

Sisters of the Church

1901 – 1908

Other Names: • Kilburn Sisters

Details

The Sisters of the Church (also known as Kilburn Sisters) were an Anglican religious order of women who arrived in Perth, from England, in 1901. They established Tower House in 1901; Perth College in 1902; the Waifs' Home, Parkerville in 1903; Girls' High School, Kalgoorlie in 1903; and the Malcolm Street Receiving Home in 1907. They also accommodated boys temporarily in St Peter's Boy's School, Freemantle in 1903. In 1908, The Sisters of the Church was re-named the Community of the Sisters of the Church.

The Sisters of the Church, also known as the Kilburn Sisters, was an Anglican religious order of women, headquartered at St Michael's Convent in Richmond, England. The first group of three Sisters arrived in Perth on 20 November 1901. A second group of Sisters, which included Sister Kate Clutterbuck, arrived on the ship *Oroya* on 11 December 1901. The Sisters had brought with them around 22 orphan children from the Orphanage of Mercy, Kilburn, (numbers are uncertain, but there were likely to have been 11 boys and 11 girls aged 6-10 years). Four older girls also accompanied the Sisters. The Sisters rented Tower House in Russell Square, West Perth and lived there with the orphanage children.

At this time in Perth, there were two Anglican orphanages: the Perth Girls' Orphanage and the Swan Boys' Orphanage. However, Whittington (*Sister Kate* 1999, p.69) reports that the Sisters 'had no intention of abandoning their migrant boys and girls to separating orphanages'.

The Sisters' mission was two-fold: to set up day and boarding schools for Anglican children, and to establish a 'foundling home' for infants. By 4 February 1902, the Sisters had established a school for girls (Perth College) with 32 pupils including the orphan girls from Kilburn, and a boarding and day school for boys at Tower House.

On 26 May 1902, the Sisters opened a crèche at 133 William Street, Perth. Working mothers could leave their babies at the crèche during the day. Whittington (p.75) quotes Sister Kate Clutterbuck's view that this crèche was the beginning of the Waif's Home, Parkerville as 'many of these babies' were later admitted to that Home.

Around July 1902, according to Whittington (p.74), the 'big boys' for whom Sister Kate was responsible were 'installed in a house in James Street' near the school they attended. These big boys were probably around 11 years old.

On Christmas Day, 1902, Sister Jane arrived from England with three more boys. Possibly, these boys were sent to Tower House.

On 13 March 1903, Sister Sarah and nine of the English orphan girls moved to Kalgoorlie where the Sisters had set up a boarding school in a makeshift building about half an hour's walk from Hannan Street. This was known (Battye, p.79) as Girls' High School, Kalgoorlie. Whittington (p.112) reports that these girls completed their schooling in Perth, at Perth College.

During 1903, Sister Kate and the orphan boys moved from Tower House to temporary accommodation at Perth College, which was situated in the Hawkesbury building in Bellvue Terrace, Perth. From Perth College, the boys relocated to the old St Peter's Boys' School in High Street, Fremantle. Whittington (p.78) writes that Sister Kate had charge of 'thirteen English boys between seven and ten years of age, and three or four babies less than two years old'.

On 5 May 1903, one of the Sisters of the Church, Sister Jane, left Fremantle railway station with six of the older boys (all aged under 12) and arrived at the property that the Sisters had purchased for a children's home in Parkerville. The following day, Sister Kate arrived. The babies remained in Fremantle with Nurse Wright until July 1903 when they were transferred to the Waif's Home, Parkerville.

Whittington (p.131) reports that around May 1907, the Sisters opened a 'receiving home' for infants in rented premises at 37 Malcolm Street, Perth (the Malcolm Street Receiving Home). Within its first few weeks, it had 10 'inmates'. Some infants were kept at the Home, and others were boarded out (placed with a foster parent in a private home). According to Whittington (p.135), the Home was 'probably' opened because the infants could not be accommodated at the Waif's Home, Parkerville. Whittington makes no further mention of the Malcolm Street Receiving Home, so it may have operated for only a short time.

In 1908, the Sisters of the Church were re-named the Community of the Sisters of the Church.

More info

Chronology

- **Sisters of the Church (1901 – 1908)**
 - Community of the Sisters of the Church (1908 - current)

Related Entries

Ran

- [Tower House \(1901 - 1903\)](#)
- [St Peter's Boys' School, Fremantle \(1903\)](#)
- [Girls' High School, Kalgoorlie \(1902 - 1916\)](#)
- [Malcolm Street Receiving Home \(1907\)](#)
- [Waif's Home, Parkerville \(1903 - 1909\)](#)

Run by

- [Perth College \(1902 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Doncaster, Edward William, *The Sisters of the Church in Kalgoorlie 1902-1916: a record*, 1998
- Baldwin, Angelica, *Interview with Angelica [Annie] Baldwin* [sound recording] / [interviewed by Patricia Barrett-Lennard], Australian 1938 Oral History Project, 1983
- [History](#), Perth College Anglican School for Girls Website, 2014

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