

THE HILLS

Sydney's Garden Shire

Set in 16 hectares of parkland in the middle of Baulkham Hills, the old school buildings of the William Thompson Masonic School still provide for community use and care.

History

Long before the idea was conceived of establishing a school for orphans or other children in need, the Lodge members of the Freemasons had established a charity devoted to those children. In 1918, William Thompson thought that the wide open spaces and rolling landscape of Baulkham Hills would be a good location to establish a school and garden village for children who had been orphaned or left in poor circumstances following World War I. The project was funded by the Masons.

On November 11, 1922, (Armistice Day) the William Thompson Masonic School was opened. Fifty "motor buses" and extra trams helped transport 12,000 Masons and friends to the opening of the school.

At its peak the school was home for 364 children many of whom lived on the property.

During World War II the children were moved into the countryside and the buildings became the 103rd Australian General Hospital. The school reopened on 8 November, 1947 as the Masonic School and functioned as such until the 1970s. In December 1973 Council signed a contract to pay for the property over 3 years with the final payment being made in 1977.

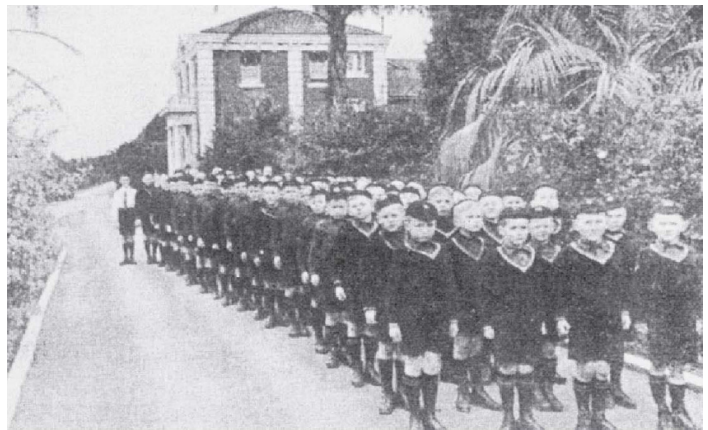
Several of the original school buildings still exist including the dormitory buildings, classrooms, gymnasium, staff cottages and the Georgian Revival style central administration block. The main hall building was lost to fire and has now been replaced with a modern community hall suitable for hire.

Other historic elements such as the memorial tree avenue of Brush box (planted in memory of soldiers lost in World War I), sundial, fishpond and memorial garden compliment the property's heritage. Many of the buildings are hired by community groups.

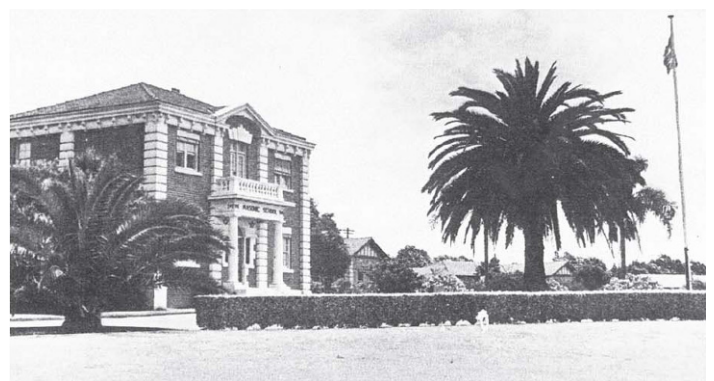
balcombe heights estate fact sheet



watercolour of school around 1922



children marched everywhere

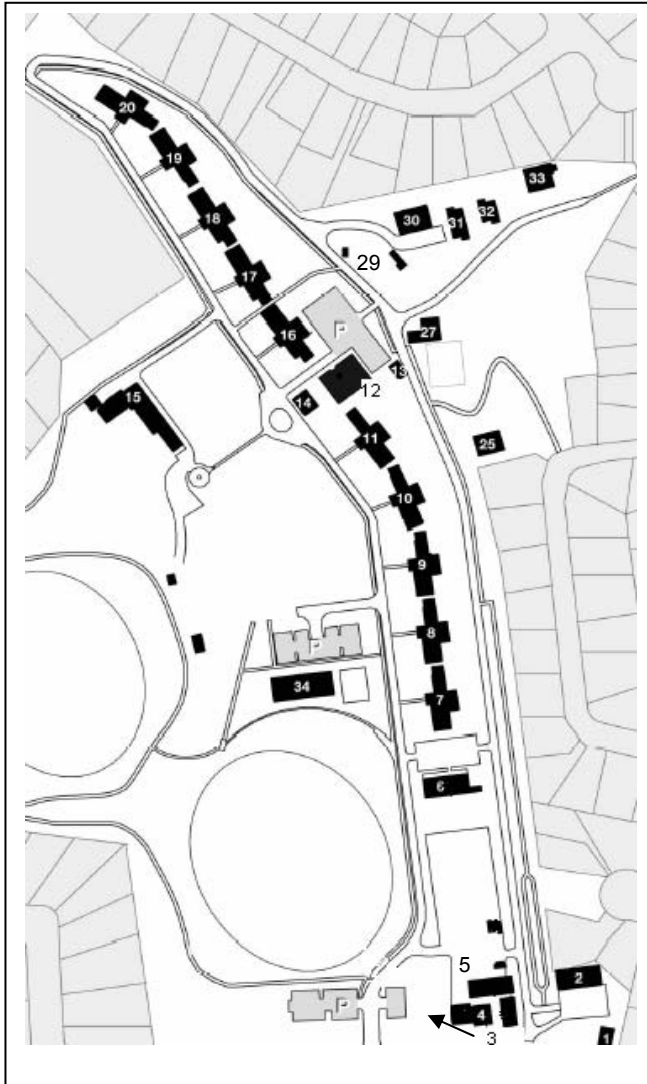


administration block



balcombe heights estate

fact sheet



Key to pre-1942 uses

Bld No.	Use
1	Drill Instructor's Cottage
2	Primary School Gymnasium
3	Original entrance
4	Classrooms - Official opening plaque – 11/11/1922
5	Upper Primary & Senior School classrooms
6	School Playground
7	Girls Cottage LM "Favonian"
8	Girls Cottage JK "Felicity"
9	Girls Cottage EH "Famous"
10	Girls Cottage CD "Fidelity"
11	Girls Cottage AB "Faithful"
12	Assembly Hall now new building – Thompson Hall
14	Administration Building
15	103 rd Aust Group Hospital and Surgery Theatre
16	Boys Cottage AB "Foremost"
17	Boys Cottage CD "Firm"
18	Boys Cottage EH "Fortitude"
19	Boys Cottage JK "Fearless"
20	Boys Cottage LM "Fervent"
25	Superintendent's Cottage
27	Tea-room and Tennis Court
29	Fishpond
30	Laundry
31	Staff Cottage
32	Teacher's Cottage
33	Hospital

Location and access

Situated along Seven Hills Road, the main entrance is opposite Jasper Road in Baulkham Hills.

Things to do and see

Education: The reserve contains several interpretive devices relating to the site's past.

Memorial Avenue: The 364 Brush Box trees planted along the avenue on the western boundary, represent the Masons who fell in World War I. A list of their names is displayed on the memorial at the northern end of the avenue.

Memorial Garden:

Constructed in memory of World War II soldiers, the plinth once held the names of eighteen fallen pupils.

Playground: A children's playground is provided that caters for older children.

A skateboard ramp is located near the main oval.

Walking: Many concrete walking tracks circumnavigate the park. Walking is for all grades.

Getting involved

- Keep pets on a leash at all times unless sign posted as off leash
- Report vandalism to Council's 24 hour hotline 1300 884 885

For further information:

Visit the Local Studies Collection at the Castle Hill Library.

Halls can be booked through Council's Community Facilities team.