

Jan Worthington

Title

The Abandoned Child - Social Changes 1850-1870 through the records of The Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children.

Summary

This presentation will cover the historical background to the establishment of the Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children; the social and family background of the children and why they were admitted, as well as information about their families and their place of origin. It will cover their living conditions, length of time they spent on average in the asylum and why they left. It will also cover where they were sent when apprenticed and will cover their lives up until their deaths. Statistical information demonstrating facets of the above will be used.

Abstract

In the early 1850s destitute and deserted children roamed the streets of Sydney ranging in age from one year and eight months to ten years. Rarely were children accepted after the age of ten years and many children were sent direct from the Benevolent Asylum to the Randwick Asylum. Known parents who placed their children in the care of the Asylum were expected to pay something towards their keep. Many children were reclaimed when their parents' fortunes improved. Case studies of some of the children revealing their personal stories will be shown visually.

Religion played a large part when it came to the children's departure from the Asylum as the various churches had a network of parishioners who supported the institution by taking a number of children over several years. This will be demonstrated with the use of maps.

This project to find out more about the occupants of The Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children was begun in 2006. The objective was to analyse the children's lives and deaths and find their descendants. This quest began as the result of Jan's employment in 1995 by Godden MacKay Logan Pty Ltd, Heritage Consultants, to identify the unnamed occupants of the children's graves uncovered during extensions to the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick. Hundreds of death certificates were obtained during the research process which provided a very interesting insight into the diseases prevailing and the attitudes to the value of children's lives at this time. Some of these death certificates will be used to demonstrate the above

Audience

All levels