

# Wingfield House

1938 – 1971

**Other Names:** • Wingfield Home

## Details

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Wingfield House, run by the Board of the Royal Hobart Hospital, opened in 1938. It was on the grounds of St John's Park. Wingfield provided residential and outpatient aftercare to children affected by the polio epidemic of 1937 to 1938. Later it offered services to children with a range of physical disabilities. It closed in 1971.

Wingfield House was on the grounds of St John's Park, the site of the old Queen's Orphan Asylum.

The Governor, Sir Ernest Clark, opened Wingfield officially on 9 November 1940. According to the *Mercury*, he said that 'the gift to all who were well and strong was the power to help others and that gift was given in abundance to the devoted nurses who cared for the helpless patients'. He hoped that the Home would be "conducted in such a spirit of Christian benevolence that the patients will be cared for with every kindness and every scientific facility fully utilised for their recovery."

The first wing of the building had been finished in 1938. The Tasmanian Society for the Care of Crippled Children funded it with a portion of the gift given to the Australian government by Lord Nuffield for the care of children with physical disabilities. Wingfield was named after Lord Nuffield's Hospital in Nottingham. An extension, named the Shugg Wing after a Hobart paediatrician, opened in 1941. After the opening, the Society handed Wingfield over to the Board of the Royal Hobart Hospital.

A 1941 menu shows that the children had a set meal for every day of the week. They always had porridge for breakfast, followed by eggs, chops, lamb's fry, bacon or sausages. They had two courses for their midday meal with meat, potatoes and another vegetable for the first course and steamed pudding, rice or sago custard, or bread and butter custard for the second. At tea time, they usually had meat again, sometimes followed by a dessert of blanc mange, jelly, preserved fruit, or cornflakes. Five years later, the diet appears to have been less varied. The Director of Hospital and Medical Services received a complaint because on several evenings the meal had been saveloys. He told the Matron that the children should be offered more choice and suggested soup, custards, junket, stewed fruit, bread and butter pudding, scrambled eggs, mince, bread, butter, jam, and Bournvita or weak tea.

There was a Wingfield Outings Club that took children on day trips, In 1946, they took 146 children and 39 nurses out on 24 occasions. They covered 1,463 miles. Members took part in at least one outing each but some went on more than that. According to the Annual Report of the Club:

*All passengers were carried safely and no mishaps occurred. Weather conditions have been generally favourable and no Outing [sic] has had to be postponed on this account. The places visited have been many and varied.*

In a series of four oral history interviews conducted for an Arts Tasmania funded project entitled 'I stand corrected', its coordinator, James Newton, found that patients from Wingfield House were sometimes transferred back to the children's ward at the General (now Royal Hobart) Hospital when their conditions improved. From there, they were sent to work, allegedly as therapy, in the orthopaedic workshop that was attached to the hospital. Sometimes they received low wages, at other times, no payment at all. Some eventually went on to do apprenticeships in the trade.

In 1957, 14 children lived at Wingfield. They had a range of illnesses including Little's Disease, TB, and polio. Wingfield later took adult patients as well as children.

A former resident and later, an outpatient of Wingfield, says that it has 'got its good memories but it's got its bad memories too'. Among the good memories are lifelong friendships made there and an occupational therapist who taught him to speak. Bad memories include being restrained and learning how to tie his bootlaces. If he did not do it properly, one therapist would 'give me a whack around the head or tread on my fingers'.

## Gallery

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**Wingfield Home, children entering bus**



**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, the feeding of each child who cannot complete his own meal is important**



**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, the dining room is used for the teaching of children in the use of table procedure at each meal time**



**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, sandpapering to encourage extension of elbow and wrist**



**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, stool seating for co-ordination and strengthening of upper limbs**

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**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, child in posture chair with tray**

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**Wingfield Home, Occupational therapy, weaving on the kick machine, co-ordination of hands and legs**

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**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, assisting medical officer checks the use of a walking 'moveline' for a baby**

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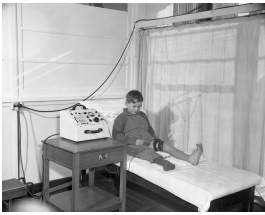
**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, standing box stimulates posture reflexes in training to stand and walk**

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**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, class work for cerebral palsied children to teach control and strength**

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**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, electrical stimulation of muscle to improve power in early stage of re-education**

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**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, one of a series of exercises used to re-educate strength and control for standing**

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**Wingfield Home, Physiotherapy Department gym, children wear long callipers (jointed) to correct knee flexion problem, child 11 years can cope with own callipers**

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Wingfield Home, classroom, paints and brush provide a valuable medium of self expression

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Royal Hobart Hospital \(1938 - current\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Queen's Orphan Asylum \(1833 - 1879\)](#)  
Wingfield House was at St John's Park on the site of the former Queen's Orphan Asylum.
- [St John's Park \(1936 - 1994\)](#)  
Wingfield House was at St John's Park.
- [Victoria Convalescent Home \(1891 - 1959\)](#)  
Victoria Convalescent Home stopped taking children following the establishment of Wingfield House in 1938.
- [Tasmanian Society for the Care of Crippled Children \(1935 - 1988\)](#)  
The Tasmanian Society for the Care of Crippled Children established Wingfield House.
- [After Care School, New Town \(1942? - 1957?\)](#)  
Children receiving day treatment at Wingfield House attended the After School.

### Resources

- [Wingfield holiday](#), The Mercury, 31 August 1938
- [Party at Wingfield](#), The Mercury, 20 December 1946
- [Merry moments at Wingfield House](#), The Mercury, 14 December 1944
- [Stories for children at Wingfield](#), The Mercury, 4 August 1948
- [Teatime](#), The Mercury, 9 December 1944
- [Thrill for polio sufferers](#), The Mercury, 8 July 1952

## Records

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

### Records

- [General Correspondence-Hospital and Health Administration \(1932 - 1987\)](#)
- [Films and Videos Produced and Acquired by the Agency \(1950 - 1985\)](#)
- [Building Applications, Hobart City Council \(1919 - 1990\)](#)
- [General Correspondence, Department of Public Health \(1920 - 1956\)](#)

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