



WAR MEMORIAL

Background

The War Memorial Home was donated by Sir James Burns, designed by McCredie & Anderson architects and built by JM & A Pringle. The War Memorial Home was established by Sir James Burns to commemorate Australians who died during the Great War, 1914 -1919. Sir James was personally affected by the Great War as his youngest son was killed in France in 1916 and his second son died in 1921 as a result of active service.

The Home was opened by His Excellency, the Governor-General, Lord Forster on 21 April 1922. It was built to accommodate 70 children. Soldiers' dependents were to be given preference in this Home.

The architect, Gregory Nolan, describes the building thus:

The War Memorial Home is a two storey brick and sandstone building which is dominated by a central tower. This four storey tower has a rusticated stone base surmounted by two storeys of brickwork featuring good stone bulls-eye windows and a dedication plate. These are capped by an open top storey which features an arcade of truscan columns and pilasters. The entry to the building is through the tower's base and /features a fine semi-circular stone arch on decorative dwarf pilasters. The door and fanlights are in fine timber and lead lighting. The bulk of the building is of dark brick accented by sandstone quins and banding, surmounted by a brick parapet. On the east and west sides of the building there are single storey verandahs supported on sandstone truscan

columns. The roof is of slate with box gutters. The windows are mainly double hung with sandstone lintels and sills. The floors are timber throughout and the internal walls rendered. The interior of the building features an impressive grand timber stairway which is sky lit from above.



Initially senior girls were accommodated in War Memorial under the supervision of Miss Hellewell who had been a matron at Burnside since 1911. In February 1937 it became home to Burnside boys.

War Years

During the Pacific War years (1942 to 1945) the children were evacuated to the Blue Mountains and the Australian Army occupied Burnside, using the War Memorial Building as Operational Centre for the Eastern Command HQ of the Australian Army.

1945 plans of the War Memorial Home in the Burnside Archives show rectification work to be made by the Australian Government following the Army's occupation, before the children were moved back to the site.

1945 - Present

War Memorial Home was renovated during 1945. The bathrooms and toilet facilities were completely remodelled with new baths, tiled walls and terrazzo floors. The kitchen was tiled, a gas stove substituted instead of a fuel stove, stainless steel sinks and refrigerator fitted. The hot water boiler, formerly in the kitchen, was moved outside thus making the kitchen cooler and cleaner. Part of the Home was converted into a self-contained flat for the newly appointed Homes and Welfare Officer.

Approximately 40 boys lived at War Memorial and were supervised by Mr and Mrs Moore from mid 1950 to September 1952. Other long term house parents include Mr and Mrs Jiear, Mr and Mrs Coombes, Mr and Mrs Harris, Mr and Mrs Paris and Mr and Mrs Selman, the latter from February 1960 until July 1964. Following the recommendations of a study undertaken by the Department of Social Work at Sydney University in 1962, smaller numbers of children were subsequently placed in each Home. The large dormitories were divided into smaller rooms accommodating up to 5 children, individual wardrobes replaced clothes' rooms and the rooms were decorated in bright colours. Only 27 boys were housed at War Memorial by July 1964.

The residential care programme continued at War Memorial with declining numbers throughout the seventies. By mid 1982 only 4 boys were in care at War Memorial and the Home closed.

Burnside however was in fact expanding its activities and providing new programmes for families and children. The resulting increase in staff numbers meant there was insufficient space in the office building so it was decided to relocate the office to the much larger War Memorial Home. Planning was commenced in 1985, renovations were commenced in 1986 and completed in 1987. The official opening of the new office was celebrated on 19 June 1987.

Despite growing staff numbers which have required further modifications to the office space in War Memorial it remains the official administrative headquarters for the Burnside organisation.

