

Training Home for Girls

c. 1883 – c. 1923

Other Names:

- Servants' Training Institute
- Girls' Training Home
- Girls' Training Home for Domestic Service
- Yarra Park Girls' Training Institute

Details

The Training Home for Girls was established in around 1880, as an institution where young women received training to become domestic servants. Originally, it was known as the Servants' Training Institute. The Training Home for Girls was located in Berry Street, East Melbourne (Jolimont). It was run by a committee of management with links to the Church of England. The Training Home for Girls closed in 1923, when the trustees leased the building to the Girls' Friendly Society, who established a School of Homecraft on the site.

In 1879, an article in the Geelong Advertiser on 21 April 1879 reported on a proposal to establish a training institution for domestic service. A group of 'ladies who have visited the industrial school girls placed in service' believed that such an institution would be 'of great advantage'. Initially, the school would house up to 20 young women, 'to be selected from the Government industrial schools'. According to a circular:

Girls belonging to any Protestant denomination will be eligible for admission to the institution, and will receive a sound moral and religious training. Two hours every day will be devoted to ordinary school instruction, and during the remainder of the working hours the girls will be thoroughly trained in cooking, plain sewing, laundry, and housework.

The government paid the institution a sum of 5s weekly for each young woman, and the remainder of the running costs was to be raised by private subscription. The majority of young women at the institution were wards of the state.

According to the East Melbourne Historical Society, the Servants' Training Institution, as it was first known, was established in a rented house in The Vaucluse, Richmond. In 1882, it received a grant of land at 43 Berry Street, East Melbourne (Jolimont). The building was officially opened on 4 October 1883.

In 1902 the institution was renamed the Training Home for Girls. The Home experienced some difficulties in raising funds and in 1908, following a suggestion that the institution be closed 'as a superfluous charitable institution', the committee of management arranged for a deputation to the Chief Secretary to advocate for the Home to stay open.

By 1910, the institution was in a more solid position, reporting that the 31st annual meeting of the Training Home saw 'a large attendance of ladies whose names are known in social and philanthropic circles' and 'an ever increasing number of girls within its walls, drawn both from Government and private sources'.

That same year, the institution opened a laundry, which helped to meet the costs of maintaining the young women and running costs. An article in Table Talk about the new laundry reported that:

The girls have much to be thankful for in being sent to the home to be so cared for and well trained and helped by instruction received there to gain good situations when they have qualified, and later on to have a home for holidays or cases of minor illnesses ... At present there are 32 in residence; 300 places have been filled in ten years ... It is hoped soon to have 50 girls in residence. The girls do the cooking (under supervision), and, of course, the housework and laundry work.

It would seem that young women returned to the institution from time to time, after having been trained and placed in service. A brochure produced about the institution, made available on the website of the East Melbourne Historical Society, stated that 'The institution is not merely a Training School, but a Home, and its doors are always open to all former inmates for their holidays, when ill, or temporarily out of employment'. The brochure stated that the residents were 'principally wards of the State who have just left school' but noted that 'Respectable parents or widowers can board their girls at the Home at the rate of 5/- per week, and have them equipped to earn their own living'.

'Old girls' were present at a Christmas fete held on 22 December 1909. Another article in Table Talk mentioned how 'grateful' former residents came to the fete and 'showed their kindly interest by each subscribing a small sum to give the present inmates a Christmas treat'. This article sheds some light on how the young women in the Home lived. Prizes were awarded at the Christmas fete 'for punctuality, neatness and politeness'. Some of the Christmas ornaments donated at the fete were 'photos of committee ladies and others who have given generous help to the home', to adorn the rooms of the girls.

An article from 1911 reported that 33 girls were at the Home being trained in household duties (*Weekly Times*, 9 December 1911).

The Home closed in around 1923. In the post-war period, there was reduced demand for domestic servants. The committee president, Ada Armytage of Como, South Yarra, wrote a letter to the Editor of the Argus explaining more about the circumstances of the Home's closure.

Armytage wrote that the previous committee of the Training Home had resigned the previous year, 'when they found that the parents of the girls refused to allow them enter domestic service, either taken them home, or placing them in factories'.

The Argus reported on 1 May 1923 that the Home was about to be reopened 'under the auspices of the Church of England, as a school of homecrafts, where it is proposed to give girls a complete training in every branch of household activities, cooking and laundry work, sewing, and the care and management of children in infancy and in the kindergarten stage'.

From 1925, the new institution, known as the School of Homecraft, was run by the committee of the Girls' Friendly Society.

Gallery



Sketches at the Servants' Training Institute

Description: This is a copy of a wood engraving published in the Illustrated Australian news in 1883.



Girls' Training Home for Domestic Service. Berry Street, East Melbourne.

Description: This is a copy of a brochure about the Training Home for Girls, made available on the website of the East Melbourne Historical Society. The brochure contains information about the institution and a number of photographs of young women who lived there. The photograph of the building appears on the back page of the brochure.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [School of Homecrafts Hostel \(c. 1925 - 1976\)](#)

The School of Homecrafts Hostel was located on the former site of the Training Home for Girls.

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 1896-1921
 - 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 1888-1896
 - [Servants Training Institute](#), Mistress of the Rough Seas: what women actually did in the 19th century, 17 December 2016
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