

# Seaside Garden Home for Boys

1921? – 1934

## Details

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The Seaside Garden Home for Boys was established in around 1921 in Newhaven, on Phillip Island and run by non-denominational committee of management. Following the death, in 1933, of Rex Ronnie Simpson from a beating from Superintendent, William Baye, the Home was taken over by the Mission of St James and St John. In 1934, it became St Barnabas' Boys' Home.

The Seaside Garden Home for Boys was situated in Newhaven, on Phillip Island. The Home was run by a non-denominational committee of management.

When the Seaside Garden Home opened in around 1921, it was an approved 'institution to whose care neglected children may be committed', under the terms of the Children's Welfare Act 1915.

In October 1923, the *Argus* newspaper reported that the management committee of the Home was seeking to expand its premises. At that time, there were 55 boys at Seaside Garden Home, and others awaiting admittance. The committee wished to build an extra dormitory and buy land to use for providing training in farm work. The Superintendent and Secretary of the Home in 1923 was William Henry Baye.

The *Argus* reported in November 1923 that the Seaside Garden Home had managed to purchase this additional land.

A newspaper article from 1926 mentioned that applications for admittance to the Seaside Garden Home were received at its city office, in the City Newsboys' Hall (which was set up by the Try Society, another non-denominational 'care' provider for boys).

Superintendent Baye described the Home in a letter to the *Argus* in 1926,

*It provides for orphans, foundlings, destitute boys, neglected children, and truants ... we are strictly undenominational*

[Baye's letter to the paper was to clearly distinguish Seaside Garden Home for Boys from what was then known as the Newhaven Boys' Home or Newhaven Reformatory. The latter Home had recently been purchased by the Church of England, and would in 1928 be renamed St Paul's Training School. Baye wished newspaper readers to know that Seaside Garden Home was a different institution, and that it would still be 'extremely thankful for financial assistance'.]

Baye was still in the position of Superintendent when a tragic event occurred at the Seaside Garden Home some 10 years later. In November 1933, a boy at the home (whose age was reported in newspapers as 10, 11 or 12) Rex Ronnie Simpson, died in the Wonthaggi Hospital. It was first believed that Simpson died from tetanus. In subsequent days, newspapers were describing the boy's death as 'mysterious'. The press reported that Simpson had received a 'severe thrashing' days before his death, and at the inquest, a doctor reported having found

bruises on Simpson's head and body. Baye was stood down as Superintendent following the inquest.

At the inquest, boys from the Home testified that they had seen Baye hitting Simpson with a cricket bat on the day before the boy's death. They said that there had been 'something funny' about Simpson for about a week, and he had been complaining of neck pain (a symptom of tetanus).

Baye stated to police that he thought Simpson was 'malingering', this presumably being the Superintendent's justification for beating the boy.

William Seeney stated: 'Baye hit him several times pretty hard. Baye later stuck a pin into Simpson's leg, making him cry out.'

Another boy, Sydney Bown claimed that he had seen Simpson enter Baye's room on the day before the boy died, then stagger from the room with his nose bleeding. Simpson then went out into the yard, fell on the back of his head, and lay there for two hours.

On the day of Simpson's death, it was reported that other boys from the Home were trying to feed him in the dining room, but that Baye 'came along and ordered the other boys not to help him'.

Superintendent Baye was subsequently charged with manslaughter and assault. There was great public interest in the case, with crowds appearing at Baye's court appearances.

The *Canberra Times* reported on a demonstration against Baye at his hearing in Melbourne on 28 February 1934: 'A section of the gallery hissed, but there was also some hand-clapping.'

Baye's counsel complained that 'public opinion had been stirred to an extraordinary extent against Baye'. Two juries were unable to reach a verdict on the case. Finally, on 28 February 1934, the judge advised the jury at a retrial to acquit Baye of the manslaughter charges. The judge stated that he was 'disappointed' and that there was 'a deal of prejudice in this case'.

Baye was later quoted:

*I venture to suggest that at the time of their occurrence, the incidents which led to the trial were the result of a mistake, into which anyone in my position might have fallen. Looking back now, it is easy to recognise that a very great mistake was made, and one which I will greatly regret for the whole of my life. I have been under a tremendous strain, and the whole affair means banishment.*

The judge committed Baye to a third trial on 1 March 1934. This case, and the charges against Baye, were later abandoned.

At the request of the Charities Board, the Mission of St James and St John assumed control of the Seaside Garden Home for Boys in 1934.

Under the Mission of St James and St John, Seaside Garden Home for Boys became known as St Barnabas' Boys' Home.

## More info

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### Chronology

- **Seaside Garden Home for Boys (1921? – 1934)**

- St Barnabas' Boys' Home (1934 - 1939)

## Related Entries

### Related Organisations

- [St Paul's Training School \(1928 - 1955\)](#)  
St Paul's Training School was situated adjacent to an institution known as Seaside Garden Home for Boys.  
Date: 1928 - 1934
- [The Try Society \(c. 1883 - current\)](#)  
In 1926, it was reported that the city office of the Seaside Garden Home for Boys was located in the City Newsboys' Hall.

## Resources

- [Seaside Garden Home for Boys](#), The Argus, 28 August 1931
- Swain, Shurlee, *Traces in the archives: evidence of institutional abuse in surviving child welfare records*, Children Australia, 2007
- [Seaside Garden Home for Boys \(1921-34\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance*: See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to Seaside Garden Home for Boys

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Records, 1896-1985, \[manuscript\], Children's Protection Society \(Vic.\) \(1896 - 1985\)](#)
  - ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
  - [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)
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