family, and the way of recording that in the fragmented world into which she arrived, was through naming. The father may have died or deserted or remained behind; it is not known.

Father recorded as deceased.

The subject of naming relates closely to the issue of respectability. It is possible to deduce conditions of the time relating to social standing and relationships. For example, when a mother is listed as single because of the death of the father of her children, it is recorded as such. Widowed single mothers were regarded differently from the other single mothers. The fact that she had been married and widowed gave her a protective shield of respectability, because she was single through no fault of her own. In such cases, the admission register records the father as deceased. In the majority of entries regarding single mothers, there is no record of the father.

The death of a husband often placed the mother in a position of untenable hardship. Ann Banks, a free woman whose husband had died, admitted three of her four children on February 14, 1854: Jane, (seven), Samuel (ten years six months) and William, (nine). Her other child Joseph who was five years old when his siblings were admitted stayed with his mother another three years, before he too was admitted on October 2, 1857.

Children of Single Free Mothers.

A single free woman had a better chance of having her children returned, as she was not stigmatised by being a criminal. Three children, James, (six), John, (eleven) and William, (nine) Beackley had a free mother who oddly enough is not named in the admission register. They were admitted into the Orphan School on April 6, 1840, and all were discharged on June 7, 1843. As only one was of age for service, it is possible that they were released to their mother. Fortunes fluctuated in the colony and when a sentence was served, the parent was free to find work and prove that she could now support her children. This did not happen often, however, because of a chronic shortage of available work that paid well enough for a parent to support dependants.

f) Children whose mothers were convicts.- Convict mothers who were transported with their dependent children were soon separated. The average time between arriving in

Hobart Town and having children admitted to the orphan schools was usually less than one week. Sometimes the children stayed only until the mother had served her sentence and established herself economically in the colony. Such may well have been the case with Ann Botterill, who arrived on the '*Tory*', on July 4, 1845. Her two children, Ann, (eight) and Betsy, (six), admitted to the Orphan School on July 12, 1845. However, both were discharged three years later, on September 13, 1848 aged 11 and 9.

If life for single mothers was hard, it would have been harder for mothers of twins. Two such cases are recorded: Ann Barrett, a convict woman who arrived on the '*Asia*' on July 21, 1847, had sailed with her two sons, both of whom were rather unimaginatively called Thomas. Both were admitted into the Orphan School two months after arrival, on September 18-19, 1847. They were two and a half years old. One was discharged just over a year later, on December 16, 1848 and the other was discharged on July 1, 1851 when he would have been seven. Either he or his brother was readmitted on April 16, 1852 and died at the school almost exactly two years later on April 5, 1854 aged nine.

The second case is that of Bridget Blinkensop, a convict mother who arrived on the '*Tasmania I*', on December 20, 1844 with her three children, Hannah, (two), James, (four), and Robert, (seven). All three were admitted into the Orphan Schools seven days later, December 27, 1844. She must, however, have conceived either just prior to leaving or while on the voyage out, because eight months after her arrival her twin sons, William and William were born. They also were admitted into the Orphan School on October 2, 1846, aged one year and nine months. One was discharged on September 22, 1847, aged two years and eight months, while the other was discharged on July 1, 1851, aged six years and five months. One of them was readmitted January 26, 1852 and stayed until 1859 when he was fourteen. So of all Bridget's children, four remained in the Orphan Schools until old enough to enter service.

g) Children of Immigrant single parents. -There are two entries concerning the admission of the children of German immigrants to the Orphan Schools. Although there are no records as to which ship the families arrived on, given the dates of admission, they would have arrived on one of the following ships that arrived in Hobart in the 1850's carrying German immigrants: the '*Montmorency*', the '*Wilhelmsberg*', the '*San Francisco*' and the '*America*'.¹¹⁴ In each case, the families arrived with only one parent. The Busch family consisted of the father and four children. The Halme family on the other hand, arrived with four children and the mother. In the first case, the father may have been widowed prior to emigration, but it would be unlikely that Mrs. Halme would have undertaken the journey as a single woman. A more likely scenario might be that her husband died on the journey out to Van Diemen's Land. Twenty-one passengers on board the '*America*' died on the voyage out, from post measles complications. If they had been exposed to an epidemic in America, the chances are that the Germans aboard the other ships may also have been exposed. Whatever the circumstances, in both cases the children arrived with only one parent, and in both cases, the children were admitted into the Orphan School. The Halme children aged between six and eleven were all admitted on December 21, 1855.

In the case of Mr Busch, who arrived with his four children, three were admitted into the Orphan Schools on September 26, 1855. The fourth child was admitted less than two weeks later. It would seem that Mr Busch established himself in the colony in a short time, because two of his children were discharged on January 7, 1856, with the other two discharged a year later, January 14, 1857. If this was the case, he was certainly not the only parent who found the orphan schools a helpful interim arrangement. According to the records, parents were trying to establish themselves so as to be eligible to reclaim their children. For example, Catherine and James Casey had two children in the Orphan

¹¹⁴ *German Immigrants Arriving in Tasmania per "America" 1855*, compiled by Pat Harris and Irene Schaffer, New Town, Tasmania 1997

School. The first, Peter, who was twelve at the time, was admitted on November 25, 1849 and discharged a day later. His brother James was admitted the following year on October 31, 1850, aged three and a half, and stayed for eight months before being discharged on July 1 1851. Peter's time at home was brief though because he was readmitted on November 25, 1852 for another three months, before being discharged again July 12, 1852, Peter's short stay may well have been because at the age of twelve, he would have been of use to his parents or because he was assigned to someone in the colony.

g) Children of Aborigines.

Forcible or coerced removal was not restricted to European families as Aboriginal children were placed in the orphan schools as a matter of policy, to separate them from the 'contaminating' influence of the parents, or because they were orphaned, or taken by settlers.¹¹⁵ West records one case that epitomised the different attitudes and policies regarding Aboriginal children. Over the course of fourteen years, one particular Aboriginal girl experienced abduction, assimilation and removal. Firstly, a Mr Talbot captured her in 1817. She was given to Dr. Temple Pearson of 'Douglas Park', Campbell Town, sometime during 1819 or 1820 where she was baptised by Reverend Bedford under the name of Margaret Douglas. In April 1831, Dr. Pearson for reasons best known to himself, wanted to send her to the Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island. The Governor approved 'if she wants to go'.¹¹⁶ It is unclear whether she went or not.

Choice was something usually unavailable to Aborigines let alone Aboriginal children. It is doubtful whether entering the orphan schools was often by choice, either on the part of the parents or the children. Whether these children were placed in the Orphan Schools, or moved to the settlement at Wybalenna on Flinders Island depended on current policy.

¹¹⁵ Lyndall Ryan, *The Tasmanian Aborigines*, SWD 24, West, *History of Tasmania*, p. 75, Plomley, *Friendly Missions and Weep in Silence*.

Prior to G.A. Robinson taking command of the settlement at Flinders Island, the children were sent to the orphan school as simply being Aboriginal made the parents ‘unfit’ to raise their own children. On June 25 1832, Darling recommended to the Aboriginal Committee that four healthy boys between the ages of six and nine be either taken to the orphan school or put into service. However, only three, Daniel, Peter and Friday are recorded as being admitted. The fate of the other child remains uncertain.

On July 31 1835 Robinson recommended to the Colonial Secretary, that children who had family on Flinders Island should be removed from the Orphan Schools to the mission there.¹¹⁷ While this sounds progressive, the children were kept separate from their parents after their arrival in accordance with current policy of social control and institutionalisation. The girls were instructed in sewing and caring for a home, while the boys were instructed in agriculture. The mission therefore operated in the same way as the orphan schools fostering the ideals of a gender divided world of service. Robinson was particularly keen to take those who could read and write and therefore become school monitors in the Mission.

A comparison of historic records relating to Aboriginal children reveals many discrepancies. The records of Plomley, Ryan, Purtscher, CSO records and the Minutes of the Orphan Schools do not correlate with any degree of accuracy. When Robinson went back to Flinders as Commandant, in September 1835 he took with him seven boys and a girl from the school, yet only five Aboriginal children are recorded as having left the orphan school in September 1835:¹¹⁸

Age at				
Name	Admission	Date admitted	Date Discharged	Age
Daniel	10	17/08/1832	30/09/1835	12

¹¹⁶ CSO1/492/10853 cited in Plomley, *Friendly Missions*, op cit., p. 911 n.10

¹¹⁷ Plomley, *Friendly Missions*, p. 933

Menou	?	06/02/1835	30/09/1835	?
Peter	9	17/08/1832	30/09/1835	11
Pungerawallah	?	06/02/1835	30/09/1835	?
Tommierick	?	06/02/1835	30/09/1835	?

Other Aboriginal children who also were discharged from April to June 1835 are:

May-June 1835

Beamannock	?	06/02/1835	09/05/1835	?
Friday	10	30/11/1832	26/05/1835	12
George	?	03/09/1834	26/04/1835	?
Mowana	?	06/02/1835	27/05/1835	?
Samuel	?	03/09/1834	26/04/1835	?
Tina	?	09/02/1835	15/06/1835	?

Not all Aboriginal children were discharged at this time. It appears that at least six Aboriginal children remained at the Orphan School.¹¹⁹ Between 1847 and 1848, ten more children were sent to the orphan school¹²⁰ although SWD 24 records list only the following six admissions:

Adam, 7,	28/12/1847
Hannah, 7,	28/11/1847
Billie Lannie, 8,	28/12/1847
Martha, 12,	28/12/1847
Mathinna 12,	28/12/1847
Nannie, 10,	28/12/1847

¹¹⁸ Joyce Purtscher, *Children in Queens Orphanage, Hobart Town*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Ryan, L., *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, Queensland University Press, St. Lucia, 1981

Ryan says that by April 1851, thirty Aborigines survived on Flinders Island, thirteen having died between 1847 and 1851 and that four children were at the orphan school, yet SWD 24 records list six children as enrolled in 1851: Alexander, Sanford and William Clark, Billie Lannie, Adam, and Marthinna. The case of the three Clark children is interesting. They were removed from their father, who was recorded as an Aboriginal store keeper and admitted to the Orphan Schools yet one would imagine that this position would have supplied him with an adequate means of supporting his children, even of employing them. This raises the issue of coercion or compliance, which can be related to all the Aboriginal children placed in the orphan schools. According to the following evidence, there was little choice involved.

Commandant Jeanneret said 'The reluctance of the natives to allow their children to go to the Orphan School was due to the many deaths which had occurred among those sent there.'¹²¹ They will not stay in a place of sickness or death, believing an evil spirit caused it.¹²² However, what would happen if they were forced to stay in a place of sickness and death?

The following deaths of Aboriginal children at the Orphan school are recorded by Plomley: Fire.er.book, Pen.der.roun.dim, Pen.er.mon.rook (Sam) Male, died May 1835, and Tean.ic, 'Mr. Robinson's Djuke'

Joyce Purtscher records the following deaths of Aboriginal children: Charles, November 26 1839, Fireboke, June 2 1835, Jessie, March 2 1843, Nannie, April 25, 1835 and Mary

¹²¹ N.J.B Plomley, (Ed) *Weep In Silence: a history of the Flinders Island Aboriginal settlement*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart 1987.

¹²² N.J.B. Plomley, *Friendly Missions: the Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1971

Sherwood. Fireboke was only at the school for four months before he died, and Jessie only for three months.

'Fireboke' is almost certainly the same person who Plomley names as Fir.er.book. Tean.ic, referred to also as 'Mr Robinson's 'Djuke' is almost certainly 'Duke', recorded by Purtscher as discharged, but recorded as deceased by Plomley. Even if Joyce's 'Charles' is the same person as Plomley's 'Pen.der.roun.dim', it still means that although individually, both sources list four and five deaths in the Orphan School of Aboriginal children, an analysis reveals a minimum of seven deaths. If we add to this Plomley's comment that 'the above list is almost certainly incomplete,'¹²³ we might assume that the number was higher. Even from the available data, the death rate of Aboriginal children at the Orphan school was at least 20%, given that thirty-five admissions are recorded.

If we look at information regarding the welfare of other Aboriginals in similar circumstances, it seems possible that the strange disease that West described may partially explain the high death rate of Aboriginal children in the school. Regarding the high death rate on Flinders Island West noted that 'It is however, clear, that many perished by that strange disease...[homesickness]. They were within sight of Tasmania and as they beheld its not distant, but forbidden shore, they were often deeply melancholy...They die from a disease of the stomach, which comes on entirely from a desire to return to their own country.'¹²⁴ Plomley refers to the same phenomenon among Aborigines being detained in Hobart and at the mission on Flinders Island. It had 'every appearance of an epidemic. The patient seldom survives longer than 48 hours after being attacked. All ages and sexes fell victim to its ravages and generally expired in a state of delirium. They

¹²³ Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, op cit, p 947

¹²⁴ West, *History of Tasmania*, p 74

were all in apparent health when first brought to the settlement.¹²⁵ The children admitted to the Orphan Schools were also in good health.¹²⁶ 'Fireboke (Fire.er.book) was admitted 06/02/1835 and died 02/06/1835. During the months of April and May of that same year, five of his Aboriginal peers were removed to Flinders Island. Why was Fire.er.book left behind, and did this contribute to his death in June?

The Administration under Arthur was meticulous even notorious for its record keeping. Why then are the records of deaths of Aboriginal children in state care so incomplete and inaccurate? Close analysis may well reveal more oversights and silences of lives and deaths not recorded, or wrongly recorded. What happened to the rest of the Aboriginal children admitted into the Orphan Schools is unknown as yet.

¹²⁵ Plomley, *Friendly Missions*, p. 822

¹²⁶ Plomley, *Friendly Missions* pp. 229, 815

Chapter Five:

After the Orphan School

Control of the child extended beyond the walls of the orphan school. When a child was apprenticed or assigned, the indentures formed an official contract between masters and the Guardians of the Queen's Asylum. The contract was binding until the apprentice turned eighteen.

The master had a legal duty of care to the apprentice, who was to be supplied with 'good and sufficient meat, drink, lodging and apparel, medical attention and all other things necessary.'¹²⁷ This would have made a pleasant change for the child, who had suffered a significant amount of institutionalised neglect while at the orphan school. As Purtscher states, medical care had not been a feature of the orphan school. Many of the children who were apprenticed and absconded were described in the police records as suffering from chronic and untreated conditions, particularly from poor eyesight yet none had been prescribed glasses. John Brown, who absconded February 8 1871, was described as approximately fifteen years old, small for his age, with a stupid appearance, weak eyes with both arms having been broken. The descriptions which recurred most often were: small for age, often four feet six to eight inches tall, of pale complexion, with scarring, most often on foreheads, a stupid appearance and with a restless expression of the eyes.¹²⁸ The years of living in building where the windows were boarded over had evidently taken their toll. Others suffered from untreated epilepsy or from the effects of serious

¹²⁷ Joyce Purtscher, *Apprentices and Absconders from the Queen's Asylum, Hobart Town*, I. Schaffer, New Town, Tasmania (1993).

accidents and burns while at the schools. Too many were described as being significantly small for their years, both in height and weight, which supports the allegations by convict staff that the children were being starved.¹²⁹

While many apprenticeships were successful, approximately 23% absconded.¹³⁰ Of those who ran away, a significant percentage returned voluntarily to complete their apprenticeship and it would seem that they were not so much running away as running to known family members. Often the police records list any known relatives that the runaway might have had.

John Davis the son of convict parents, Alice Dwyer (deceased) and Phillip Davis had a history of absconding from each of his masters. Each time he left a master he was apprenticed to another. When this occurred there was usually some evidence of mistreatment or cruelty, because the indenture otherwise bound the apprentice to the master until the child reached the age of eighteen. It was recorded that he was 'supposed to have gone to his father who is working for Mr Page at the Sand Hills.' Each time, he was arrested and returned. Another boy who absconded but was not returned to the master was George King. He ran away after a period of approximately six months from his first master in Green Ponds, to whom he had been apprenticed on January 16 1875. The police record stated that he was dressed in asylum clothing and was found 'at his mother's place in Hobart Town suffering from sore feet.' What was so bad that he would walk from Green Ponds to Hobart? He was not sent back, but was reassigned elsewhere.¹³¹

¹²⁸ These descriptions are given by the masters to the police and are compiled by Joyce Purtscher in *Apprentices and absconders from Queens Orphanage: Hobart Town*, I. Schaffer, New Town, Tasmania (1993).

¹²⁹ SWD 24, p 19,59-69, Joyce Purtscher, *Apprentices and Absconders from the Queen's Asylum, Hobart Town*, I. Schaffer, New Town, Tasmania, 1993.

¹³⁰ Of the 931 children apprenticed between 1860-1883, 220 apprentices absconded. Taken from data printed in Joyce Purtscher's report, cited above.

¹³¹ Ibid.

A Thomas Harding absconded on June 16 1871, and he too 'was supposed to have gone to his father at Franklin.' He was arrested. When a boy called Charles McDonald absconded, it was known that he was searching for a thirty-year-old man named Davis whom 'the lad called Uncle.' The search for belonging drove William Rhodes, an orphan, to try to run away in the direction of Port Cygnet, where his father had owned land. He too was arrested. William Ross made four attempts to escape service, trying desperately to reach his sister in Hamilton.¹³²

Sometimes a family member trying to find a sibling who had been admitted to the Orphan Schools initiated the search. For example Henry McDonald, a seaman in Hobart Town, posted an advertisement for 'information respecting Charles McDonald, an apprentice from the Queen's Asylum'. The outcome is not recorded. Very occasionally, a 'happy ending' occurred. A thirteen-year-old boy, Robert Martin was tried in March 1868 for absconding and sentenced to a month in goal at Deloraine. In this instance, however, the Guardians of the Schools sanctioned that he should be handed over to the care of his brother instead.¹³³

The most conclusive evidence that the orphan schools were institutions concerned with social control is that these absconders were pursued and arrested, some even receiving goal sentences for the 'crime' of trying to reunite with a family member.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid

Conclusions

The Orphan Schools in Hobart existed in a liminal world. They operated in dependence on a distant government, which had created a situation of social fragmentation, perceived immorality and increasing poverty. Hopes, therefore, were pinned on the 'rising generation' and to this end children were removed from homes as well as streets, to be remade into useful and productive members of a colonial lower class.

The fact that it took as long as it did for orphan schools to be introduced places them within the framework of social control. If the objective had been a philanthropic desire to provide education to the poorer classes, the government would simply have extended the funding towards public schools that were already providing the eligible poor with a free education. If protection was the objective, the children would not have been kept in run-down, cold and overcrowded buildings. However, these were not the primary aims. The primary aim was one of social construction and this necessitated the creation of an efficient and submissive working class. It may not be simply an ironic coincidence that the first Orphan School to operate in Van Diemen's Land was situated in a redundant factory, as the Orphan Schools themselves functioned as human factories. They took in 'vulnerable' children and by providing a suitable gender based training to fit girls for their projected social stations as domestic servants or wives and boys as labourers, they effectively manufactured a compliant labour force.

There is considerable irony in an institution that struggles to provide materially for its inmates, refusing to allow those inmates to return to their own families. This was however, the experience of many children who lived in the Orphan Schools. On admission, the parent signed over guardianship of the children to the Governor, who was represented by the Board of Management. The child then became the legal concern of the Governor and it was unlikely that many children expected to be reunited with their families. Bearing in mind how many of the children admitted were members of a family, the number who were reunited is insignificant. To be eligible to remove a child, the parent had to prove, not only that they could support the child financially, but that they were 'fit' to do so. It was not enough to have been pardoned. Control was total and unrelenting, even after they were placed in apprenticeships. Any that absconded were arrested and returned to their master or mistress. It was only when the terms of their indenture expired that they were allowed their freedom.

'You can check in any time you want but you can never leave.'

(Hotel California, The Eagles)

Appendix A: Minutes of the first meeting of the Committee of Management of the King's Orphan School.¹³⁴

April 24th 1828

Committee of Management of the King's School:

*The Venerable Archdeacon Scott,
Major Kirkwood
Joseph Hone Esq.
Affleck Moodie Esq.
Reverend Bedford*

Until His Majesty gets round to appointing a corporation for the Management of the Church and School Affairs, the Committee to be responsible for the:

Rules needed for internal management of the schools and the quantity and kind of rations and clothing which shall be supplied.

Victuals of every kind should be supplied by the Commissariat and be contracted by the Assistant Commissary General and that clothing and every other article should be supplied from the Government Stores.

The Master is to make all other requests 14 days in advance, for three months at a time, to the Auditor.

At the end of each month, the Assistant Commissary General and the Ordinance storekeeper to send the auditor statements, Masters to send receipts and vouchers certified by the Committee and the number of children, all certified by the Committee.

Any repairs needed to be submitted by the Master to the Committee, who will seek approval from the Colonial secretary.

Weekly meeting to be held by the Committee to decide upon applications to the school, inspecting accounts and visiting the schools to make sure all regulations are punctually observed.

By His Excellency's Command,

J Burnett. 1833

¹³⁴ SWD 24PDI/237 AOT 26 April 1828-23 October 1833

Appendix B: Daily menu for the Orphan Schools.

Menu:

Breakfast: Oatmeal porridge with some milk, or bread and tea with sugar and milk.

Monday: Baked meat, bread and vegetables.

Tuesday: Soup of Meat, thickened with oatmeal, vegetables and bread.

Wednesday: Boiled and baked dumplings with suet.

Thursday: Baked meat, bread and vegetables.

Friday: Soup of Meat, thickened with oatmeal, vegetables and bread.

Saturday: Boiled and baked dumplings with suet.

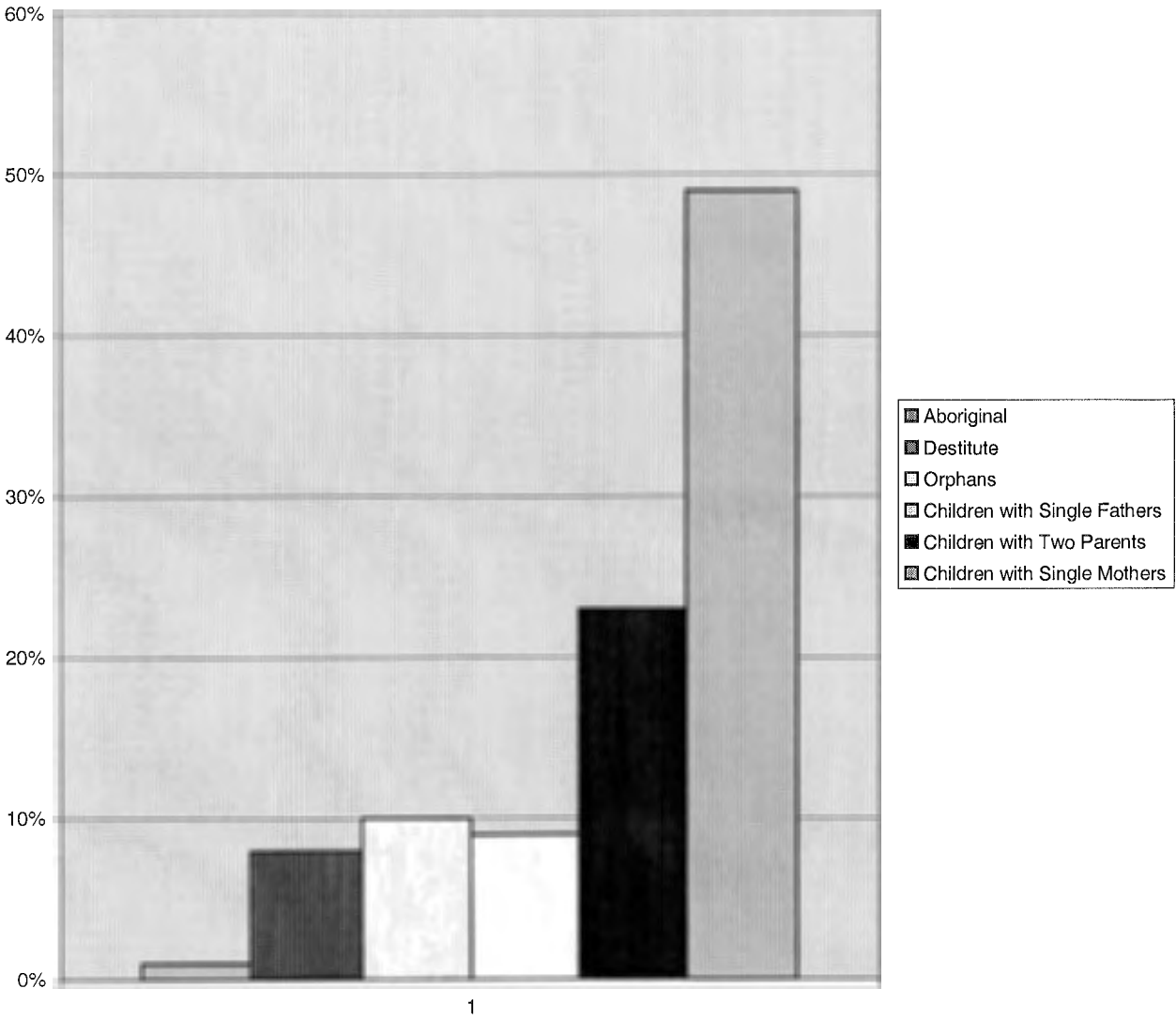
Sunday: Cold boiled beef, vegetables and bread.

Supper daily: Bread and tea with milk.¹ SWD 24PDI/237 AOT 26 April 1828-23
October 1833

The Committee estimated that the cost of supplying this menu to the children in the schools to be £10/12/4 per annum.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ SWD 24

Appendix C: Categories of Children Admitted into Hobart Orphan Schools



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