

Excelsior Boys' Home

1886 – 1915?

Details

The Excelsior Boys' Home, in North Brighton, was established by William Groom in 1886. Initially, the Home provided temporary accommodation for boys until they could be placed in suitable situations (generally in the country). In 1893 it was proclaimed as a private reformatory under the [Juvenile Offenders Act 1887](#). The Home closed in around 1915.

The foundation stone of the Excelsior Boys' Home was laid in December 1886. The home was to be constructed in the yard of the Grooms' own property in Elwood Street, North Brighton (previously, the Grooms had given temporary accommodation to boys in their home). A newspaper article in 1886 stated that the building being constructed would have four small bedrooms, and a dining room which would accommodate 6 boys when it was used at night as a bedroom. It noted that that much good had already come from Mrs Groom's "self denial and motherly attention to the poor waifs" (*The Argus*, 13 December 1886).

William Groom had previously been involved in [Try Excelsior](#) classes in Melbourne and Richmond, which aimed to provide alternatives to "larrikinism" for boys and young men.

In the late 1880s, Groom was given land in Mulgrave to establish a farm for the boys.

The object of the Excelsior Home in Brighton was to provide temporary accommodation for boys until they could be placed in suitable situations (generally in the country). A newspaper article from 1887 reported that:

*Every lad, as he proceeds to the country, carries with him a letter, stating to his employer his previous character and the particular temptation which it is advisable for some time to keep out of his way. If he has played the part of a thief, a larrikin, or a criminal of any sort, the farmer is duly warned (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1887).*

Boys generally came to the Excelsior Home from the courts, and the Home was mainly funded by government payments towards the maintenance and reform of its inmates.

Excelsior was declared to be a private reformatory in 1893 and received boys from the government reformatory at Ballarat which closed in April of that year.

The Department for Reformatory Schools annual report for 1893 stated that the Excelsior reformatory was

conducted strictly on the family system, the boys having meals with, and, as far as possible, participating in the joys and troubles of the family. Each boy has a separate sleeping room, for which he is responsible in every way, and the door which opens out to the garden is always unlocked, even at night-time. The "Home

" is connected by telephone with the police, but there are no bolts, bars, walls, or high fences ; there is, in fact, an entire absence of the usual appliances to be met with, and generally hitherto thought indispensable in any properly-arranged and securely-appointed Reformatory.

That same year, Groom reported to the department that he had received 45 boys since Excelsior was proclaimed as a reformatory school (29 Protestants and 16 Roman Catholics). He wrote that:

If we can claim any success it is partly owing to giving each boy a separate bed-room, and promoting a spirit of self-government amongst the boys. We find our "camping out" in the country of much assistance to us, both in finding a boy's true character and also in giving Mrs. Groom a rest. The private boys in the home, for whom it was first instituted, have also been of great assistance to us in checking the wild spirits of the Reformatory boys.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [The Try Society \(c. 1883 - current\)](#)

William Groom, the founder of the Excelsior Boys' Home, was involved with the Try Excelsior classes organised by the Try Society.

Date: 1883 -

Resources

- Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary and Inspector for the year ... / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools.](#), 1896 - 1924. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1896-1916
- Campbell, Dr., [Rescue the boys](#), The South Australian Advertiser, 3 December 1886
- Victoria. Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools](#), 1887 - 1895. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1893-1896
- [Boys of The State](#), The Age, 4 February 1905

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