

ST JOHNS FOUNDLING ORPHANAGE by Nic Hume

All packed and set to travel 3 hours out of Sydney, APPI - Australian Paranormal Phenomenon Investigators headed to Goulburn to investigate St Johns Foundling Orphanage. Arriving at the orphanage and laying eyes on it for the first time was amazing. The sheer size of the place was daunting in itself. The fullness of the moon cast many creepy shadows. The winter chill didn't help with the clatter of teeth or the firming of nerves.

We were warmly greeted by Goulburn Ghost Tours. Louise took us for a walk through telling us about St John's history. Built circa 1890, operated as an orphanage from 1905 to 1975. It was a foundling orphanage, which meant that children who were placed here had at least one surviving parent. During the depression, it was common for large families to keep older children and leave younger ones in the orphanage as there was no money to care for all their children.

For a short period it was a home for girls and boys but it was predominantly used as a boys home. An account by a boy who stayed there described that when you entered the orphanage your clothes were taken and you were issued one set of clothes and underwear that were washed once a week. If during the week your clothes were soiled you were beaten as punishment. Beatings were sadly a common occurrence, not just for punishment but more for mental scarring. Many accounts from St Johns tell of repetitive rape and beatings not only by staff but also by older children and notably the caretaker.

The orphanage was run by the Sisters of Mercy. Sr Genevieve Cummins was known to the children as 'Mother Gen'. She would provide the mothering that their circumstances denied. Mother Gen also provided education and encouragement for the children to engage in sport, song and dance. The boys experienced difficult times but looked up to Mother Gen and stayed in contact with her until her passing.

We gathered our gear and headed in for round one of the investigation. As we entered the first room we gathered in a circle to officially open the investigation. We said our prayer of opening, protection and introduction. We reached the Chapel and felt compelled to set up for a short vigil. After setting equipment we

were greeted with what felt to be a Priest. We noticed fluctuations in temperature, spikes on the Ghost Meter Pro (GMP) and the Ghost Radar Classic (GRC) provided the words - 'smith', 'below', 'shell'. We left the Chapel and headed to the nursery to conduct an EVP session. Not that we needed the digital voice recorders as we could all clearly hear shuffling, voices and chimes coming from INside the building.

The voices we heard were audible but we could not clearly make out the words. The music was a clear chime like sound and the shuffling came from the rooms on the balcony (where the children slept). These noises were noted as coming in as a train would pass in the distance. The train was acting as white noise. What we could hear was amazing.

After a short break we headed back for round two in the nursery to try a psychic board session. Whilst setting up we could again hear voices and shuffling inside the building, it felt like 'they' were all gathering to see what we were up to. We sat at the board and...nothing...not one single movement of the planchette. After trying for a while we decided to head back to the Chapel.

Not long after settling in, independent investigator, Daniel, became fiercely angry, his eyes dilated, his body pumped full of adrenaline and his breathing became heavy...we got him to speak what he felt - he was full of hatred towards the Priest and what he subjected the children to, he wanted to lash out and physically attack the non-physical Priest. All hands were required to help bring him back and ground him to his own energy. During our walk back to base we set up trigger items such a ball at the top of the stairs, lollies laid out on a bed of flour and toy cars strategically placed.

Round three...our investigator, Trina, had a wonderful but sad interaction with 'Mikey' through her mediumship ability and the Ghost Meter Pro (GMP). Mikey was shy at first to come forward but he was fascinated with the toys we had laid on the table. Mikey wanted us to follow him to a location, so up we got and followed Trina and the GMP. Mikey took us outside to where the hospital is located, he was telling us that this is where he passed and as we looked inside one of the rooms we found a large 'shell' which took us back to our first visit to the Chapel where we got the words 'smith', 'shell', 'below'...we tried to find a way under the building but there were no visible entrance.

After finding the shell, Mikey vanished. We then headed to the bathroom and no sooner settled when Andrea picked up two boys, brothers, in the care of Mother Gen. Mother Gen told how she knew what was happening in the orphanage but kept a professional blind eye. The boys were frightened and confused, they wanted to heal and go home. Andrea asked that we join our energy to help these boys heal and help them home. This was quite a moving and sad experience but exhilarating at the same time.

It was nearly sun up and a thick fog was setting in. Peet, Andrea and myself took a slow walk around the perimeters...taking in every window of every room. From the outside it seems larger than life. St Johns daunting architecture is definitely something to be admired and feared at the same time. This is definitely a place that we would love to spend more time in and venture to areas that we missed this investigation.