

Tresca

c. 1958 – 1976

Details

Tresca, run by the Fairbridge Society, opened in Exeter in 1958. It was a Home for child migrants, most of whom arrived under the parent following scheme. Tresca closed in 1976.

Tresca, built between 1909 and 1911 by Eric Reed, was one of the first and most substantial houses in the West Tamar area. Reed established an orchard and farm there. It became a meeting place for local groups such as the Masonic Lodge, the Country Women's Association, the local drama club, and music society. The Department of Education bought it after World War Two and established an area school on part of the property.

Tresca was officially opened as a Home for child migrants by the Governor, Sir Ronald Cross, in March 1958. The first five boys were already in residence. They had arrived before preparations at Tresca were complete and stayed on the estate at Beaufront, Ross, for two weeks. The owner, Sir Donald von Bibra, was a leading member of the Fairbridge Society and the Big Brother Movement.

The Fairbridge Society had established Tresca because the flow of child migrants to Australia had begun to slow. The parent following scheme, by which the child or children came first and the parent, usually a single mother, arrived later, was a way of increasing their numbers. Tresca was the only institution in Tasmania to be formed solely for child migrants.

Tresca was run by a British couple, Harry and Lily Richmond. The couple maintained Reed's tradition of using Tresca as a meeting place for local groups and the first Carols by Candlelight in Exeter was held on the verandah. In her article about child migration to Tasmania, Laura Williams writes that the home had a 'bright, cheerful colour scheme'. Some local people apparently thought that the surroundings were too good for children they considered to be 'delinquent'.

In 1959, when the Commonwealth government decided that the children should be handed over to their parents as soon as they arrived, a dispute occurred. The Society wanted to decide when to release the children. In May, it refused to return children to two mothers. The government eventually agreed to a contractual agreement whereby the children remained in the home for three months after their parents' arrival. Parents could also make a verbal agreement for another 18 to 24 months.

In 1960, the British Home Office decided that the parent following scheme could only continue if the parents and children travelled to Australia together. The separation would take place after they arrived. The Australian legislation did not deal with this situation. This meant that the Fairbridge Society was not answerable to the government, a particular problem because of their reluctance to release children. They appear to have relaxed over this issue in the mid 1960s. The first family arrived in 1961. Most children arriving after that came with their parents.

Historians of child migration mostly agree that the last child arrived in Australia in 1967. However, Tresca accepted five unaccompanied children in 1970. It closed in 1976, the same year that the Commonwealth government decided to phase out the assisted passage which most of the parents used. A total of 67 children went to Tresca, 13 of them unaccompanied. The rest migrated with their parents or were reunited with them

under the parent following scheme.

In 1991 with the approval of the President of the Fairbridge Drake Society, London, the Tasmanian records of the society were deposited in the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office.

In 2013, Tresca is used as a community centre.

National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse

In 2021, the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments have agreed to be a funder of last resort for this institution. This means that although the institution is now defunct, it is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and the government has agreed to pay the institution's share of costs of providing redress to a person (as long as the government is found to be equally responsible for the abuse a person experienced).

Gallery



'Tresca'

Description: Caption from National Archives of Australia: Immigration - Child migration schemes - The Fairbridge Society this month extended its child migration scheme to Tasmania. The Society has taken over and modernised "Tresca" near Launceston. This will be in addition to farms schools for British migrant children at Molong, NSW and at Pinjarra, WA. The society already has brought more than 500 children to Australia since WWII. The first five children to "Tresca" [editors note: names of children removed]. On the verandah are the Warden, Mr Hary Richmond, Mrs Richmond and the first five boys to live at the house [photographic image].



Children picking apples in the apple orchard at Tresca Children's Home for child migrants, Exeter, Tasmania, 1958

Description: [Caption taken from the National Archives of Australia Recordsearch] Immigration - Child migration schemes - The Fairbridge Society has converted "Tresca", Exeter, Tasmania, into a home for children from Britain. The new home is for children from broken homes, parentless children, or children with only one parent unable to care for them.



A Tresca boy talks to the farmer who fenced the property

Description: [Caption taken from the National Archives of Australia Recordsearch] Immigration - Child migration schemes - The Fairbridge Society has converted "Tresca", Exeter, Tasmania, into a home for children from Britain. The new home is for children from broken homes, parentless children, or children with only one parent unable to care for them.



Tresca boys with the Warden, Harry Richmond, and his wife on the verandah

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Morning coffee at Tresca

Description: [Caption taken from the National Archives of Australia recordsearch] Immigration - Child migration schemes - The Fairbridge Society has converted "Tresca", Exeter, Tasmania, into a home for children from Britain. The new home is for children from broken homes, parentless children, or children with only one parent unable to care for them. Morning coffee for everyone at Tresca. Harry Richmond, the Warden, is to the right.



Boys in the playroom at Tresca

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The first 5 children to arrive at Tresca

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Tresca boys and the Warden, Harry Richmond, build a boat from scraps of timber left over from renovations to the home



Tresca boys trying to catch a frog

Description: [Caption taken from the National Archives of Australia Recordsearch] Immigration - Child migration schemes - The Fairbridge Society has converted "Tresca", Exeter, Tasmania, into a home for children from Britain. The new home is for children from broken homes, parentless children, or children with only one parent unable to care for them. [Two boys] try their luck in a billabong near their new home. They were trying to catch a frog, but their luck was out.



Tresca boys put their clothes away after school

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Tresca boys with a Merino sheep

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Tresca Community Centre

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Fairbridge Society Inc. \(1909 - 1987\)](#)
Date: 1958 - 1976

Related Events

- [Listen to the children: review of claims of abuse from adults in state care as children, Ombudsman Tasmania \(2003 - 2006\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Beaufront \(c. 1949 - c. 1958\)](#)

Related Concepts

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

Resources

- Community Affairs References Committee, [Lost Innocents: Righting the record - Report on child migration](#), 30 August 2001
- Immigration Museum, [Stolen childhoods](#), 2012
- [For 500, a new start in life](#), Good Neighbour, 1 March 1958
- [Child and Youth Migrants: 1924-1976](#), Archives Office of Tasmania, No date
- [Fairbridge Society Annual Reports - 1949 to 1979](#), 1949 - 1979

- National Museum of Australia, [From the eyes of an eight year old by Rupert Hewison](#), 30 May 2011
- *Children from U.K. For new home*, The Mercury, 7 January 1958
- *To begin new life*, The Mercury, 10 January 1958
- *[No title]*, The Mercury, 11 January 1958
- *New life for 7 shy children*, Advocate, 4 August 1975
- Hewison, Rupert, [My life inside a children's home](#), Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions blog, 16 November 2011

Records

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

Records

- [M3846 Fairbridge Society of Tasmania \(1956 - 1971\)](#)
 - [Visit to Australia of Major-General Hawthorn, director and secretary of Fairbridge Society \(1964 - 1968\)](#)
 - [Correspondence Files \(1919 - 1998\)](#)
 - [General Records of the Society, Fairbridge-Drake Society \(1925 - 1985\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/tresca-2/>