



# CUMBRAE

(No 3 Home)

## Background

Cumbrae was the second of the Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes for Children and the first home for girls. Its erection at a cost of approximately £2,500 was financed from general donations and it was officially opened by Lady Denman (wife of the Governor General of Australia) on 21 September 1912. The architects were McCredie and Anderson.

The architect, Gregory Nolan, has described the building as follows:

*“Cumbrae is a double storey Federation building. The ground floor is of rusticated sandstone and the first floor is of brick. The terra-cotta tiled roof features two asymmetrical gables to the front façade, in addition to a mansard roof with timber shingled facings over the dormitory.*

*The two simple timber verandahs and exposed rafter ends are typical of the Federation style.*

*The windows are casement as well as double hung. The floors are timber throughout except in the play shelter. The ceilings are of AC sheeting and the internal walls are rendered.”*

The concept of Cumbrae had been to produce a building resembling a normal home. With the building of No. 2 Home this was abandoned and the home became more institutional but more efficient. A single dormitory was provided

for the thirty original youngsters who were to call it 'home'. High activity areas such as dining room, kitchen and play shelter were on the ground floor and lower activities such as dormitories, sewing room and bathrooms and residential quarters for the staff were on the first floor.

## 1912 - 1945

Cumrae was originally designated '**No. 2 Home**' but altered to '**No 3 Home**' in 1919 when the original administration building, Airlie, was converted into a home. The name Cumrae, meaning 'Island of the Welsh', was first used in 1924 and the use of the Scottish name continued long after the building ceased to be a home for children. The reason for the choice of the name is unknown.

During the years 1942 to 1945 the children were evacuated to the Blue Mountains and the Australian Army occupied Burnside. Cumrae was used to house the General Liaison Office and the Royal Australian Air Force.

## 1945 - 1985

The children returned to Burnside in January 1945 and Cumrae appears to have housed approximately 30 girls as it had done before the war.

The home was renovated in about 1948 including the modernisation of the kitchen, bathrooms and lavatories and was painted throughout. The girls were moved into Eskdale while building work was in progress.

Between 1962 and mid 1965 Cumrae was unoccupied whilst further remodelling was undertaken, which included the replacement of the dormitory shutters with windows and the creation of more private space for each girl. Only 12 girls could now be accommodated instead of the previous 30.

Miss Betty Headley who had worked at Burnside since 20th September 1961 was appointed housemother at Cumrae when the girls returned there in August 1965. 'Aunty Betty', as she was affectionately known, continued as housemother until she resigned on 29 December 1984 when it was proposed to change the role of the home. Cumrae was one of only three homes at North Parramatta in use for residential care at that time. It had been specialising in assisting long-term Burnside residents when the trend for the past two decades had been to shorten the period in residential care or to use foster care.

In 1985 the home was used for the care of primary school children who had been admitted voluntarily by their parents. Both the children and the parents received therapy during the period that the child was in care and the parents took responsibility for many aspects of the child's life – any medical and dental appointments and some social activities. The period in care was as brief as possible in the child's and the family's best interests.

## 1987 – PRESENT

In 1987 Cumbrae ceased to function as a home and was converted into a Staff Training Centre for Burnside's residential staff and has continued in use for staff education and conferences. The upper storey was leased as a residence from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s.

In 1994 the offices of Burnside's Foster Care program were moved into the upper storey and, while most of the ground level was available for staff training and conference purposes, the entrance foyer was developed for the Burnside Museum.

In August 1997 the Burnside Museum was officially opened at Blairgowrie permitting the vacated space at Cumbrae to be used as the offices for Burnside's Aftercare program.

In 2000 the ground level became offices for the Family and Youth Support program.

Since 2009 the ground level has housed the Children's Services program and the upper level the Family Preservation and Aftercare programs.



Cooking in the Cumbrae kitchen in the 1950s