

Government Agricultural Farm, Scheyville

1905 – 1940

Other Names:

- Training Farm for City Lads
- Government Agricultural Training Farm, Pitt Town
- Scheyville Training Farm
- Scheyville Camp
- The Dreadnought Farm
- Casual Labour Farm
- Scheyville Farm School

Details

Government Agricultural Farm, Scheyville, located at Pitt Town, was a training farm for youth from 1905, and, from 1911, a camp for British migrant boys and youth in the Dreadnought and Big Brother schemes. During World War II it was converted to a military training camp and after World War II became a Commonwealth migrant camp. It stopped housing youths and children in 1940.

Scheyville began in the 1890s as a labour co-operative known as the Pitt Town Co-operative Labour Settlement, which failed. It was then taken over by the New South Wales Government. In 1905 the State Labour Bureau set up a training farm to alleviate unemployment amongst city youths. Boys, mostly aged between 14 and 16, spent one month attending the Labour Depot in Randwick, then were sent to the Training Farm for City Lads, on the Pitt Town property. A Casual Labour Farm, for men, was on the same property. By 1910 both farms were known as the Government Agricultural Training Farm.

In 1911 the government entered into an agreement with the Dreadnought Trust to migrate 20 English youths a fortnight to meet the demand for trained agricultural workers in New South Wales. The first 12 arrived on 21 April 1911 and were sent to the Government Agricultural Farm. They received two pounds, which was withheld until they completed their training and took up a position on a property.

In 1913 the site was proclaimed as Government Agricultural Farm, Scheyville. It was named in honour of the William Francis Schey (1857-1913) who, as director of labour for the State Labour Bureau, established the Government Agricultural Training Farm.

Scheyville was 2150 acres and consisted of living facilities for the young men, Farm Manager's residence, a killing room, butchers shop and a Post Office known as Scheyville. The farm was divided into paddocks for different purposes and consisted of a dairy, piggery, sheep section, farm section, orchard, vegetable garden, millet broom making plant, sawmill, blacksmiths, saddlers, wheelwrights, carpenter's and tinsmith's shops. Within 18 months of starting the Dreadnought scheme, Scheyville had housed 361 youths.

The property was used as a detention centre for 87 Germans taken from boats held in Sydney Harbour as war broke out in 1914, and then, briefly, was used to train women in agricultural skills while men were at war. The training of youths was discontinued.

Training youth resumed in 1919. In 1920 some ex-servicemen were sent to the farm for training. From 1925 the Commonwealth Government undertook to pay half the costs of the Training Farm operation, while the British Government agreed to pay one third of maintenance expenditure. This allowed a building programme to start in 1929.

During the 1930s boys continued to be migrated to the farm for training, through the Dreadnought Scheme and the Big Brother Movement, as well as the Anglican Church. In 1932 the home housed 116 boys, with around nine new boys arriving each week. Most were from the city and their average age was 18.

According to the Perth *Sunday Times* of 20 October 1935, 'Scheyville Farm School' was very similar, in methods and cost, to training farms at St Lucia in Queensland and the Ugly Men's Boys' Farm at Bundidup, Western Australia. The *Sunday Times* stated that Scheyville was then training Australian-born boys, following extensive research interstate and overseas conducted by an Employment Research Committee set up by the Department of Labor and Industry. It had 100 boys resident at that time.

The commission investigated Scheyville policy and its operations, taking idle lads from poor homes and training them for a future, and it must be understood that all institutions, while giving special attention to the helpless lad, are pleased to accept, and do accept, lads from families in better positions.

The commission's finding was that the policy operating at Scheyville was

SOUND AND CORRECT.

And recommended to the Government an immediate extension to accommodate 200 lads, being an increase of 100 per cent, in the number of trainees, with an increase of the dairy herd, and corresponding increase in machinery and plant. The commission's finding was that the policy of dealing with the boys in numbers collectively till they developed a farm-craft and a bias for the life, was the correct one, rather than on individual farms. They considered their interest was best served in that way till they had gained a confidence in their work, and in experience necessary to make them efficient in employment, where, with the advance of years, and matured experience, those capable of becoming owners and managers would be sifted from the multitude of employees necessary for the carrying on of the industry. As in all avenues of employment, all learners are not capable of being owners and managers, but all are, with experience, capable of being producers in some form.

Scheyville ceased being used as a training farm in 1940, when World War II started. It was then used by the military for artillery training, until 1945, causing much damage. Staff returned to the farm in 1949, rebuilt it and began recultivating and restocking, but it remained run down and overrun by rabbits and foxes.

In 1949 the New South Wales Government transferred the property to the Commonwealth Government, who used it as a hostel for migrants. It was one of the largest hostels in Australia, taking thousands of migrants, mostly from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. From 1957 the Sisters of St Joseph ministered to Catholic children there.

Scheyville Migrant Hostel was closed in 1964 and became the Officer Training Unit for National Service conscripts, and new officers, who were being prepared to fight the Vietnam War. This continued until 1973, and 1871 conscripts passed through the camp in this period. From 1978 to 1983 Scheyville was a campus of Hawkesbury Agricultural College. In the late 1980s it was used by the New South Wales Police Tactical Response Group.

In 1996 Scheyville National Park, which covers 920 hectares, was created. It takes in the old farm training school and hostel and has been placed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register.

Gallery



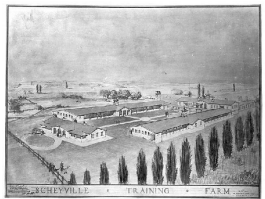
Scheyville Training Farm

Description: Building dating from Scheyville Training Farm phase at Scheyville National Park today.



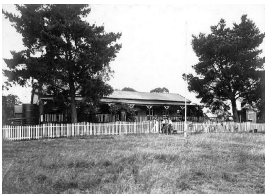
[Meal time at Scheyville Training Farm]

Description: This is a photograph of boys in the dining hall at Scheyville Training Farm in 1926. It shows approximately 50 teenage boys seated around 6 large trestle tables eating a meal. They are inside a moderately sized, uninsulated weatherboard hall. A staff member in a white coat stands at the back of the hall. The boys are wearing what look to be a variety of dirty work-clothes.



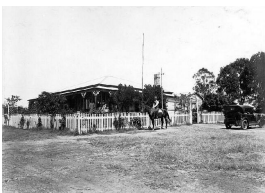
Sketch of Scheyville Training Farm, by B. Wiltshire, Designing Architect in Charge

Description: This is a sketch of the proposed Scheyville Training Farm. It shows four large single-storey buildings arranged around a central quadrangle and surrounded by farmland.



[Manager's Cottage and Post Office at Scheyville Training Farm]

Description: This is a photograph of the Manager's Cottage and Post Office at Scheyville Training Farm. It shows a large single-storey weatherboard cottage behind a white picket fence. Three boys, a dog, and a man are standing at the gate to the cottage.



[Family group on verandah of Manager's Cottage at Scheyville Training Farm]

Description: This is a photograph of the Manager's Cottage at Scheyville Training Farm. It shows a large single-storey weatherboard cottage behind a white picket fence. A man on a horse and a car sit outside the house, and another three adults and two young children are standing on the verandah.



Dormitory & quadrangle, Scheyville Farm

Description: This image shows the outside of the building and gardens of the Government Agricultural Farm, Scheyville.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Dreadnought Trust \(1909 - 1930?\)](#)
- [Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart \(1866 - current\)](#)

From 1957, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart ministered to Catholic children at Scheyville, when it was a migrant hostel.

Related Concepts

- [Child Migration \(1800s - 1970s\)](#)

Resources

- [They'll All Enjoy Christmas Parties](#), The Australian Women's Weekly, 9 December 1933

Records

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

Records

- [Dreadnought Association - records, 1890-1997 \(1890 - 1997\)](#)
 - [Departmental Records relating to State Wards, New South Wales \(1918 - current\)](#)
 - [Photographs of Scheyville Training Farm \(c. 1926 - 23 June 1946\)](#)
 - [Correspondence files, Class 5 \(British Migrants\) \(1920 - 1957\)](#)
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