

MAGDALEN HOME MOUNT ST. CANICE

THE EARLY YEARS

**BY
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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

All names of inmates of the institution and of their families have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

Valerie Baxter

Friday 10th December 1993

Abstract

Prostitution was rife in nineteenth century Tasmania, and a variety of philanthropic efforts attempted to assist underprivileged girls who were involved or likely to become involved in the trade. Magdalen Home became the largest and most enduring of these endeavours. This thesis studies the early years of the Magdalen Home.

Chapter 1 describes the life of Father William John Dunne, whose bequest provided the capital for the founding of the Home. Chapter 2 examines the will of Father Dunne, attempting to illustrate how, with careful execution, it provided funds for the institution to commence in 1893, with a substantial land holding and edifice. Chapter 3 looks at the role played by the Good Shepherd Order and the Catholic press in establishing the institution. Chapter 4 deals with the establishment of the commercial laundry and farm, which were to become mainstays of the Home. It also describes the building extensions up to 1900.

Chapter 5, analyses the lives of inmates who were Wards of State, and describes the collusive relationship that developed between the Magdalen Home and the Neglected Children's Department in the early twentieth century. Finally, Chapter 6 describes the contribution of the religious and their auxiliaries to the prosperity of the institution, and concludes with the building of the Memorial Church in 1910.

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Introduction

In colonial Van Diemen's Land, as in New South Wales, prostitution was regarded by the authorities as regrettable but inevitable. A proportion of female convicts were working prostitutes at the time of their conviction,¹ whilst many others who had been domestic servants would have come to accept sexual exploitation and harassment with a degree of resignation. On board some of the convict ships, sexual favours were exchanged for money or for relative freedom to move about the ship. Some of the more chaste women may have been pressured or tempted with such deals as a result of intolerable shipboard conditions. In 1819, with the complicity and participation of the captain, two thirds of the female convicts on board *The Janus* were pregnant by the time the boat reached Sydney.² Once ashore in the colonies, prostitution thrived, partly because of the imbalance in the gender ratio, with males vastly outnumbering females. The imbalance existed because most convicts were male, and because many naval and military employees had left their partners at home. In Hobart, the whaling industry accounted for a large number of seafarers in port throughout the colonial era and prostitution had always been accepted as an integral part of seafaring life.³ Pubs and boarding houses in the vicinity of the wharf made Wapping one of the areas of the city in which prostitution thrived.⁴

Officially the State was against prostitution and according to Robson one in eight women convicts were prosecuted for offences relating to sexual behaviour.⁵ Nevertheless, prostitution was on the whole tolerated and it was easy for unchaste or promiscuous women to drift in to such employment. Bonded, or free but poor immigrant women often found that work and sexual exploitation were interwoven. Girls working as servants, whether assigned or free, were likely to be vulnerable and lonely and were far removed from both family support and restraint. Attracted to or lured by flattery from predatory males, they often faced abandonment when pregnant. Ostracism frequently followed confinement thus reducing the likelihood of risk-free employment. The brothel offered refuge, money and social life which might be tempting if not attractive to an abandoned girl or one worn down by a life of domestic drudgery.⁶ The reality of a hard working sordid lifestyle numbed by alcohol was not necessarily apparent, at least not initially. In general, low wages and limited

¹ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p.26.

² W. T. Southerwood, *Lonely Shepherd in Van Diemen's Land*, (Launceston 1988) pp. 21-22.

³ J. Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, (Melbourne 1992), p. 573.

⁴ The Wapping History Group, *Down Wapping*, (Hobart 1988) p. 185.

⁵ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p. 26.

⁶ M. Barbalet, *Far From a Low Gutter Girl*, (Melbourne 1983) p. 87.

employment for women created conditions, particularly in the 1840's, in which prostitution flourished.⁷ Meanwhile, the Government was alarmed by 'unnatural' sexual practices, especially between men. Sodomy remained a capital crime until 1887, with the last execution taking place in 1863.⁸ Any form of heterosexual activity was apparently tolerated in the hope of diminishing homosexual activity.

An increasing free-born population towards the mid-nineteenth century bolstered the ranks of the middle class and the desire to create a more 'civilised' society grew.⁹ In commenting that vice was now hidden, a contemporary writer acknowledged that anti-social behaviour toward women had improved since earlier in the century.

The women of the present day are not insulted or outraged as their grandmothers were: gentlemen no longer stagger drunken into their presence, with impudent leer certain of impunity. They no longer boast in ladies' hearing of their conquests in the field of Venus. To have the reputation of a rake now-a-days is not an acknowledged passport to a lady's favour.¹⁰

Individual Christian philanthropists began to differentiate the hardened prostitute who was seen as beyond help from those who might respond positively to assistance. In such a climate *The Van Diemen's Land Asylum* was formed. This rescue organisation placed considerable emphasis on inculcating religious and industrious habits and encouraging remorse among the girls. Unfortunately the enterprise did not prove to be financially viable.¹¹ Without a tradition of private benevolence, and with a history of Government welfare provision, it was easy for public financial support to wither after initial enthusiasm.¹² An additional impediment to the organisation's success was the still generally accepted view that poverty was self-inflicted and that prostitution was the end result of individual moral laxity.

As the depression bit hard into the Tasmanian community in the 1860's, the Benevolent Societies and the City Mission did their best to alleviate distress. The Hobart Benevolent Society withstood some criticism for diverting some of the virtuous funds of its subscribers to assist single mothers.¹³ The City Mission was so stretched for funds that it suspended help for several

⁷ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p. 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁰ One of Four (pseud), *Words to Women. A Plea for Certain Sufferers*, (Hobart 1858) p. 12.

¹¹ J. Brown, *Poverty is Not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 94.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

years.¹⁴ Seeking to restore the sanctity of marriage, however, its missionaries made home visits and endeavoured to persuade cohabiting couples either to marry or separate.¹⁵ During this period of hardship in the community, the welfare organisations found that it was difficult enough to raise funds for the 'deserving' poor, let alone those perceived to be less deserving, such as the prostitute and potential prostitute. Accordingly, Joan Brown has estimated that four or five Penitent Homes commenced between 1856 and 1890 foundered due to a lack of public support.¹⁶ The philanthropists felt concerned but helpless. An anonymous reporter estimated that there were twenty brothels in Hobart in 1856 and that one in sixteen women in the town were involved in prostitution.¹⁷ These figures were corroborated by the Superintendent of Police in his evidence to a Select Committee on Immigration in 1861.¹⁸

An anonymous but far sighted pamphleteer tried shock tactics coupled with consciousness-raising on the subject of prostitution. *Words to Women* published in 1858,¹⁹ combined intellectual, feminist, religious and emotional arguments in favour of "a suffering sisterhood". Readers were urged to give up the "counterfeit of delicacy" which had until then smothered discussion of "the blood-weeping sorrow that now shudders unconsolated at the street corners." The writer attacked the "apathy with which pure women look on these unfortunates" and urged confrontation of the problem and sympathy for the women concerned.

In truth there is no lot in life so abjectly and unspeakably miserable. They have no home, nor home delights; no comfortable fireside thoughts; no love in life or of life, but a deep dread of life; and a yet deeper dread of death; for after death there is the vast Beyond.²⁰

The extent of the problem was indicated by citing an estimate of 350 "unfortunate girls" in Hobart Town among 5196 women aged fourteen to sixty years.²¹ These figures indicate a high incidence of prostitution, or in the language of the pamphleteer a "holocaust of virgin life". Christians were urged to respond as: "There is no social ill which the Gospel cannot remedy."²² In addition to a plea for assistance, the writer implied an obligation for women to assist prostitutes who were used as an outlet for male libido, thereby alleviating

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p.29.

¹⁶ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p.1 21.

¹⁷ P. Bolger, *Hobart Town*, (Canberra 1973) p. 104.

¹⁸ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 121.

¹⁹ One of Four (pseud) *Words to Women. A Plea for Certain Sufferers*, (Hobart 1858).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²¹ Population figures cited were taken from the 1857 census figures, according to the author.

²² One of Four (pseud) *Words to Women. A Plea for Certain Sufferers*, (Hobart 1858).

sexual demands upon other women. The writer also accused men of using prostitutes to nourish their vanity: "A chief cause of the inordinate prevalence of this sin is that notion in society that a little vice becomes a gentleman". The writer applauded action recently taken (presumably referring to the establishment of the *Van Diemen's Land Asylum*) and recommended raising the level of education and cleanliness in the city as well as attending to unemployment. Without such improvements the writer feared that "To girls dragged up to womanhood through such a maze of poverty and ignorance, the lie of 'a gay woman' must necessarily appear in another light than that in which it is regarded by others blessed with more advantages."²³

Intermittent voluntary efforts to assist 'fallen women' continued through the depressed sixties and seventies, until in 1863 the Hobart Benevolent Society entered into an arrangement with the Government to provide low-cost and homely care for pregnant single girls. In some respects anticipating the boarding-out scheme, the girls were placed in a series of respectable homes and attended by a nurse at delivery. This scheme was only available to destitute girls undergoing a first pregnancy and who were not considered to be of 'profligate' character. The street girls were left to the Sisters of Charity who visited them in hospital and gaol.²⁴

The prostitutes themselves were apparently reluctant to enter the Penitent Homes. City missionary Robert Gray reported to the Select Committee of the Industrial Schools Bill in 1862 that ex-prisoners who did so usually returned to their "evil courses".²⁵ The *Cornwall Chronicle* put it bluntly that such women would be reluctant "to be patronised by preaching philanthropists".²⁶ Meanwhile, Gray feared, that girls were sometimes pushed into prostitution by their parents for financial gain. It was considered that destitute children would develop toward a rosier future if adequately trained during their youth. As a result, voluntary organisations were encouraged by way of Government assistance to establish Industrial and Training Schools. Founded in 1862, as the Hobart Town Female Refuge, the Girl's Reformatory and Industrial School had evolved by 1868. Government co-operation and financial support meant that girls between the ages of nine and fourteen, who were committed by the Court would be admitted for training, and then be sent to service.²⁷ The Industrial School for Girls in Launceston was established on

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁴ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 121.

²⁵ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p.53.

²⁶ *Cornwall Chronicle*, 16th August 1876.

²⁷ Girls Industrial School, *Minutes of Management Committee*.

similar lines in 1877; and as with its Hobart counterpart, was under strong Protestant influence.²⁸

Protestant influence over Catholic children was anathema to philanthropic interests within the Catholic Church, and provided a spur to the establishment of St. Josephs Orphanage, under the auspices of the Sisters of Charity.²⁹ It had become clear during the 1870's that the Queen's Orphanage was passing into a decline. The Tasmanian system was evidently changing in response to the widespread influence of Catherine Spence, who had persuaded the Destitute Board in South Australia to allow children in need to be boarded out rather than placed in large institutions.³⁰ Following the Public Charities Act of 1873, Tasmanian destitute children could be placed privately as an alternative to the Queen's Asylum. The Catholic hierarchy realised with alarm that all children placed in existing Industrial schools would be under Protestant influence. As a result, an appeal was launched to establish a Catholic Orphanage and Industrial School, to cater for "destitute virtuous girls". Vicar General Father William Dunne, the Catholic Chaplain at the Queen's Orphanage, vigorously supported the campaign, collecting £500 in Victoria.³¹ The Orphanage was opened under the auspices of the Sisters of Charity in 1879. A paucity of financial resources and preoccupation with the establishment of churches had restrained the Catholic Church from sponsoring a welfare institution any earlier. Catholics had first petitioned the Governor for assistance to establish 'a Catholic Orphan School' in 1839, but assistance had not been forthcoming.³²

At the time of the opening of St. Joseph's Orphanage, a goad to church involvement in rescue work came about by a rather circuitous route. The Contagious Diseases Act had been introduced in Tasmania in 1879, following threats by the British Navy to strike Hobart off its list of safe visiting ports, on account of virulent venereal disease.³³ Similar legislation in Victoria for mandatory medical examination, detention and treatment of suspected 'common prostitutes' was criticised by women temperance advocates as an affront to the civil liberties of women.³⁴ In Tasmania, with its history of government control over the lives of underdogs, and the shame of the slight from the Royal Navy, there was no equivalent opposition. It was the men who were seen as the victims of Hobart's 'unclean' prostitutes. The Lock Hospital

²⁸ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 138.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93. The Sisters of Charity arrived in Tasmania in 1847.

³⁰ C. H. Spence, *An Autobiography*, (Adelaide 1910) p. 47.

³¹ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Hobart 1968) p. 54.

³² J. H. Cullen, *The Catholic Church in Tasmania*, (Launceston 1949).

³³ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p.58.

³⁴ M. Lake & F. Kelly, *Double Time. Women in Victoria 150 Years*, (Melbourne 1985) p. 122.

was established at Cascades, and although it was detested and avoided by the women if possible, its functioning did have the desired arresting effect upon venereal disease.³⁵ Attention was then turned toward the needs of the women. Walter Reid, Staff Surgeon of *H.M.S. Wolverine* evaluated the procedures put in place and wrote accordingly to Commodore Wilson on 26-2-1880.³⁶ He added with concern:

So far as I know, nothing has been done by the public in Hobart Town by means of voluntary organisations to aid these women in the Lock Hospital, some of whom are by no means confirmed in a vicious course of life. I admit there is often little hope of reclaiming an old prostitute. She is too often physically and morally diseased and vile in the very grain and fibre of her being. We can try however to minimise her evil influence. With a young girl it is different; and it is a pity that she should have to leave the Lock Hospital, as she must do at present, clad in the dirty drabs or decked with the tawdry finery of a common harlot. She is ashamed or afraid to go back to her respectable friends should she have any. She cannot get good employment because she has no character, while the very graces of her girlish nature make her more eagerly sought after by thoughtless men, and led on to hopeless ruin. Society cannot afford to neglect her, for in time she will have her revenge in the moral and physical contagion which she will spread through every rank ...

He envisaged Government responsibility to be :

to facilitate, as far as possible, the operations of any organisation having for its object the good of these unfortunate women. Indeed, work of this kind must be regarded as a proper and necessary complement to a good Contagious Diseases Act.³⁷

The Governor also recorded observing "a total absence of clerical supervision and religious influence" when visiting Cascades in the same year.³⁸

By 1890 Reid's recommendations had been instituted. Attitudes were changing so that young prostitutes had come to be more pitied than reviled. The Anglican Church took over control of the Lock Hospital in 1890 with the Bishop's wife responsible for both the hospital and the Home of Mercy which

³⁵ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p. 63.

³⁶ K. Daniels & M. Mumane, *Uphill all the Way, A Documentary History of Women in Australia*, (Brisbane 1980) p. 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

³⁸ K. Daniels, *So Much Hard Work*, Fontana/Collins 1984, p. 65.

was established in 1890.³⁹ Girls were encouraged to move to the Home of Mercy once treatment at 'The Lock' was completed.⁴⁰ By the early nineties, the Anglicans were involved in so many rescue initiatives that the editor of *Church News* found that: "The number of different institutions under diverse management has made this matter rather difficult of comprehension to the general public".⁴¹ As a matter of propriety the organisers made it clear that they preferred to avoid publicity, but under the circumstances were prepared to clarify the situation. Teresa Hamilton, wife of the Governor and President of the Anchorage Rescue Home explained the system, which clearly still reflected judgmental and punitive attitudes, blended with a caring philosophy. Those who kept their children were separated from those who relinquished them.

The Anchorage Refuge Home takes no confinements upon principle as its committee look upon the penalty of going to the Cascade Government Institution, arranged for that purpose as a wholesome discipline for those who err. Afterwards mother and child are taken to The Anchorage for twelve months, where mother love is instilled into them as the great incentive for endeavouring to regain and retain their social position. This Home only deals with those who fall once. The House of Mercy does not receive all other cases; it deals only with that special type of women where the question of motherhood and its sacred duties have no part or lot.

Hope Cottage in Launceston "embraced as well as it could every description of the fallen."⁴² Neither Hope Cottage nor The Anchorage endured. In Hobart, the Anglicans concentrated their work at the Home of Mercy and in Launceston the Salvation Army commenced "scouring the streets". It would not be until 1897 that the Army would open its Elim Maternity Hospital in Hobart.⁴³ The Roman Catholics, meanwhile, were building their rescue home at Sandy Bay during 1892.

* * * * *

This thesis traces the early years of that Catholic rescue home which came to be known as Magdalen Home. From its inception, it was planned to be a rescue home on a grand scale, and compared with its local counterparts, it was financially secure from the beginning of its history. It was modelled on a

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁰ J. Brown, *Poverty is Not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 168.

⁴¹ *Church News*, 1892 p. 675.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 675.

⁴³ J. Brown, *Poverty is Not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972) p. 168.

successful establishment in Victoria and was conducted by the same religious order, namely the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The genesis of its success also lay in the fact that it was well publicised before operations began, and considerable effort was expended in building links with the community. The need to recruit penitents caused concern from time to time, but was never a serious problem. This was partly because the only pre-condition to entry was that girls were not expected to be pregnant when they entered the Home. The admission policy was flexible and no time limit was imposed upon those who were content to remain there indefinitely.

Girls were taken from The Lock, the New Town Charitable Institution Lying-in Home, the police, from parents or on request from the girl herself. Their age range between 1893 and 1900 was 12 to 39 years with the majority being under 20 years.⁴⁴

The Magdalen Home opened at a time of crippling depression in Tasmania. Conditions created by the depression would have encouraged penitents to enter the Home for shelter. Once admitted, the all-embracing nature of the institution, both spiritually and physically enticed many to make it their permanent home and refuge. The motherly kindness of the nuns was a significant factor for girls who were content to stay on. Those who left also benefited from the network of friends the Sisters developed in the community, some of whom took in girls for service when they were ready to leave. A cooperative relationship was established with the Neglected Children's Department from the turn of the century, which meant that Children of the State were placed at Magdalen Home with the utmost confidence. The institution has arguably been Tasmania's largest private charitable institution, both in terms of the bequest from which it originated, its physical size, number of inmates and endurance over time.

In addition to exploring the origins of Magdalen Home, and the experiences of Children of the State who were placed there, the remarkable financial viability of the institution will be explained, as far as available resources permit. At its peak Magdalen Home housed approximately 200 girls and Sisters with virtually no Government assistance. Original material has been provided by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Austin's Ferry, Tasmania, and by the Department of Community Services, Tasmania. The Sisters have contributed their Convent Annals and some financial records. It was decided to limit the research to written and taped material. The Department of Community

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Services made available their Ward of State Registers and relevant personal and departmental files.

Chapter 1: Benefactor

"A man simple and upright and fearing God" Job XI 3 ¹

The establishment of the Magdalen Home in Hobart was made possible by the bequest of a wealthy but now obscure Catholic priest, who died in Melbourne on 7th March 1883, aged 68 years.² He was Father William John Dunne, who had come to Australia as a young Irish priest filled with missionary zeal. Dunne was born in the parish of Ballycallan,³ County Kilkenny in 1814, and had commenced his education studying classics at Burrell's Hall. He then entered St Kyran's College Kilkenny, where he spent the next three years. Subsequently, he was inspired by Archbishop Polding of Sydney, who had visited Kilkenny on a recruitment drive, seeking young priests who would "volunteer for the foreign mission".⁴ Dunne agreed to undertake preparation for the Sydney Mission.⁵ The fact that Polding was an English Benedictine⁶ probably influenced Dunne's next move to the College of the Immaculate Conception in Ratcliffe, Leicestershire, for another two year's study, after which he proceeded to Sydney in 1843.

Dunne was ordained by Archbishop Polding soon after his arrival. Initially, he was attached to St Mary's Cathedral, and then spent two years in charge of the mission at Windsor.⁷ He may have stayed on there, but for the arrival in Sydney of Bishop Willson, for the consecration of Bishop Murphy of Adelaide.⁸ Bishop Willson had been appointed to Hobart in May 1844,⁹ and had requested that Archbishop Polding send some youthful priests to assist him.¹⁰ Polding himself had visited the island in 1835. At Richmond he had celebrated Mass at John Cassidy's estate of "Woodburn",¹¹ and is reputed to have left plans of an English country church. These were soon acted upon by local Catholics. John Cassidy donated the land, and with the aid of many subscriptions and £500 from the Government, the church was opened by the end of 1837.

¹ Inscription on Father Dunne's gravestone, St Patrick's Church, Colebrook.

² *Tasmanian Mail*, 10th March 1883, quoted *Mercury*, 22nd January 1937.

³ *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

⁴ *Tasmanian Mail*, 10th March 1883, quoted *Mercury*, 22nd January 1937.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ P. O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*. NSW Uni Press 1987, p. 43.

⁷ *Tasmanian Mail*, 10th March 1883, quoted *Mercury*, 22nd January 1937.

⁸ *Catholic Standard* 2.4.1883, p. 50.

⁹ L. Robson, *A History of Tasmania* Volume 1 Oxford 1983 p.409.

¹⁰ *Tasmanian Mail*, 10th March 1883, quoted *Mercury*, 22nd January 1937.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

As a result, Polding would have been familiar with the situation faced by Bishop Willson, and therefore decided that Dunne should accompany him back to Hobart. Dunne accordingly took up his position at the Richmond mission in 1845.¹² "Willson saw to it that William Dunne, 'a young clergyman of the highest character' was paid £200 from the colonial fund, with forage for one horse and £30 house rent".¹³ Father Dunne was the third priest to be appointed to Richmond, following Ambrose Cotham and Thomas Butler.¹⁴ He was to remain there for 21 years.

Initially, the bulk of Father Dunne's work would have been with the convicts in the district, both at the gaol and in the convict gangs. As part of his contract with the Government, religious services were also required at the monthly musters for pass holders.¹⁵ During his Richmond years, Dunne's direct contact with convicts, as well as Bishop Willson's influence, would have helped to develop his concern for the under-privileged, which was to mark the rest of his career. During Dunne's time in the Richmond area, the Catholic population increased rapidly, and by 1850 there were 1574 Roman Catholics, although only 200 were either willing or able to attend Mass regularly.¹⁶ As the boundary of the mission extended to that of the Launceston mission area, "constant and laborious travelling was required."¹⁷ Father Dunne was to endear himself to the residents of the Richmond district for his pastoral care and willingness to undertake arduous travel in the course of his duties. In the formal Address given when he left the area, he was particularly thanked:

For all your attention to ourselves and children, your visits to the sick and dying, in all states of the weather, by day or night, whether in the immediate locality of Richmond, or many miles therefrom in the distant bush, journeying on dangerous roads to do so; for your wise counsel to us and for all your charitable works, we feel we owe a deep debt of gratitude.¹⁸

Many of Father Dunne's parishioners had already shown their gratitude in material form. The most significant donor, and leader of the local Catholic

¹² *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

¹³ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania, The Country Parishes*, (Tasmania 1977), p. 12.

¹⁴ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania, The Country Parishes*, (Tasmania 1977), p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13 and W.T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Tasmania 1970), p. 25.

¹⁶ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania, The Country Parishes*, (Tasmania 1977), p. 5.

¹⁷ *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

¹⁸ *Mercury*, 23rd October 1866.

community at Richmond was the aforesaid John Cassidy. He had been in the colony since 1810, and had prospered as a licensee at Richmond,¹⁹ as a result of which he had purchased Gilbert Robertson's property.²⁰ By the time of his death at 'Woodburn' in 1851,²¹ he had donated land for the church, convent, and presbytery buildings at Richmond.²² The Cassidy family fortunes, however, declined severely in the late fifties, and John's sons sold 'Woodburn' in an attempt to pay enormous debts. Father Dunne took up a subscription on their behalf.²³ It is possible that he persuaded the Catholic Church to purchase 'Woodburn' as a means of assisting the struggling Cassidy family, or even bought it himself.²⁴ When the Presentation Sisters arrived in Tasmania in 1866, Father Dunne accommodated them "at his Woodburn estate" until their convent was built.²⁵ He resided at 'Woodburn' at that time, and the estate was later described as "a great resort for his brother priests."²⁶

During his two decades serving the Richmond area, Dunne's name became linked with fund-raising and the establishment of church buildings. In the Richmond parish he proved to be adept in encouraging donations and bequests from both Catholic and Protestant supporters. For instance, "Most of the leading families residing in the neighbourhood, both Catholic and Protestant"²⁷ were present when St Patrick's, Jerusalem was opened by Bishop Willson in January 1857. £190 was raised at the collection, and Lieutenant Charles Eardley-Wilmot²⁸ proposed a toast at the luncheon afterwards to "Father Dunne, through whose indefatigable zeal and exertions they had been enabled that day to celebrate the completion of the sacred edifice." In reply Father Dunne was modest, claiming "He had only done his duty, and the thanks were merited by those Protestants, as well as Catholics, who had by their subscriptions so nobly assisted in the good work."²⁹ At Jerusalem, Mr McGuire

¹⁹ Wayn Index, A. O. T. *Hobart Town Advertiser*, 10th August 1841.

²⁰ J. Woodberry, *Historic Richmond (Tas) Sketchbook*, Rigby Ltd. 1977, p. 50.

²¹ J. H. Cullen, cited in Jones E. *Richmond-A Crossing Place*.

²² *Tasmanian Mail*, 10th March 1883, Wayn Index *Chronicle*, 4th July 1851.

²³ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Tasmania, The Country Parishes*, (Tasmania 1977), pp. 18-19.

²⁴ Information from W. T. Southerwood.

²⁵ P. Bolger, "W. J. Dunne" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, p. 118-119.

²⁶ *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

²⁷ *Hobart Town Advertiser*, 23rd January 1857.

²⁸ Lieutenant Charles Eardley-Wilmot was a son of Lt-Governor Sir J. E. Eardley-Wilmot Robson, L. A *History of Tasmania*, Volume 1, p. 434. Sir J. E. Eardley-Wilmot's "three youngest sons, Augustus Hillier, Robert Charles Chester, and Charles Octavius, went with him to Van Diemen's Land," Roe, M. "Eardley-Wilmot, Sir John Eardley" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 1, p. 346.

²⁹ *Tasmanian Mail* 10th March 1883.

bequeathed his property to the Church for charitable purposes.³⁰ Father Dunne's astuteness in such business matters as bequests was put bluntly in the report of his funeral oration in *Catholic Standard*. "The property belonging to the Jerusalem Mission there and in this city, was also secured for the church by him."³¹

Dunne's speech at the opening of St. Patrick's Church went on to confirm his conception of a priest's duty, "especially in a new land, to do something in the way of church building, school establishing or some other pious work, to show his zeal and his good intentions." This was to prove something of an understatement since Dunne is "reputedly responsible for the building and improvement of seven country churches including those at Richmond, Sorell, Brighton, and Jerusalem."³² Bishop Willson is alleged to have called him "the angel of the seven churches."³³

In October 1866 the incoming Bishop Murphy appointed Dunne to be "the first Archdeacon of the Diocese", and in the same year, Vicar General, following the death of Father William Hall.³⁴ The latter appointment necessitated his move to Hobart and attachment to St Josephs Church. As a measure of the esteem in which he was held in Richmond, a formal Address was given on the eve of his departure, and printed in the *Mercury*.³⁵ It "regretted the severance of the close tie" while offering congratulations "upon your preferment to so exalted an office." Father Dunne was thanked for his church building and for his pastoral care. Materially, he was thanked with "a gold watch, silk soutane, Fariola, and Beretta."³⁶ A large number of Protestants joined in the Address, which was signed by over two hundred heads of households.

The move to the city was not Father Dunne's choice but he declared in his reply to the Address "I willingly bow to the will of my Superior." He left the district able to tell his many friends and parishioners that "during my residence among you, over £4500 have been expended upon a Presbytery, School and ecclesiastical buildings." Clearly Father Dunne was a man who liked to see return for his efforts in the form of substantial buildings. He closed his remarks

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² P. Bolger, "William John Dunne" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, p. 118-119.

³³ *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Mercury*, 23rd October 1886.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

expressing the "greatest satisfaction" that "many esteemed friends" who were not Roman Catholics had participated.³⁷ Lt. Charles Eardley-Wilmot had remarked in 1859 on the occasion of the opening of the enlarged and redecorated St John's Church at Richmond, that the district was "remarkably free from ... little asperities which sometimes exist between members of different denominations."³⁸ This harmony was undoubtedly due to a considerable effort on the part of Father Dunne.

Once in the city Father Dunne became immersed in administrative and charitable work as well as his pastoral duties as a priest attached to St Josephs. He served on the Council of Education for nearly sixteen years.³⁹ As Superintendent of St Luke's Free School "he was energetic in preserving its maintenance and efficiency."⁴⁰ In the late sixties and early seventies, harmony between Catholic and public educators has been largely attributed to the influence of Father Dunne.⁴¹ Nevertheless as one of the "guardians of the New Town Orphan School" he was vigilant in enhancing and protecting "the religion of the Catholic children".⁴² His contribution to St Joseph's Orphanage was both personal and financial. It was remarked at his funeral oration that "his genial disposition [made] him a great favourite with the little ones."⁴³ Dunne's work at St Joseph's also served to make him aware of the gap in institutional services for older girls in need of care and protection.

Father Dunne's diverse talents were utilised in his position as Vicar General. In 1867, he became the inaugural editor of the *Catholic Standard*.⁴⁴ As the Bishop's deputy, he became embroiled in the campaign against the abolition of State Aid to the Churches,⁴⁵ and with persistence, secured Governor Du Cane's patronage of the fund-raising Bazaar for the Sisters of Charity. Repeatedly, he hassled the municipal authorities to improve roads in the vicinity of St. Mary's Cathedral and the Catholic Burial Ground.⁴⁶ Dunne was industrious and generally popular. After a European holiday in 1872, he was welcomed back "at a public Soiree in the Town Hall."⁴⁷

³⁷ Address to the Very Rev W J Dunne *Mercury* 23rd October 1866.

³⁸ *Hobart Town Daily Mercury*, 15th February 1859.

³⁹ *Mercury*, 13th December 1882.

⁴⁰ *Catholic Standard* 2nd April 1883, p. 50.

⁴¹ P. Bolger, "William John Dunne" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, p. 118-119.

⁴² *Catholic Standard*, April 1883.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Tasmania 1970), p. 46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ *Catholic Standard*, April 1883.

Nevertheless, his career was not devoid of controversy. As a senior priest, in the 1850's, he had been involved in factional fighting among the clergy, which resulted in divided loyalty for the then Vicar General William Hall.⁴⁸ This situation, together with Hall's poor health accounted for Bishop Willson's failure to recommend him as his successor.⁴⁹ Later on, Dunne showed that he could be stubborn as well as persistent. The "papal flag controversy" was a result of his insistence on flying the flag to celebrate Bishop Murphy's return from Vatican Council 1 in 1871. Both the Colonial Secretary and Dr. Swarbreck Hall, the layman in charge of the Bishop's reception committee, criticised Dunne's action which they feared would provoke a civil disturbance and increase disunity between the laity and the clergy.⁵⁰ In the late seventies, with the Catholic community still reeling from the financial burden of rebuilding St.Mary's Cathedral, Dr. Swarbreck Hall was again critical of the Church hierarchy. Implying criticism of Murphy and Dunne, he deplored "mismanagement owing to exclusion of laymen of business habits from any control over the expenditure of the funds raised by the public."⁵¹

Catholic angst reached boiling point with the Chiniquy lectures and near riots in 1879. Dunne supported Bishop Murphy in ameliorating sectarian feeling which was stirred at that time. In the same year, Dunne was bitterly attacked in a pamphlet by Thomas Sheehy, a prominent solicitor whose brother Joseph was the first Tasmanian born priest.⁵² Sheehy accused Dunne of using his authority "to persecute priests, heartlessly domineering over them with a hand of iron." Eleven priests wrote in defence of Dunne and one hundred leading laymen signed a statement of defence.⁵³ Nevertheless, Bishop Murphy may have been influenced to some extent by the Sheehy clique in somewhat restraining Dunne's sphere of influence.⁵⁴ This is not possible to verify, as Bishop Murphy destroyed "all his private and most of his ecclesiastical papers just before he died."⁵⁵

There was certainly a note of bitter regret in Dunne's reply to a Presentation at the Town Hall, which was made to him on the eve of his departure from Tasmania for Coburg, Victoria. Whilst possibly anticipating with

⁴⁸ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Tasmania 1970), p. 41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵² P. Bolger, *Hobart Town*, (Canberra 1973), p. 167.

⁵³ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Tasmania 1970), pp. 56-57.

⁵⁴ Information from W. T. Southerwood.

⁵⁵ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Tasmania 1970), p. 50.



Father Dunne's Grave at St. Patrick's Church, Colebrook (Jerusalem).

some pleasure the prospect of again working with "convicts" at the Pentridge Stockade, Dunne added that the position "will afford a wider field and ampler scope for my labours than was latterly allotted to me here."⁵⁶ This does seem to indicate that his responsibilities had been curtailed in Tasmania. The Presentation itself was both a solemn and festive occasion. Members of Parliament, Aldermen, and the clergy were present, as well as prominent laymen such as Henry Hunter. As Chairman, Hon. H. Butler, M.H.A. stressed Father Dunne's co-operation as a member of the Council of Education, and in his speech, Henry Hunter drew attention to the friends of "every denomination" who were present. Certainly their presence signified the respect Father Dunne held for and was held in, by the Protestant community. Following tea, the gathering was entertained by the Artillery band led by Herr Schott.⁵⁷

Father Dunne's time in Victoria was to be short-lived. His health declined almost immediately, and he died there three months later. Requiem Mass for his soul was conducted at St. Paul's Church Coburg on 10th March 1883, with the bishops from Melbourne, Hobart, Ballarat and Adelaide attending as well as "other leading members of the clergy". The long funeral cortege made its way to the Mortuary Chapel at the Melbourne Cemetery. Bishop Murphy was presumably privy to Father Dunne's will at that stage, as the Melbourne press reported the following day that the remains "will remain there pending removal to Tasmania, the deceased having, it is stated, expressed a wish to be buried at Jerusalem, Hobart."⁵⁸ The body was subsequently shipped to Hobart on the *Southern Cross*, arriving in Hobart on the fourteenth. St Joseph's was so crowded for the funeral service that evening that many could not fit inside.⁵⁹ Next day the body was taken by procession to Jerusalem for burial.⁶⁰ These grand occasions matched Father Dunne's prominence and popularity in the Tasmanian community.

⁵⁶ *Mercury*, 13th December 1882.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Age*, 11th March 1883.

⁵⁹ *Mercury*, 15th March 1883.

⁶⁰ *Catholic Standard*, 2nd April 1883, p. 51.

Chapter 2: Site

***"and I declare that such Reformatory shall be situated within the city of Hobart or within a radius of five miles thereof."*¹**

Father Dunne's will, made on 1st August 1881 with solicitors Roberts, Allport and Allport, gave to his Executors "all lands, hereditaments and real estate which may belong to me at the time of my decease or over which I may have any disposing power."² No property was willed as such and none was declared for probate purposes. Instead, Father Dunne empowered his executors "to stand seized of my said real estate upon trust to sell the same either by public auction or private contract in such lots and parcels and subject to such special or other conditions as my trustees may think fit."³

Although the will indicates that a significant percentage of Father Dunne's fortune was in real estate, the source of his wealth remains unknown. His annual salary of £200 from the Convict Department was payable in a reduced amount for life. When probate was determined six weeks after his death, "Pension due from the Colonial Government for period from 1st January to 7th March 1883" was listed as £36-13-4 ⁴ This would amount to an annual pension of £146-13-4 at a time when the annual salary of an Assistant House Surgeon at the General Hospital was £200, that of a Head Nurse £50, or an Assistant cook at the Hospital £20-16-0!⁵ Judiciously invested, this handsome salary and pension may have been the basis of his wealth by the time he died. It is also likely that he inherited money from his family in Ireland.⁶ By purchase or gift he may have accumulated land in the Richmond/Jerusalem area during his long residency there. It is equally likely that he may have held property in the Hobart area. No property is listed in his name in the Richmond/Jerusalem area on the Valuation Roll for 1879,⁷ but a considerable amount of property appears in the name of the Roman Catholic Church. Since probate was only payable on property in the name of the deceased, it is likely that Father Dunne had transferred his property into the name of the Church, but that he held "disposing power" over it, as mentioned in his will. This seems to be the most plausible explanation for no property being listed in the inventory supplied by

¹ Probate Registry 9A/594/2669.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Statistics of the Colony of Tasmania 1883 - Blue Book for the Year.*

⁶ Information from W. T. Southerwood.

⁷ *Hobart Town Gazette Extraordinary*, 1st January 1879.

✓ And I declare that the residue of all moneys arising from my residuary estate shall be invested by my Trustees in manner aforesaid and the income arising therefrom and all accumulations thereof shall be invested and reinvested for a period not exceeding thirty one years from my death or for such shorter period as my Trustees may in the exercise of their discretion deem sufficient to form such an amount as will enable my Trustees to carry out the trusts next hereinafter declared. And I declare that my Trustees shall stand possessed of the last mentioned amount and the investments and securities representing the same and the income thereof Upon trust for the establishment and maintenance or carrying on of a Reformatory for Stullen Females. And I declare that such Reformatory shall be situated within the City of Hobart or within a radius of five miles thereof. but I declare that in all

I am Dear
Percy Pybus

(2)

William J. Dunne

the Executors to the Supreme Court on 20nd April 1883.⁸ Nothing is listed under "Property which the Testat [sic] had power to appoint as he thought fit" although "Mortgages and Interest due at the death" amounted to £3352-19-5 indicating a substantial amount of invested capital.⁹

The principal bequests made in the will were for "works of religion". The charitable bequests were "£500 or such less sum as may be required to erect the South-East Wing of Saint Joseph's Orphanage, in accordance with the plans and specifications prepared by Mr Henry Hunter of Hobart", £500 to be invested to support the Roman Catholic clergyman of St John's Church Richmond, £1000 to Saint Ignatius College Sydney "for the establishment of a Bourse in the said Institution eligible only for Natives of Tasmania", and £1000 to establish "The Dunne Scholarship" in Saint John's College Sydney. A brother and two sisters were to receive £200 each, and two nieces £100 each. Apart from his library, which he left to the Bishop of Hobart for diocesan use, and payment for "an appropriate monument or gravestone", £100 was left "to dole out to the poor of Hobart". The residue of the estate, which Dunne knew would be the bulk of it, was to be "invested and re-invested for a period not exceeding twenty-one years" from his death until sufficient "for the establishment and maintenance or carrying on of a Reformatory for Fallen Females". It was to be "within the City of Hobart or within a radius of five miles thereof."¹⁰

The trustees of the will were Garrett Patrick Kenny, a long time accountant with the Union Bank of Hobart, and the Venerable James Hogan of Westbury, Archdeacon.¹¹ Father Philip Hennebry would become a trustee following the death of Kenny on 14th October 1887.¹² Archdeacon Hogan, 10 years younger than Father Dunne, was a predictable choice as an executor for his will. Both were Irishmen from County Kilkenny, volunteers for the foreign mission, pioneering priests in rural Tasmania, and ardent church builders. Archdeacon Hogan had been the first resident priest at Westbury since 1850. By the time of his death on 7th September 1899, aged 74 years, the Magdalen Home would be physically and financially well established.¹³

⁸ Probate Registry 9A/ 594/2669.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Mercury*, 16th 1887, Obituary G P Kenny.

¹³ *Examiner*, 8th September 1899.

It took time to sell Father Dunne's real estate to meet the bequests and time to find an appropriate site for the proposed Reformatory. The latter was achieved on 23rd November 1886, when Archdeacon Hogan and Garrett Kenny bought a 28 acre farm at Sandy Bay from Richard Backhouse, with a deposit of £650.¹¹ This land had originally been granted to James Sharp in 1835¹², who was also granted a larger ninety one acre allotment adjacent to it in 1837.¹³ By 1863 the land had passed to James' son Robert, and was being leased to Frederick Lipscombe, nurseryman of Sandy Bay.¹⁴ The holding which the executors purchased for the Magdalen Home was known as "Cropper's Farm" and was apparently worked separately from Robert's larger adjacent holding.¹⁵ Richard Backhouse, gardener, had bought the twenty eight acres from Sharp in January 1865, including access to the Lipscombe Rivulet.¹⁶

Following the death of Garrett Kenny on 14th October 1887,¹⁸ the title remained in Archdeacon Hogan's name until transferred to that of Reverend Philip Hennebry, together with a right of way to the Rivulet.¹⁹ A token 5/- payment was paid.²⁰ The selection of Father Hennebry to replace the deceased Garrett Kenny as co-executor of Dunne's estate was astute. Unlike Hogan at Westbury, Hennebry was based locally at St Joseph's Church. His credentials were similar to Hogan's and included County Kilkenny as his birthplace and an Irish education for the priesthood followed by migration and ordination for the Hobart diocese in 1866. He too became a church builder (and reputedly financier of Sacred Heart New Town). He was closely involved in works of charity being "chief governor and chaplain" at St Joseph's Orphanage since its inception. It seems likely that action to implement Father Dunne's will regarding a Magdalen Home was precipitated by the appointment of the more youthful and locally based Father Hennebry. Aged fifty-two years when Magdalen Home opened in 1893, he was to continue his close association with the establishment for the rest of his long working life. He died on 25th January 1921, aged eighty.²¹

¹¹ Transfer No. 6912 18th November 1886, Certificate of Title Vol. IV Folio 54.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ A & F Rowntree, *Early Settlement of Sandy Bay* (Hobart 1959) p. 43.

¹⁶ Certificate of Title Vol. IV Folio 54.

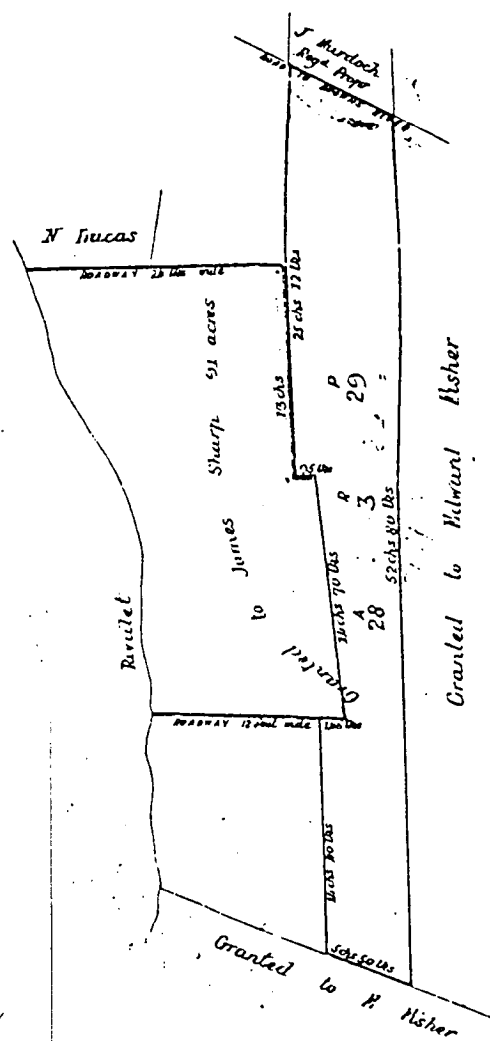
¹⁸ *Mercury* 15.10.1887 Death Notice.

¹⁹ Information from Misses E and D Pearce. The present Dresden Rd was formerly the access for Magdalen Home cattle to Lipscombe Creek.

²⁰ Transfer No 9113, Certificate of Title Registered Vol IV Folio 54.

²¹ Father Hennebry's Obituary, Hobart Good Shepherd Convent Annals.

8/11/67



The Order No 11 was produced the 8th day of February 1898 at 12.25 pm from the Venerable James Hoggan and the Reverend Philip Hennessey to Annie Downing. The Venerable James Hoggan and the Reverend Philip Hennessey of the above land, together with other land(s) for £0.5.0 together with a right of carriage way.

19. *Piculet*



The land purchased was described as "a splendid site upon the elevated land west of the Sandy Bay Rd close to the three mile stone from Hobart and commands an uninterrupted view over the river north and south."²² The purchase price was £1600. Geographically, Mt Nelson had restricted "the Sandy Bay farms to the half-mile wide strip of land between the river and approximately the 300 foot contour."²³ The acreage on which Magdalen Home was to be built was separated from the Lipscombe farm by a hawthorn hedge, remnants of which are still visible²⁴. With subsequent additions, the land was to prove adequate for virtual self sufficiency until the 1960's.

The executors selected a site away from the city and its associated vice and temptations. Secluded, and surrounded by natural beauty, it was anticipated that such an environment would have a purifying effect upon the inmates. It would also be a spiritually nurturing place for the nuns, and would help to cleanse sins and bring everyone there closer to God. Functionally, country air and farm produce would be healthy and hopefully the past life could be forgotten.

Here, Nature herself on this beautiful and unrivalled site will recall to the penitent soul the grandeur and bounty of the Great Creator, and secluded in this blessed retreat from the allurements and temptations of the outer world, she will have leisure and opportunity to think of the past only to deplore her mis-spent time, to use the present in doing penance, and making all possible amends both to God and to society, prepare for that great future when a merciful Judge may welcome her.²⁷

It was not possible to start building the Institution and rebuilding lives immediately. In order that the land purchased not remain idle, it was leased to James Joseph, a gardener, of Sandy Bay in February 1889 for a three year term. Eighty pounds rent was payable annually in half yearly instalments,²⁸ the rent apparently derived from the Valuation Roll.²⁹ During the period of the lease further action was instigated, namely, the invitation to a religious order to

²² "The Magdalen Home and Convent" *Mercury*, 15th August 1892.

²³ R. J. Solomon, *The Evolution of an Australian Capital*, Angus and Robertson 1976, pp. 115-117.

²⁴ Information from Misses E and D Pearce.

²⁷ *Catholic Standard*, September 1892, p. 135.

²⁸ Certificate of Title Vol 55 Folio 91.

²⁹ *Hobart Town Gazette Extraordinary*, 1st January, 1879. The 26 acre property of Richard Backhouse is assessed as having a rateable value of £80.

conduct the proposed Magdalen Home, and the employment of an architect. The Catholic press took on the important task of promoting the new venture.

Chapter 3: Establishment

***'A Magdalen Asylum for the reform and redemption of the fallen daughters of Eve'*¹**

In 1891, Archdeacon Hogan applied to the Mother M. Visitation Kennedy, Provincial Superior, based at Abbotsford Convent, and to Archbishop Carr of Melbourne for a Foundation of Good Shepherd Sisters to establish themselves in Hobart and to conduct the proposed Magdalen Home.² The Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, generally known as Sisters of the Good Shepherd³ originated in mid-seventeenth century France, when Madelaine Lamy began rescue work with prostitutes in Caen, Normandy.⁴ She sought assistance from (St) John Eudes, a priest who combined missionary zeal with intellectual endeavour.⁵ He organised the women into a religious congregation and after Papal approval in 1666 the Order spread rapidly in Normandy, managing to survive dispersal during the French Revolution.⁶

Rose-Virginie Pelletier, (1796 - 1868)⁷ who entered the Community at the Tours Refuge in 1814, was to contribute much vigour⁸ to the Order. Taking the religious name of Sister Maria Euphrasia, by 1829 she had established the Convent at Angers where she became Superior in 1831.⁹ St. John Eudes had not permitted penitents among the religious,¹⁰ so Sister M. Euphrasia established the religious community of the Sisters Magdalen, for inmates who wished to stay and "devote themselves to a life of prayer and penance."¹¹ Upon application to Pope Gregory XVI in 1835, existing convents were tied within a unified administration centred upon Angers. The name was simplified

¹ *Catholic Standard*, April 1883, p. 51.

² Extract from *Abbotsford Convent Annals*, 10th April 1893, also recorded in *Hobart Convent Annals*.

³ M. Andreoli, "Good Shepherd, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, (New York 1967), p. 627.

⁴ *Morning Star*, 20th August 1892, p. 9.

⁵ P. McIcent, *Saint John Eudes*, (Glasgow 1964), p. 21.

⁶ M. Andreoli, "Good Shepherd, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the" *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, (New York 1967), p. 627.

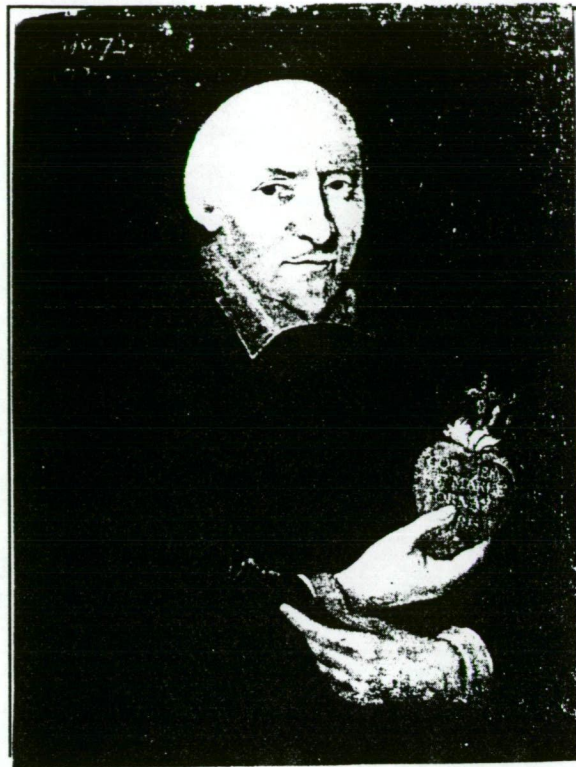
⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 627.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 60.

¹⁰ P. McIcent, *Saint John Eudes*, (Glasgow 1964), p. 15.

¹¹ M. Andreoli, "Good Shepherd, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the" *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, (New York 1967), p. 627.



St. John Eudes, portrait painted by J. Leblond in 1673



St. Maria Euphrasia Pelletier

to the "Congregation of the Good Shepherd", and with rapid growth there were almost 160 convents in Europe, Asia and Australasia by 1892.¹²

The Good Shepherd sisters first came to Australia in 1863 at the invitation of Melbourne's Archbishop Goold.¹³ Four sisters arrived, led by Sister Joseph Doyle, Foundress of the Good Shepherd Order in Australia. They commenced their work from a small cottage on seven acres on the Yarra at Abbotsford. They followed the accepted pattern for new foundations, and as a result it grew rapidly, by drawing on Church and local charitable support.¹⁴ Intensively worked fertile acres and a business-like laundry operation; set in place to generate income and provide occupation for inmates, meant that the initial debt of £4281-11-8 was almost cleared by 1865.¹⁵ Other Australasian foundations followed rapidly with Oakleigh in Melbourne (1883), Mt Magdala at Christchurch New Zealand (1886), and both Rosary Place Albert Park Melbourne and Hobart commencing operations in 1893.¹⁶

At the invitation of Archbishop Hogan, Mother Provincial (Kennedy) and Sister Mary of the Holy Infancy (Curtain) visited Hobart to inspect the site purchased,¹⁷ in January 1892. They approved the site, and probably conferred with the architect. Tenders for "the erection of a new Institution at Lower Sandy Bay" were advertised,¹⁸ on 11th June 1892, and the builder, David Williams, signed the contract on 28th June 1892.¹⁹ The contracted price for the initial building was £2893 with the brick and stone work sub-let to Cooper Bros.²⁰ The whole structure was to be completed by the following March.²¹ The *Catholic Standard* described the building from the plans as "somewhat plain in character, suitable for the purposes the building is intended for, Italian in style."²²

George Fagg was the architect selected for the project. He had arrived from London with his family in 1885, and had purchased the departing Henry Hunter's business. Like Hunter, Fagg was a devout churchman, though not a Roman Catholic. The business continued to attract ecclesiastical contracts,

¹² *Morning Star*, 20th August 1892, p. 9.

¹³ *Abbotsford Centenary* (Booklet), p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6.

¹⁵ *Morning Star*, 15th April 1893, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Abbotsford Centenary 1863 -1963*, (Melbourne 1963), p. 10.

¹⁷ *Abbotsford Convent Annals*, 25th January 1892.

¹⁸ *Mercury* 11th June 1892, p. 1, col. 6.

¹⁹ Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

²⁰ *Mercury*, 15th August 1892. Also cited in *Morning Star*, 20th August 1892, p. 13.

²¹ *Hobart Convent Annals*.

²² *Catholic Standard*, September 1892, p. 134.

including additional work on St Mary's and St David's Cathedrals.²³ Perhaps a generous price was negotiated as, "In religious and charitable organisations, both Mr and Mrs Fagg have always taken an active interest."²⁴ In the case of the Hobart Baptist Church, which opened in 1889, Fagg had been willing to adapt plans sent from England of the Stockport Baptist Church.²⁵ In a rather back-handed compliment the Launceston Catholic weekly, the *Morning Star* described the Magdalen Home thus:

It is simple, and if anything rather plain in its external appearance. Mr Fagg, the architect, embodied in his design the suggestions made to him by the Mother Provincial of the nuns, and studied not to erect a building of stately and striking proportions, but rather one in which is presented a pleasing external appearance, had still an excellent accommodation and a completeness in every detail ...²⁶

The foundation stone was duly laid by Father Hennebry on 14th August 1892, and the event was well publicised in the Catholic and lay press. The *Mercury* made it clear that the building under construction was merely the centre and right wing of a larger one planned.²⁷ Further funds from Father Dunne's estate were not yet available.²⁸ Perhaps with a somewhat parochial touch, the Launceston based *Morning Star* pointed out that the ceremony was "shorn of much of that external pomp with which it is fitting that the inauguration of such an important and meritorious work should be surrounded."²⁹ The low-key ceremony was attributed to the absence of the Archbishop, however, St Joseph's choir under the direction of Mr Mulcahy MHA performed, and Father Kelsh preached the sermon based on Mary Magdalene. He "dwelt at length on the solicitude of the Catholic Church for the welfare of fallen women." The usual coins and newspapers of the day were placed under the foundation stone and "despite a slight shower of rain, a procession consisting of the priests, choir and others, and headed by the cross bearer and acolytes marched round the foundations chanting the psalms, whilst the Rev. Father Hennebry sprinkled the walls already several feet high with holy water."³⁰ The buildings to be erected

²³ *Mercury*, 17th December 1897, Obituary, p. 2, col. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ L. F. Rowston, *One Hundred Years of Witness. A History of the Hobart Baptist Church*, (Hobart 1984), p. 14.

²⁶ *Morning Star*, 15th April 1893, p. 12.

²⁷ *Mercury*, 15th August 1892.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Morning Star*, 20th August 1892, p. 9.

³⁰ *Catholic Standard*, September 1892, p. 134.

were declared to be "dedicated to God under the patronage of St Canice", the patron saint of Father Dunne's native city.³¹

During the year before and after the laying of the foundation stone, the Catholic press was an important propaganda vehicle for the new Institution. The Abbotsford Convent upon which the Hobart establishment would be based was eulogised, thereby strengthening local motivation to support the Magdalen Home both morally and financially. In May 1891,³² the *Catholic Standard* reproduced an article on the Abbotsford Convent, from the Melbourne Catholic *Advocate*, giving "particulars of another excellent Order of Nuns, a branch of which is ... to be established on that charming site, secured for a Magdalen Home at Sandy Bay."³³ The article summarised a visit to Abbotsford by the Charities Commission Inspectors,³⁴ whom it declared "were astonished at the perfection of the system adopted by the nuns."³⁵ In her evidence to the Commission, the Reverend Mother at Abbotsford had extolled the virtues of institutional care. She claimed that younger children could be taught housework more easily than if they were boarded out and, despite the large size of the Home, "girls in most cases grew to be very fond of the nuns."³⁶ The Commissioners were also reported to have approved the boot and shoe factory and fine lace-making department, but were particularly astonished by the laundry, which was "conducted on the most approved method" and employing over one hundred inmates. They found that "heavy and complicated machinery was managed entirely by women inmates, under the supervision of skilled nuns, who had perfected themselves in the knowledge of the machinery up to the required standard. Even the steam engines were driven by the Sisters."³⁷

By July 1891, "Tasmanian Catholic Abroad", recorded his eye witness impression of Abbotsford.³⁸ He found that "great order prevails throughout the institution, and cleanliness is a marked feature of it".³⁹ The laundry was seen as a marvel - technically advanced, "yielding annually a profit of over £6000",⁴⁰ and run by women!

³¹ *Mercury*, 15th August 1892.

³² *Catholic Standard*, May 1891, p. 259.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ As the Abbotsford Convent received £1000 annually from the Victorian Government inspection by the Charities Commission was mandatory. *The Catholic Standard*, July 1891, p. 294.

³⁵ *Catholic Standard*, May 1891, p. 259.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "Our Melbourne Letter" *The Catholic Standard*, July 1891, p. 294.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Catholic Standard*, May 1891, p. 259.

extensive machinery of the most modern kind, purchased at great cost at our last Centennial Exhibition, is found in use, and managed, and even repaired by a Sister who has no small knowledge of it, combined with what would appear to be natural mechanical skill.⁴¹

The gentle and caring approach of the nuns toward inmates was emphasised. They gave "words of praise and encouragement to the workers" whilst "those of enfeebled health and tender constitution were given employment best adapted to them."⁴² Women such as these would be coming to establish the Hobart institution. The Catholic Press conveyed an impression of confidence, efficiency, modernity, and self reliance blended with humane care, in Good Shepherd establishments. This was conducive to gaining local support.

Readers were also encouraged to take pride in Catholic organisations as leaders in rescue work. "That our Catholic organisations greatly lessen crime and cut off the supply of inmates to our gaols, invalid depôts, etc., is apparent to the least observant."⁴³ A mild goad of the Protestants was implied as "Tasmanian Catholic Abroad" added "Let us hope it is so proportionately with all other religious denominations."⁴⁴ The Protestant managed Girl's Training School in Hobart was castigated as forcefully as the Abbotsford Convent was eulogised, thus fuelling sectarian attitudes. Its inadequacy for Catholic girls was put forward as a positive argument for the rapid establishment of the Magdalen Home. The August 1892 edition of the *Catholic Standard* accused this "Protestant Reformatory in Barrack Square"⁴⁵ of operating from a Government building and accepting Government money, whilst admitting Catholics but denying them access to a priest, and making them follow Protestant service.

All who are committed to the Institution by the Magistrates throughout the colony are supported by Government, a subsidy of £200 appearing on the estimates for that purpose; but Government has absolutely no voice in the management of the Institution ... Catholic girls must attend Protestant prayers and listen to Protestant religious teaching.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Catholic Standard*, July 1891, p.294.

⁴² *Catholic Standard*, July 1891, p. 294.

⁴³ *Catholic Standard*, July 1891, p. 295.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Catholic Standard*, August 1892, p. 120.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

A priest wrote to the government indignant that special permission from the Committee of Management was needed before he could see a particular girl. More with an eye to religious zeal than to the girl's welfare, the matter was finally resolved by her transfer to the Catholic Reformatory at Oakleigh, Victoria. The girl may not have shared the satisfaction of the adults concerned when the paper announced that she "was finally handed over to a Government official, and at last on board the steamer was free to thank God and those who had interested themselves in her welfare that she was done with the Barrack Square Reformatory."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the case was used to promote the necessity for the Church to have "a Reformatory of its own" soon to be established "thanks to the charitable provision made by the late Very Reverend Father Dunne."⁴⁸

Not all Protestant welfare institutions however, were as partisan as portrayed in the Catholic Press. In 1888 the Anglican Dean, Charles Dundas, had attempted to persuade the Management Committee of the Girl's Industrial School, to disallow visits by ministers of other denominations. He wrote to the Management Committee that: "No possible benefits can accrue to the children as it seems to me from such a mixture of religious instructions and I hope that the Committee will not permit them to be made the subject of such a doubtful if not positively cruel experiment".⁴⁹ The Committee perfunctorily informed him that "...by Act of Parliament the Industrial School is declared to be Unsectarian, and therefore they have no power to object to the visits of Ministers of other denominations."⁵⁰

In fact, the Protestant church press appears to have been equivocal as to the establishment of the Magdalen Home. The *Mercury* offered praise, the Baptist *Day Star* did not comment, and the Anglican *Church News* endorsed it. In reporting on the "Annual Meeting of friends and subscribers" of the House of Mercy at Bishopscourt on 24th October 1893, it was noted that Committee member Canon Banks Smith "commended the Roman Catholics for starting their home at Sandy Bay, and pointed out the advantages of their institution."⁵¹

The Anglicans knew well the disappointments and financial problems of rescue work. Of the nine inmates who had passed through their House of Mercy that year, one had resumed "the old life" and another "a closely allied

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

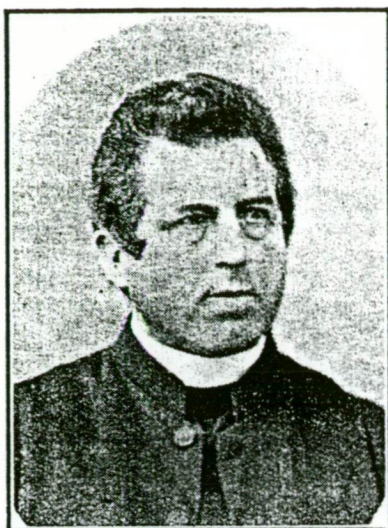
⁴⁹ Girl's Industrial School *Minutes of Management Committee*, 12th December 1888.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* and Harriet Salier to the Dean, 4th January 1889.

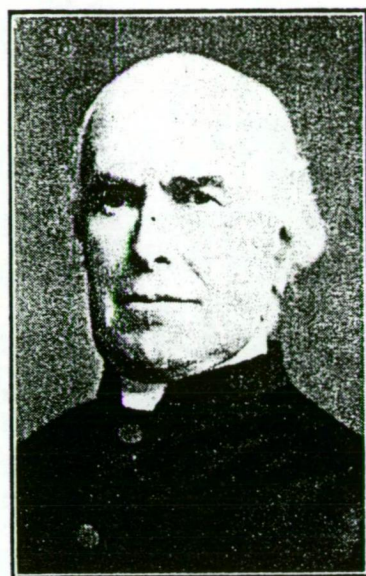
⁵¹ *Church News*, November 1893, p. 963.



Fr. Hennebry



The Very Rev. Wm. Dunne



The Very Rev. Archdeacon Hogan



THE LATE MOTHER MARY ALPHONSUS
(DOWLING)

First Prioress of the Convent of the Good Shepherd,
Sandy Bay.

sin" and two were at "the New Town Institution". Finances were "in anything but a flourishing condition" with a £30 debt.⁵² The "reluctance of mistresses to accept servants from us" was another difficulty. It is not surprising that the Anglicans welcomed colleagues into the field of rescue work. The annual report of Hope Cottage, a private venture which accommodated first-time single mothers and their babies,⁵³ found "The extreme youth of the girls dealt with is appalling."⁵⁴ After a couple of years, Hope Cottage had to be amalgamated with the Home of Mercy.⁵⁵

That "many found themselves on the bottom rung of the social ladder simply as victims of circumstances, and through very little fault of their own",⁵⁶ was a comment upon the severely depressed economy of Tasmania in the early 1890's. Since the Van Diemen's Land Bank crash of 1891, economic circumstances had worsened. The Baptist *Day Star* lamented, "Hard times have come. It is more and more difficult to get money. And the dark outlook is worse than anything experienced at present. No-one can see any prospect of prosperity returning ... few have escaped the loss of hard earned savings."⁵⁷ In November 1893 it noted "The distress continues among the unemployed ... benevolent institutions cannot continue to meet the demands made upon them". At that time the *Morning Star* claimed "400 men in Hobart want work" many being "in the most pitiable state of distress and in too many cases absolute want."⁵⁸ Single, abandoned or unskilled women with little family support were especially affected, although they were largely ignored by the Press. They found it harder to obtain work as domestic servants, and so were more likely to accept less salubrious situations involving a greater risk of seduction, and were more likely to resort to prostitution if unable to gain alternative employment. Likewise, there were fewer employment opportunities for women wishing to give up prostitution. Faced with such bleak prospects, the Magdalen Home might appear an acceptable, if not necessarily attractive, alternative to life on the streets. While unfortunate for many, the depression provided unexpected assistance to the establishment of the new institution.

The Sisters who had been despatched from Abbotsford to set up the new foundation made a discreet arrival in Hobart several days before the opening on 10th April. "Sister Mary of St Alphonsus (Dowling), Superioress,

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972), p. 168.

⁵⁴ *Church News*, 1st September 1893, p. 919.

⁵⁵ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972), p. 169.

⁵⁶ *Church News*, November 1893, pp. 962-3.

⁵⁷ *Day Star*, September 1892, p. 130.

⁵⁸ *Morning Star*, 4th Nov 1893, p. 11.

Sister Mary of our Lady of Good Counsel (Dakers), Mistress of Penitents, Sister Mary of St Dominick (White), Lay Sister, and Sister Mary of the Rosary (Harvey), Touriere Sister," were brought to Hobart by their Mother Provincial (Kennedy).⁵⁹ Father Hennebry welcomed them at the pier and took them to St Joseph's where mass was said "for the success of the foundation". After a meeting with Archbishop Murphy and several priests at the Cathedral,⁶⁰ Father Hennebry then took the nuns to their new but unfurnished convent. He presented them with the inscribed chalice which Father Dunne's fellow priests had presented to him when he left Tasmania and suggested that they reserve this "sacred treasure" for use "on Sundays and at Festivals".⁶¹ Church requisites were donated by the Abbotsford convent and St Josephs lent a tabernacle.

The arrival of Cardinal Moran on the "Orient" several days later caused a stir among Hobart's Catholic community. He was en route to Rome and the opening had been timed to coincide with his stop-over in Hobart. Citizens crowded on to the Dunn St. pier, and gave three cheers before a "carriage and four" took the Cardinal to the Archbishop's residence.⁶² In his opening speech that afternoon, the Cardinal equated charitable works such as Magdalen Home with "the true principle of Christian civilisation".⁶³ Keen to encourage Protestant support, he added that "in every true work of charity" in the colonies "he had found most strenuous co-operation on the part of his fellow Protestant citizens."⁶⁴ Again, the audience were reminded that "in other colonies similar retreats are doing excellent reformation work on the lines on which it is intended to carry on St Canice's" and though "conducted by Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the doors of the home are to be open to penitents of all creeds and all nations."⁶⁵ Eloquently, the Cardinal evoked sympathy for those women living in "degradation and misery," the crowd being moved to applaud as he declared that "no greater work of true charity could be inaugurated than that home for the outcast and homeless."⁶⁶ "Not perhaps, that they had sinned much themselves. Very often the world sinned against them."⁶⁷ The Cardinal encouraged those present to feel proud of their support for an institution "destined to be a great monument of Christian civilization in the colony of

⁵⁹ *Hobart Convent Annals*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Catholic Standard*, May 1893, p. 67.

⁶³ *Mercury*, 11th April 1893.

⁶⁴ *Catholic Standard*, May 1893, p. 68.

⁶⁵ *Mercury*, 11th April 1893.

⁶⁶ *Morning Star*, 15th April 1893, p. 12.

⁶⁷ *Mercury*, 11th April 1893.

Archdeacon Hogan & Father Hennebry

Beg to inform *Mr & Mrs Canfield*

that SAINT CANICE'S MAGDALEN HOME, Sandy Bay, to be conducted by Sisters of the Good Shepherd, from Abbotsford, Melbourne, will be solemnly opened by HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MORAN, on the afternoon of Monday, 10th instant, at 3.30 o'clock. His Excellency the Administrator of the Government and Lady Dobson will be present.

The property on which the Magdalen Home stands, and which includes an area of about twenty-eight acres, is conveniently and picturesquely situated, and was purchased a few years ago for £1,600. The structure itself, which is of a somewhat imposing appearance, has cost, taking into account water supply, etc., about £3,250. These amounts have been paid out of the estate most generously bequeathed by the late Very Rev. W. J. Dunne to the purposes of this great charity.

A Laundry and other outbuildings have yet to be erected.

In order to provide suitable Furniture for the new institution, as well as a little means to enable the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to commence and prosecute a work of true philanthropy within its walls, in behalf of the poor Magdalen of whatever creed, an appeal for funds will be made after the opening ceremony.

Archdeacon Hogan and Father Hennebry solicit the favour of your sympathy and of your presence on the auspicious occasion.

BARRACK SQUARE, HOBART,
4th April, 1893.

Invitation to the Opening of St. Canice's Magdalen Home.

Tasmania."⁶⁸ He congratulated the Sisters on their personal sacrifice to become "ministers of that charity". He also drew attention to the "benefits to society" when "poor unfortunates" compensated for their past by striving to "attain the very perfection of heroism in virtue."⁶⁹ Presumably he was referring to the Sisters Magdalen.

The Acting Governor Sir Lambert Dobson, Premier Henry Dobson and Dr E L Crowther then made adulatory speeches before Father Hilary O'Meara preached the sermon. O'Meara was the superior of a Congregation of Passionist Fathers, who had recently arrived in Tasmania and were briefly to take charge of the New Town/Glenorchy parish before moving on to New Zealand at the end of 1894.⁷⁰ Dignitaries and others signed the new Visitors Book.⁷¹ £150 was taken up at the collection,⁷² and the home was declared open to visitors. The building was complete, but sparsely furnished. Ninety by thirty nine feet deep, it was built to accommodate thirty sisters and penitents.⁷³ The first floor of the central block had a dormitory for the children, (called "children" whatever their age), individual rooms called "cells" for the nuns, and an Infirmary on the sunny northern end. Downstairs, a large Class Room, behind a small doctor's surgery and priest's sacristy, adjoined the chapel and refectory which abutted the hallway and stone staircase. The protruding northern end of the central front block contained a parlour, and behind it, the sister's own dining room. From the northern end of the central block a single-story wing housed the pantry and store which adjoined the large central kitchen with stairs to the produce storage area below (now the Church Archives). The scullery, bakery and oven were adjacent to the kitchen ⁷⁴. The laundry, packing and ironing rooms were still under construction, but were expected to be finished in two month's time.⁷⁵

When the inmates arrived, it was expected that they would come seeking shelter in a humble, penitent spirit, weighed down by "troublesome spiritual contagion for which a remedy was sought."⁷⁶ The Sisters, and religion would step in and become "a mother to the motherless, and [offer] a home of security, peace, and comfort to those who otherwise would be motherless and

⁶⁸ *Morning Star*, 15th April 1893, p. 13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ W. T. Southerwood, *Planting a Faith in Hobart*, (Hobart 1970), p. 103.

⁷¹ Visitors Book, Good Shepherd Convent, Austin's Ferry, Tasmania.

⁷² *Hobart Convent Annals*.

⁷³ Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document collection.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Hobart Convent Annals*.

⁷⁶ *Morning Star*, 15th April 1893, p. 13.

— 5th Canices' —
Hobart — Tasmania.

10th April 1893.

W. D. Dobson.

Administrator of the Govt of Tasmania.

+ Patrick A. Cardinal Moran —
Archdeacon of Sydney

Samuel McEachern Bishop of Hobart

Henry Dobson, Premier.

H. E. Lewis. Attorney General

Alfred Taylor Public Librarian

Edmund Buckley M.A.

Des Champs J. P. Hobart

10th April 1893. J. W. Sheehy.

G. J. Kelly

M. J. Weston

History of the Ann Convent, (Possession)

+ Patrick Delaney Bp. Larunda

homeless"⁷⁷ It was not anticipated at this stage, that in a few years any would come compulsorily to "do their time". It was expected, however, that the institution would benefit society, "freeing it from what would otherwise be a very serious contagion, spreading moral and spiritual disease among its citizens."⁷⁸ Articles on "the social evil" of prostitution were common in the Catholic press at that time.⁷⁹ The Municipal Council had been under pressure to stop the "dishonouring traffic", or at least in some way geographically confine "those women of shame and sorrow" plying "their degrading and infamous trade."⁸⁰ Above all, they were urged to "remove the scandal givers from under the eyes of the children".⁸¹ Members of the congregation on opening day probably hoped that Magdalen Home would reduce visible prostitution in the city and thus contribute to a more "civilized" society.

⁷⁷ *Catholic Standard*, May 1893, p. 68.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ "Blot Out the Stain" *Morning Star*, 11th March 1893, p. 10 and "The Social Evil" 25th March 1893, p. 9.

⁸⁰ *Morning Star*, 11th March 1893, p. 10.

⁸¹ *Morning Star*, 25th March 1893, p. 9.

Chapter 4: Consolidation

***"Order, arrangement, cleanliness, all admirable."*¹**

Within weeks, the first two penitents had arrived, the one voluntarily and the other sent from Launceston by Dean Beechinor who "desired that she should be called Fidelus".² Strong links with other Good Shepherd convents and especially with the mother house at Abbotsford, meant that personnel were transferable between convents according to need. Consequently, two additional nuns came from Abbotsford during the first year, bringing with them several inmates "to work in the kitchen and with the younger children".³ One was "a consecrated child", indicating that she had entered as a penitent but had decided to remain within the convent of her own volition.⁴ Mutual assistance between convents extended to financial and material aid as well as sharing human resources. It is not clear how much money Abbotsford loaned to Hobart in the early nineties, but receipts have survived showing that £200 was paid from Hobart in February 1898, and another £200 in March 1899 as a "second instalment of debt".⁵ As well, Abbotsford gave at least £300 towards the establishment of the Magdalen Laundry.⁶

The first laundry was designed by George Fagg and commissioned a month after the official opening.⁷ By August 1893 the laundry was almost completed, and was publicised by the *Morning Star* as "one of the finest laundry establishments in the Colony".⁸ The paper expressed the hope that with "sufficient patronage", it would make the refuge "practically self-supporting". In prophetic words it appealed to its readers: "Magdalen Refuges, like other institutions, cannot be kept going, unless they are generously supported especially in their critical stages".⁹ Anticipating a plentiful supply of free labour who needed occupation, the laundry was designed as a modern but largely manual operation. A long row of wooden wash troughs contrasted with "a large boiler [which] supplies a steam pipe and hot air service throughout so that while the clothes will be dried in the spacious wired drying ground in fine weather, the

¹ *Visitor's Book*, Convent of the Good Shepherd, St. Canices', Hobart. Entry by Devonport visitor, 1901.

² *Hobart Convent Annals*, 3rd May 1893.

³ *Ibid.*, 4th May 1893.

⁴ *Ibid.*

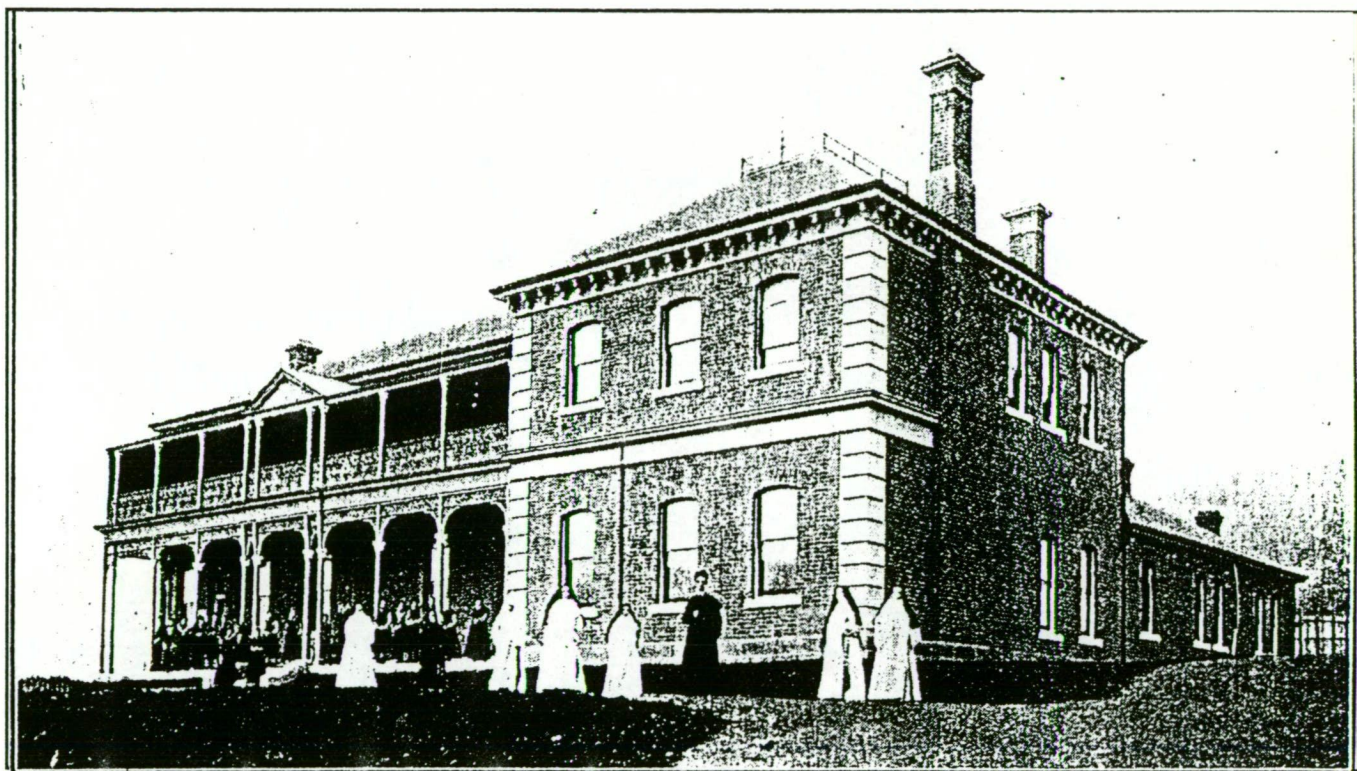
⁵ Financial Records, Mount St Canice.

⁶ *Catholic Standard*, November 1893, p. 173.

⁷ "New Laundry. Magdalen Home Sandy Bay", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

⁸ *Morning Star*, 19th August 1893, p. 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*



Magdalen Home as designed by George Fagg. Father Hennebry is pictured with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and penitents, circa 1893.

difficulty of drying may be entirely overcome in a wet week or in any case of urgency."¹⁰ The soap loft was located above the separate disinfecting room, (presumably for hospital laundry), with indoor drying closets near the boiler room. At a right angle to the laundry block, the starching room, ironing room with large tables, packing room and airing chamber were located. Efficiency was to be the keynote, and accordingly, a collection and delivery van service had been arranged for town customers. The machinery, which had been donated by Abbotsford convent was modern, however quaint "a rotary wringing machine, a mangle, goffering apparatus,¹¹ and heating stoves for the irons"¹² may now sound.

Despite publicity from the *Morning Star*, the laundry was inadequately patronised during its first year of operation, probably due to the fact that it was a new business opening at a time of severe depression. Unlike the Boys Training School and Industrial School, where "farms were overseen by hired personnel and generated considerable revenue",¹³ small scale institutional laundries were but marginally profitable. "The girls' institutions were always in financial difficulty, their income being generated through the laundry work undertaken by the staff and girls."¹⁴ At the end of 1893, nine penitents were in residence, at Magdalen Home, but for want of laundry work had to "largely turn their attention to gardening in the grounds."¹⁵ The *Catholic Standard* implored its readership to support the Magdalen Home by "sending them plenty of laundry work to do, for by that means they will mainly have to make both ends meet."¹⁶ The article stressed that whilst "charges are low", the laundry conditions were by no means substandard. "Ventilation and sanitation" were assured, and everything was kept "scrupulously clean". Efficient methods would be combined with careful hand washing, thereby "avoiding the wear, rot and tear peculiar to some of the other processes."¹⁷ The Catholic press promoted the Magdalen Home laundry service as efficient and cheap. It also implied that customers would have the additional satisfaction of knowing that they were aiding a charitable cause. By aiming to do especially good work at very competitive prices, the Magdalen Laundry might succeed as a profitable undertaking. It also became a means of fostering good relationships with the community.

¹⁰ *Catholic Standard*, November 1893, p. 173.

¹¹ Oxford Dictionary defines 'goffer' as "make wavy, crimp with hot irons (lace etc)".

¹² *Catholic Standard*, November 1893, p. 173.

¹³ V. Pearce, *The Lowest Common Denominator - Children, State and Society, Tasmania 1896-1920*, Thesis, (Hobart 1983), p. 49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Catholic Standard*, November 1893, p. 173.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

By the end of the first year of operation, available money from Father Dunne's estate had been exhausted. The land, buildings, fencing and clearing costs "including purchase of a right of way through the Queenborough Park Estate"¹⁸ had cost £5866. Crops were doing well and road-making and fencing were being completed by working bees,¹⁹ evidence that links with the charitable public were being forged. Many private charities had discovered that an important link with the public came through cultivating the interest and patronage of the Governor's wife.²⁰ As Magdalen Home sought to increase public awareness and patronage of the laundry and build goodwill, Father Hennebry engineered a visit to the convent by Tasmania's first Catholic Governor and his wife, Lord and Lady Gormanston, in January 1894.²¹ Special Feast days provided similar opportunities, by attracting the supportive lay public to Magdalen Home. In April 1894 - the anniversary of the opening - the Feast of the Good Shepherd was celebrated with "A large number of visitors from the city". Four foot high statues of the Good Shepherd and of St Joseph were blessed by Archbishop Delaney. These, as well as altar candlesticks, were "presented to the Convent by the men employed at Abbotsford".²² Genuinely grateful, the nuns paid great attention to showing appreciation and hospitality to their supporters in the religious and lay community. Understandably, this increased the likelihood that the support would continue. Spiritual support was vital too, and early pages of the *Annals* are filled with effusive praise for the ministrations of the Mother Provincial and for Father Hennebry, from whom the Sisters received spiritual and worldly guidance. "The zeal and devotedness of this good Father is indefatigable and he is to us a true Father and friend".²³

As the nuns received spiritual support from their mentors, so they provided it to the penitents, who continued to arrive throughout the 1890's. Most probably came voluntarily, although others came reluctantly, prompted by homelessness and destitution. Girls were also dispatched from government and voluntary confinement homes, or were delivered by the police.²⁴ Available information is not sufficient to determine how many were prostitutes, nor their religious affiliation. Pregnant girls were generally not admitted until after their confinement, and placement of their babies elsewhere. Whatever their motives, it seems that they found the solicitude of the Sisters, and the tranquility and

¹⁸ *Catholic Standard*, November 1893, p. 173.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ V. Pearce, *The Lowest Common Denominator - Children, State and Society, Tasmania 1896-1920*, Thesis, (Hobart 1983), *passim*.

²¹ "The Governor of Tasmania Visits", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 4th January 1894.

²² "Feast of the Good Shepherd", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 8th April 1894.

²³ "Feast of St. Philip", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1st May 1894.

²⁴ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972), p. 169.

regularity of institutional life, together with good food and accommodation, sufficiently gratifying to compensate for communal living and hard work. The girls were encouraged to be repentant, and generally aspired to please and emulate the sisters in the early years. Although no-one was prevented from leaving, loving care and a safe haven from the world proved to be strong inducements to stay. As a result, numbers within the establishment gradually grew, as admissions outnumbered departures. Admission figures have been derived from convent records,²⁵ but statistics of total numbers within and discharges in any particular year are not available. The gradual arrival of more sisters each year indicates increasing overall numbers. During 1894 there was a net gain of three extra sisters, a woman to help in the kitchen, and the two "children" sent from Abbotsford.

Year	Number of Admissions
1893	19
1894	16
1895	9
1896	10
1897	15
1898	17
1899	11

Extra mouths to feed necessitated farm development and efficient food production. By the end of 1894, a dairy was constructed adjacent to the kitchen. This single storey slate roofed addition is still visible, cost £141-11-0, and was blessed by Father Marsillas, a passionist father who had been at the convent to conduct a retreat. Mr. B.H. Edwards, civil engineer and architect, was responsible for the elaborate layout of the farm buildings. As the Good Shepherd Order was of European origin, and the acreages selected in Hobart and Melbourne were small but fertile, it is not surprising that the Hobart farm buildings were set out on the European model. Accordingly, the least possible land area was occupied by farm buildings, which were constructed around a large rectangular courtyard. Most of the livestock could be housed within the compound and its adjacent outdoor runs. Mr. Edwards had devised the water supply, by which an external pond uphill from the farmyard appears to have fed

²⁵ Information provided by Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Austin's Ferry, Tasmania.

a large underground tank in the central courtyard, which in turn filled the adjacent drinking trough. Various buildings for animals and for food storage surrounded the rectangular courtyard. Calf pens, "cow house", stable, pig sties, and roost indicate the types of animals that were kept, whilst the labels seed room, barn, potato store, manure pit, implements, carpenter's shop and cook house (for preparing food for animals) all indicate intensive agriculture and animal husbandry. Fences and gates around the farm buildings appear to have been relatively low, so that the area would not have been escape proof, though would have given a feeling of enclosure. Men seem to have been employed on the farm from its early years, as provision was made for their rooms adjacent to the carpenter's shop and machine room.²⁶ Farm buildings, and a cottage for workmen were constructed by William Smith early in 1895, though the cost of £491-11-4 had to be met by the Abbotsford convent, as Magdalen Home Hobart were unable to pay.²⁷

Early in 1896, attention turned to the needs of the convent chapel, with the purchase of a carved wooden altar made by W. P. Donnelly of Melbourne. The Mother Prioress of Oakleigh donated £20 to help offset the cost of £85.²⁸ The altar was painted by a local artist, known to the Sisters as Annie Hall.²⁹ She adorned the wooden panels with lilies and roses, respectively signifying purity and charity.³⁰ It is evident that the artist was Miss Anastasia Hall who, with her sister Victoria, gave painting and drawing classes from their home in St. Georges Terrace, Battery Point.³¹ Their father was Mr Leventhorpe Hall, a cartographer.³² The nuns were always most comfortable when dealing with competent but spiritually sympathetic outsiders, and in both respects, Anastasia's qualifications were impeccable. Her exhibited works³³ indicated a strong interest in depicting natural floral subjects, and her contributions to *The Austral Light*, a Catholic literary magazine, indicate that she was devout. In a metaphysical piece about flowers after fire she wrote: "Look at the thousands and thousands of white iris lilies covering the blackened tracks of the fire, as with freshly fallen snow, beautiful beyond description. Symbols of a Mother's

²⁶ "Plan of Farm Buildings relating to specification and contract signed 4th Jan. 1895", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

²⁷ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 17th May 1895.

²⁸ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1st February, 1896.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Information from Father Curmi, Dominic College, and Brother Peter Dezani. The altar was given to "Boystown" in 1952 when it was replaced by a white marble one in the church at Mt. St. Canice. It is no longer in use at Dominic College (previously Boystown), and the floral panels can not be traced.

³¹ Art Society of Tasmania, *1899 Catalogue*, p. 22 and inside back cover (advert.).

³² Tasmania Post Office Directory 18892-93, p. 299 and Tasmaniana Library catalogue.

³³ Hobart Juvenile and Industrial, 1883, International, Hobart, 1894-5. Art Society of Tasmania 1899.



The 1896 Altar from Magdalen Home, while in use at Boys' Town in the 1950's.



Statue of St. Joseph at Magdalen Home

spotless purity, and a Virgin's face, which will form a heavenly study for mankind until the end of time ... Flower faces have significance when read by the light of Faith."³⁴ The altar was in service by the end of May 1896, when Archbishop Murphy confirmed sixteen penitents. The service took place at the conclusion of a retreat, a pattern which continued for decades.

The following month saw the commencement of a massive building expansion programme at a cost of £1,700 Viscountess Gormanston laid the foundation stone "as if to the manor born",³⁵ with the aid of an ivory handled silver trowel,³⁶ for a new two storey southern wing, 105 feet long. Upstairs there would be "two 42 feet by 30 feet dormitories," above "a temporary chapel, refectory, class-room, library, pantry, reception-room, airing and furnace room."³⁷ George Fagg was engaged as the architect and issued extremely detailed instructions to builder William Smith. The single storey northern wing was to be raised to double storey, with all details matching the original work.³⁸ At that time, thirty-seven inmates were in residence at Magdalen Home, but were crowded into accommodation for thirty. The additions would create accommodation for a total of sixty. Father Dunne's estate and "some other bequests" meant that earlier buildings were now debt free, and a collection that day lifted the building fund for the additions by £109-11-3.³⁹ It appears that the laundry was flourishing by this time. Although Archbishop Murphy spoke of the symbolic significance of the work, encouraging visitors to see the "peace and happiness depicted on the countenances of each and every inmate" and "snow white garments turned out by their hands, emblematic of the purity to which they had been restored",⁴⁰ none of the official speakers mentioned the need for more laundry business.

The "Girls' Industrial School", meanwhile, were finding it extremely difficult to attract a sufficient amount of laundry work. In 1896 their Committee reported that "The sum earned by washing and needlework shows a small increase on the amount received last year, but is still considerably below that of a few years ago." With only half of the girls receiving government aid, and with them apprenticed to the Matron for two years training after their Government grant ceased, the Committee were "obliged to ask friends of the School for

³⁴ A. Hall, "Reflections from the Firelight", *The Austral Light*, September 1899, p. 516.

³⁵ *Mercury*, 11th June 1896.

³⁶ "Laying the Corner Stone of the New Wing", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 10th June 1896.

³⁷ *Mercury*, 11th June 1896.

³⁸ "Magdalen Home, Sandy Bay. Contract No. 2nd May 1896", Good Shepherd Convent, Austin's Ferry, Tasmania.

³⁹ *Mercury*, 11th June 1896.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

more liberal contributions".⁴¹ The "Girls' Training School Reformatory" at Barrack Square were experiencing even more serious difficulties. During 1896 they had found it necessary to "draw heavily on our reserve fund, having so many voluntary inmates, leaving the small sum of £61-16-3 in the Bank." The annual income from washing had only been £177-5-0.⁴² Admittedly the Girls' Training School was in decline. Only nine girls would remain in the old building by the turn of the century, and "its prison-like atmosphere was rapidly becoming outdated."⁴³ Since 1881, it had operated as "a voluntary home intended for girls who might otherwise have gone to prison."⁴⁴ Girls aged 15-18, many of whom "were regarded as potential prostitutes", were taken and "largely supported the establishment by their laundry work."⁴⁵ Although competition was not the only problem facing the Girls' Training School, the success of the Magdalen Laundry was impacting on its viability. Magdalen Home's competitive advantage stemmed from the devotion of the Sisters, the modern equipment, the support of the mother convent and the original financial assistance from Father Dunne's estate. Also, Magdalen Home had a larger proportion of voluntary admissions, which meant that the inmates were more likely to be co-operative than those committed to the Industrial or Training School by the court. Moreover, girls and women at Magdalen Home tended to be older than the Industrial School girls, and therefore more likely to have developed some work related skills.

In October 1896 the new wing was opened with a double celebration, as the occasion also marked Archbishop Murphy's Golden Jubilee. Cardinal Moran performed the ceremony at which the Archbishop of Melbourne and the Bishops of Ballarat and Sale, Victoria, were present. Following the ceremonial opening and religious service, the "children" participated with "verses of welcome", recitations on different phases of the Archbishop's life, and a "fancy march" during which "they showed sentences suitable to the occasion". The musical component of the occasion was enriched by a cabinet organ, recently donated by the Mother Prioress of Rosary Place, Victoria.⁴⁶ Choral performances again enhanced a religious occasion early in 1898, when the "children sung hymns to Our Lady of Lourdes and to St. Joseph, when donated

⁴¹ *Hobart Industrial School for Girls 1896. Twenty-eighth Annual Report*, Department of Neglected Children, First Annual Report 1897, Session 11, Parliament of Tasmania, No. 21, p. 11.

⁴² *Girl's Training School Reformatory. Report for 1896*, Department of Neglected Children, First Annual Report 1897, Session 11, Parliament of Tasmania, No. 21, p. 9.

⁴³ J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972), p. 167.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93 and p. 149.

⁴⁶ "The Opening of the New Jubilee Wing", *Hobart Convent Annals*, October 1896.

statues of them were blessed.⁴⁷ In the years ahead, the active participation of the "children" in performance on ceremonial and festive occasions was encouraged. It would become a distinctive feature of the institution, and be an important ingredient of skills training, confidence and self-esteem building.

As the century closed, the death of Archdeacon Hogan was recorded with sadness. The Sisters reflected that it was he "who first wrote for a community of the religious of the Good Shepherd to establish a house in Hobart." In his will, he was able to leave a bequest of only £100 to Mount St. Canice,⁴⁸ but his diligence as an executor of Father Dunne's will was a enduring legacy. A decade later, the future of the establishment seemed assured, and further development was envisaged. Evidence of the continued success of the Magdalen Laundry is found in the plans for its expansion in 1900. George Fagg had died in 1897,⁴⁹ and his successor Mr A. Walker had designed a new laundry, folding room, and packing room which trebled the size of the operation when built by Stabb Brothers.⁵⁰

There are no known written impressions of penitents who entered Magdalen Home in the nineteenth century. The lives of those who stayed and either relished or submitted to the religious life of the institution are noted, but with few details. The Annals are, understandably, the record of events from the point of view of the religious. If some girls/women were dissatisfied and left, then they are not mentioned. Nevertheless, glimpses into the lives of girls who went compulsorily to Magdalen Home in the early part of the twentieth century are revealed in some of the files of "Children of the State".

⁴⁷ "Blessing of the Statues of our Lady of Lourdes", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 25th March 1898.

⁴⁸ "Death of Archdeacon Hogan", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1899.

⁴⁹ *Mercury*, 17th December 1897, Obituary, p. 2, col. 8.

⁵⁰ "The New Laundry", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 26th February 1900 & "Additions to Magdalen Laundry", 25th April 1900, Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

Chapter 5: Inmates

*"the moralising of the working class"*¹

Since colonial times, the Tasmanian Government had assumed responsibility for the many illegitimate, neglected and orphaned children in the State. The orphan School had been created for that purpose in 1833.² The Royal Commissions of the 1860's highlighted both the institution's high cost and detrimental effect upon the children. As a result, the Industrial Schools Act and Training Schools Act were introduced in 1867. The government guaranteed maintenance payments, thereby enabling the voluntary sector to set up smaller and more homely establishments. Many younger children were boarded out in foster homes once William Tarlton, who favoured the approach, became Administrator of Charitable Grants.³

Magdalen Home rarely received any maintenance payments from the government, because it preferred to retain complete independence. It was not long after the establishment of the Neglected Childrens' Department in 1896 however, before a cooperative arrangement between the Department and Magdalen Home meant that teenage females under the guardianship of the Department were entrusted to the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters. The Neglected Childrens' Department was empowered to take over legal responsibility for children committed to its care until twenty years of age. Children became Wards of the State for three main reasons. Firstly, the child might be a victim - abused or neglected, poverty stricken, orphaned, abandoned or considered to be in grave moral danger by living at premises used for prostitution. Secondly, the child may have committed an unlawful act, usually larceny. Thirdly, the child might be beyond the control of parents or guardians.

It is clear from a perusal of the Ward of State files of children later placed at Magdalen Home,⁴ that for younger children, poverty and neglect far outweighed other reasons as the cause of their committal to the Department's care. Widowed fathers without skills or savings sometimes persevered until child care standards slipped to an abysmally low level, at which point somebody noticed and contacted the police. Alcohol was an exacerbating problem in a number of cases. A neighbour contacted police regarding the Roberts children

¹ V. F. Pearce, *The Lowest Common denominator- Children, State and Society, Tasmania. 1896 -1920, Thesis*, (Hobart 1983), p. 2.

² J. Brown, *Poverty is not a Crime*, (Hobart 1972), p. 26.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴ Social Welfare Department (S.W.D.), 1/1 to 1/34, Archives Office of Tasmania.

whose widowed father was "given to drink". The Inspector found them living in a hut "in a most deplorable state of filth and neglect and being near a precipice of 60 to 80 feet high their lives are in danger during their father's absence at work."⁵ Widowed, and especially abandoned women who were unable to support their children on meagre wages, or even accept live-in domestic service positions without first placing their children, generally sought the Department's assistance before the situation became so drastic. Mrs. Holmes, a West Coast deserted wife with five children, who was living in fear of her estranged husband, wrote to the Department in 1903, suggesting "you take three of my children and put them in the industrial school so as I can go to service and earn for myself and the two others because starve they must ... I have got a good job and cannot take it as I cannot leave the children."⁶ The police magistrate thought Mrs. Parsons "to be a respectable woman, but as she is working at North Lyell she cannot have the children with her ... I questioned [her] as to whether she could look after the children if allowed a grant from the state, but she said she could not manage to, although she seemed reluctant to part with them."⁷

Other children became Wards of the State in their later teenage years. Girls were generally brought before the court when they had stolen money or clothes, often from their place of service, or had run away from home or behaved in a manner deemed "uncontrollable" by their parents. In 1911, Louisa, aged seventeen, was sentenced "to the Training School Hobart for a period of three years" when she and her sister stole clothes to the value of £1-2-0.⁸ Vera, aged thirteen, was surrendered by her father as uncontrollable in 1910, her father signing a statement that she "will not stay at home she is going with young men" and had been "away from home all night, I am afraid that unless some measures are taken to control her that she will get into trouble."⁹ The Department perceived a country placement as appropriate for Joan, the Enquiring Officer writing to the Secretary that "I think it very desirable to arrange for a home in the country for Joan as the temptations of the town [are] likely to make her troublesome as she gets older."¹⁰ Magistrates, police, clergy, parents and the Department were as concerned about what girls might do, as they were about what they had done.

⁵ S.W.D., 1/4, No. 251.

⁶ S.W.D., 1/8, No. 530.

⁷ S.W.D., 1/25, No. 1362.

⁸ S.W.D., 1/17, No. 1009.

⁹ S.W.D., 1/15, No. 928.

¹⁰ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 57.

The Neglected Children's Department had three options for dealing with children who became wards of state. The most popular method for dealing with younger children was "boarding out", later known as foster care. In the 1899 Report of the Department for Neglected Children, of the fifty-five children committed to the care of the department, thirty three were boarded out.¹¹ The proportion of children boarded out remained steady at just over half the number committed, well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the Department was ever watchful of its meagre funds. In 1907, it cost the Department 21/6 per month to board out a seven year old, and 25/6 for a ten year old.¹² In the case of the four orphaned Campbell children, Secretary F. R. Seager wrote to the Sub-Inspector of Police in 1905, "Is there no-one at Burnie who would take them and care for them in lieu of the rent from their shop which I presume is 12/- per week?" He expressed his frustration to the Attorney General: "The chief aim of the local Magistrates and Police Officers appears to be to get rid of the children from the district. They probably overlook the fact that the State has to pay for the maintenance of the children committed to the care of the Department."¹³ In contrast, once children were apprenticed, the cost to the Department was minimal. Thus, the Department were keen to have children "struck off the boarded out list" as soon as possible.¹⁴ At the age of twelve or thirteen, many children were apprenticed to learn the 'trade' of "general servant", in return for a pittance.¹⁵ Boys were usually indentured to a master for farm work, and girls to a mistress for domestic service.

As a result of the Department's enthusiasm for early apprenticeship, children were placed with little close checking, provided the application form was completed with a reference from a clergyman. Children from deprived backgrounds often experienced great difficulties in adjusting to life in domestic service. They brought with them the legacy of childhood deprivation, and faced mistresses with high expectations. Many had not understood or grieved for the break-up of their own family unit. Others, who had been boarded out successfully, felt the wrench of being sent away from 'Aunty' and felt miserable and lonely. Separation from siblings and infrequent contact with relatives, combined with the monotony of housework, often in the isolation of the country, meant that many girls lacked enthusiasm for their work. Ellen, who had been

¹¹ The court made 74 committals in total, of which 17 were committed directly to the Boy's Training School, and 2 to the Girl's Training School. Thus the placement of the remaining 55 was left to the discretion of the Department.

¹² S.W.D., 1/11, No. 755.

¹³ S.W.D., 1/10, No. 632.

¹⁴ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 57.

¹⁵ In 1900, a first year apprenticed 'general servant' was paid 1/- per week for the first year, increasing by one shilling per week each year until the fifth year. S.W.D., 1/4, No. 251.

"shamefully neglected with regard to food clothing and education" in her childhood, was rejected by her mistress because she "seems careless whether she learns or not and will not do as she is told."¹⁶ Joan, was only twelve when apprenticed to service with a widow in the country, after four years with a boarding out mother.¹⁷ The child was returned two weeks later, the mistress finding her to be "of no earthly use to me as I am ill and unable to help myself and she cannot make anything for me." Petty thieving and dishonesty, reflecting unhappiness and emotional deprivation were unlikely to be tolerated. Amelia's mistress returned her in 1919 complaining "she is hopeless - so awfully dishonest and absolutely untruthful."¹⁸ Some mistresses were very controlling. Elizabeth gave her country mistress no cause for complaint for three years until the lady complained to the Department, "Some acquaintances she has made at church seem to have put ideas into her head such as Sundays off and afternoons out."¹⁹ The onset of puberty and an awakening interest in the opposite sex, often proved to be the breaking point as far as mistresses of girls were concerned. When returning a girl, because the responsibility and worry were too great, or because she was 'answering back', or exerting her independence in unapproved ways, mistresses invariably asked for a younger girl who would presumably be more compliant.

The Department itself had only a limited understanding of the problems faced by its children. In cases of gross maltreatment or abject misery, children were removed from service placements, but the majority of changes were in response to complaints by the master or mistress. Everyone concerned seems to have expected the children to be grateful that someone was prepared to take them into service. Placement failure was invariably attributed to deficiencies in the individual child, rather than to unrealistic expectations on the part of any of the adults concerned. The Enquiring Officer accepted that Joan, aged thirteen, was rightfully punished for being "guilty of a very dirty habit of wetting the bed", but once the child's fear of her mistress was understood, she was removed. The Inspector noted that she "appears to stand in great fear of her and begs to be removed to another home."²⁰ Witnesses before an investigating constable confirmed that Eileen was "cruelly used and starved," beaten and dressed in rags, when sent to the Bass Strait Islands at thirteen in 1900. No cruelty charges were laid, but she was removed.²¹

¹⁶ S.W.D., 1/3, No. 167.

¹⁷ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 57.

¹⁸ S.W.D., 1/13, No. 815.

¹⁹ S.W.D., 1/9, No. 571.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ S.W.D., 1/1, No.1 35.

The final option for the placement of wards of state was institutional care. Rachel's parents voluntarily surrendered her when her behavior proved to be beyond their control. "The girl frequents the streets in company with women of ill repute and positively refuses to enter employment as a domestic servant."²² As "the Rev. Mother has consented to take this girl into the Home if she is committed to the care of the Department for Neglected Children," she was committed and "hereby transferred to Magdalen Home."²³ Police brought the girl to the court and she was committed and transferred immediately. Children convicted of theft or other indictable offences such as damaging property, were committed to an Industrial or Training School for a set period, following an appearance before the lower court magistrates. Lily and her siblings were considered to be "a general plague to their neighbourhood" for "continually destroying or damaging other people's property", according to the Council Clerk. After throwing lathes into the sea she was convicted of "malicious damage to property" and was committed to the Industrial School for three years.²⁴ Institutions were the last resort for children who repeatedly failed in foster homes or apprenticeships. However, as autonomous bodies, institutions often had trouble supporting themselves, especially as maintenance payments from the Department ended once children reached the age of fourteen. Furthermore, institutions were not always willing to take children with a known record of antisocial behaviour. As a result, the Department had great difficulty in placing older children, especially between the ages of sixteen and twenty, or children with a history of failure in other placements.

This is the background into which the Magdalen Home fitted, providing a repository for children the Department found unable to place elsewhere. The Department sent its first girl to Magdalen Home on 9th August 1901.²⁵ She was a Roman Catholic aged fourteen years. For the first twenty-five years of ward of state admissions, Magdalen Home admitted 96 girls, 33 of which were known Catholics, and 51 were known Protestants. Placements by the Department were to continue until the 1970's, although girls continued to arrive by other channels (self-referrals, police, etc.). Girls were not accepted if known to be pregnant and generally underwent confinement and gave birth at the New Town Charitable Institution, the Home of Mercy or at Elim, the Salvation Army Maternity Home. Babies were not brought to Magdalen Home, being either adopted out or placed at St. Joseph's Orphanage or at the Diocesan Babies

²² S.W.D., 1/24, No. 1297.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ S.W.D., 1/28, No. 1489.

²⁵ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 251.

Home. Most of the girls whom the Department requested the Reverend Mother to accept had been in other placements which had broken down. Joan was committed to Magdalen Home aged thirteen in March 1903 after three short-lived service placements with the Enquiring Officer commenting that "this girl is going to be troublesome as I am afraid no-one will care to keep her for long." Helplessness and immaturity precipitated the placement.²⁶ More specifically, there was frequently a suggestion of sexual impropriety. Edith became a ward as a neglected three year old in 1897. Boarded out until the age of thirteen, she then entered service in town. By seventeen, her mistress found her "beyond her control" and "out every night now until all hours" and thus wished her removed. The Inspector used Magdalen Home as a threat as he considered her "too much mixed up with boys". His recommendation was to "put her in the Home for three years at Sandy Bay."²⁷ She went peacefully rather than under police escort, when persuaded to do so by her former boarding out mother.

Some girls were sent to Magdalen Home for other reasons. Eileen's mother was dead and her father was a drunken farm labourer. Pilfering was a problem, and when arrested for stealing from visitors at her place of service in Latrobe, aged fifteen, the Secretary arranged for her to be released and brought to Magdalen Home.²⁸ Jane was born at the New Town Charitable Institution. She was boarded out at two years. At seven, she was examined by the Government Medical Officer, who considered "her defect of speech is caused by her being an imbecile." Her spinster boarding-out mother adopted her, but by thirteen years of age she had been sent to Magdalen Home, presumably because of her dependency.²⁹ Sarah's mother was "a regular drunken tramp" according to police, and the Launceston Visiting Committee for boarded out children reported that the child's "mental powers [were] very weak." At fourteen, she was transferred south to Magdalen Home in order to be kept away from her mother.³⁰ Other girls graduated to Magdalen Home from St. Josephs as they grew older or were considered unsuited to remain. Iris, aged fifteen, was admitted to Magdalen Home by written request to the Department from the Rectress who advised "We cannot keep this girl Iris W. at our Institution any longer. Our reason for taking such a course is that she uses very bad language, and does great harm to our younger children by her bad example."³¹ Two resourceful teenagers presented themselves voluntarily for

²⁶ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 57.

²⁷ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 53.

²⁸ S.W.D., 1/2, No. 135.

²⁹ S.W.D., 1/4, No. 267.

³⁰ S.W.D., 1/5, No. 309.

³¹ S.W.D., 1/11, No. 755.

admission in 1905. The Reverend Mother informed the Department that "the girls came to her in a starving condition, begging to be taken into the home, stating that their father had no home for them and would not allow them to remain in place with their stepmother." The girls remained in the Home for almost a year before being handed back to their father.³² When "Clare" died in 1912 aged seventeen, the Sisters noted "She had a cruel Father and Step-mother and ran away from her home, with a younger sister, who both found their way to the Good Shepherd"³³

From the point of view of the Department, there were two outstanding advantages of the Magdalen Home. Firstly, no-one was turned away or turned out. Dora had difficulty remembering things and ran away from service when she was criticised. When police found her sleeping in a doorway, aged sixteen, the Home of Mercy declined to admit her, but she was accepted by Magdalen Home.³⁴ Similarly, "The Industrial School did not care to take Vera," but the Magdalen Home accepted her without question.³⁵ Enquiring Officer Pearce wrote, "Mavis has had so many chances given her, but all to no avail. She has been cautioned again and again. I think the best place now is the Magdalen Home."³⁶ Secondly, no payment was requested. The Collector for Charitable Institutions was advised by the Department that Mary would be transferred to Magdalen Home "and there will be no claim against her father from that date, as the Inmates of that Institution are admitted free of charge."³⁷ A grant of £75 was made on 23rd January 1903,³⁸ which is conspicuous as the only government grant known to have been made to the institution before the 1950's. It is possible this was an acknowledgment of appreciation for the nun's acceptance of a particularly difficult, and Protestant, child in June 1902.³⁹ It is equally likely that an understanding was reached regarding acceptance of wards of state in future, but this is a matter of speculation. Thirdly, the Magdalen Home, with its efficient laundry and farm, provided excellent work training.

Most importantly, the Department and Magdalen Home were both extremely protective of girls under their care. The Department was never keen

³² S.W.D., 1/9, No. 615.

³³ "Death of a Penitent", Hobart Convent Annals, 21st October 1912.

³⁴ S.W.D., 1/2, No.1 40.

³⁵ S.W.D., 1/15, No. 928.

³⁶ S.W.D., 1/8, No. 501.

³⁷ S.W.D., 1/34, No. 1746.

³⁸ UnderSecretary F. Lovett to Rev. P. R. Hennebry, 23rd January 1903, C.S.D. 22, Vol. 71, File No. 151 1903.

³⁹ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 135.

to take more children into care than was absolutely necessary, but once it did so, it was reluctant to relinquish guardianship before a ward reached the legal age limit of twenty. The Sisters' views were in line with those of the Department. They were providing a 'safe house' away from a world which was perceived to be dangerous and full of temptation. They too preferred to err on the safe side, and encouraged girls to stay as long as possible - forever if they wished. The Sisters acted as virtual agents of the Department by intercepting letters,⁴⁰ and advising against discharge when parents or girls applied pressure.⁴¹ Compulsory detention at Magdalen Home was officially a decision of the Department, but that decision was often prompted by advice from the Reverend Mother that early release would be undesirable.⁴²

Whilst family contact was not deliberately discouraged, it was seldom facilitated. Dora's married sister had great difficulty locating her. She wrote to the Reverend Mother that she had enquired at the Girls Industrial School but

Mrs. K. seemed too full to tell me where she was ... I suppose you know we are Orphans with no Mother to look after us, we where all parted I am glad to say I got a good home and am now married, but my Dear Sister as had nothing but trouble and now I am in a position to be able to keep her ... she is our baby sister and we would love to have her I have my only Brother here with me.

The Reverend Mother replied saying that any information would be given at the office of the Neglected Children's Department. The written application by the married sister was approved on the basis that "This girl is a Protestant and ordered to be removed from the Magdalen Home."⁴³ Family contact was also discouraged when fathers were virtually driven into hiding by the Department's relentless pursuit of maintenance arrears. Mr. Abbott, an illiterate mill worker and hop-picker, disappeared when ordered to pay maintenance for the three children he surrendered.⁴⁴ Parental visits from other parts of the state were at times both difficult and expensive, and parents sometimes needed to acquire a written order from the Department to visit their children in institutions.⁴⁵ Letters were the form of communication which the Department did encourage between girls and their families.⁴⁶ Delia wrote to thank her parents for their "kind and

⁴⁰ S.W.D., 1/18, No. 1065 and 1/23, No. 1277.

⁴¹ S.W.D., 1/13, No. 834.

⁴² S.W.D., 1/34, No. 1738.

⁴³ S.W.D., 1/2, No. 140.

⁴⁴ S.W.D., 1/15, No. 921.

⁴⁵ S.W.D., 1/13, No. 834.

⁴⁶ S.W.D., 1/25, No. 1362.

loving letter", and explained that she would be able to write back under controlled conditions "I will be able to write to you every month excepting Lent which begins on 1st of March and ends on the 16th of April it is the rule of the house not to write during that time."⁴⁷

The Department and Magdalen Home were especially wary of the possible influence of parents when their moral standards appeared to be lacking. In the case of Elizabeth, her mother was refused access "as on her own admission she has had another child by another man since her husband left her."⁴⁸ Although Mrs Parsons had voluntarily surrendered her children after she was deserted, when she applied for their return a year later, she was "informed that her application for the care of her children cannot be entertained owing to her assertion that she is married to Mr. R having been found to be incorrect." Four years later, and married to a Mr. White, the Department "refused to entertain [the] question of returning [the] children to her care." Two years later she approached the Department for her daughter's "release from the Magdalen Home." Although her daughter was eighteen, Departmental Officer Reed was advised by the Reverend Mother "that the usual period (two years) will not be up until February next." The girl's release was not recommended "in view of [the] applicant's previous history." Although the Department was always the ultimate authority regarding Wards of State, the advice of the Reverend Mother was an integral part of the decision-making process. In their approach towards both the children and their parents, the Department and the Magdalen Home were to be "mutual agents of the moralising of the working class."⁴⁹

The Department established a relationship of complete trust, cordiality and confidence in the Sisters whom they saw as having "a wonderful influence over such girls."⁵⁰ The Magdalen Home came to be regarded by the Department not only as the preferred option for older Catholic girls,⁵¹ but the most suitable placement for all older girls whose behaviour veered toward impropriety. Its officers seem only to have visited or made contact in response to specific requests by girls, their parents, or the Sisters. The Departmental attitude was that girls at Magdalen Home were away from trouble to themselves, or to the thinly stretched staff and resources of the Neglected

⁴⁷ S.W.D., 1/39, No. 1995.

⁴⁸ S.W.D., 1/9, No. 571, File note 16th December 1912.

⁴⁹ V. F. Pearce, *The Lowest Common denominator- Children, State and Society, Tasmania. 1896 -1920*, Thesis, (Hobart 1983), p. 2.

⁵⁰ File note, F. R. Seager, Administrator of Charitable Grants. S.W.D., 1/9, No. 601, 7th July 1909.

⁵¹ Most wards of state sent to Magdalen Home in the first decade of the twentieth century were Roman Catholics, but not invariably.

Children's Department. The Inspector recommended that Mary be transferred to the Magdalen Home "and keep her there for four or five years if necessary ... she could not be trusted at another place of service." Mary was then fourteen⁵² Out of sight could very easily become out of mind for the guardian, until a letter from a girl or a parent, or advice of an absconding brought a girl to their attention. Monsignor Gilleran summed up the situation when asked to intervene with a Catholic girl whose elderly mistress found her to be "beyond her control". His assessment was that "Evidently this girl is getting into evil ways. The only hope of saving her is to place her in the Magdalen Home for a period and I recommend that this be done."⁵³ The end result was that most girls who were committed to Magdalen Home as wards of the state found themselves confined for far longer than they anticipated, because their legal guardian and their carers regarded it as desirable.

Girls' impressions of life inside the institution in the first quarter of the twentieth century can be glimpsed from the Departmental files of state wards sent to Magdalen Home. Edith, aged nineteen, revealed frustration, disappointment and homesickness blended with considerable respect for the nuns in her letter to Department Secretary F. R. Seager after more than a year in the Home.

"See Aunty for me and ask her to come down and take me home again. I am giving the Nuns great trouble and I do want to go back to Auntys. When she bought me down here she told me to be good for three months and she would come for me but she never came I don't want to run away but if she doesn't come I'll have to do something. I'll promise to be so good and help her all I can if she will only take me. The Nuns would not put anyone out although we give them great trouble'..." "I am very sorry for [Aunty's] sake and the Nuns alas who have been very kind to me but I can't help it now."⁵⁴

Edith looked to the nuns for assistance later that year when wishing to be moved from service in the country. She wrote to the Reverend mother: "Will you get me a place in town I am oh so tired of the monotony of country life you have no idea what it is like." The letter was forwarded to the Department who discouraged a move to town. The Secretary replied "I cannot promise to find you another situation as I am afraid no-one would be bothered with you so the

⁵² S.W.D., 1/4, No. 251.

⁵³ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 53.

⁵⁴ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 53.

only alternative would be to send you to the Home of Mercy or New Town Institution ... The Reverend Mother will not take you into Magdalen Home again."⁵⁵ Edith's case illustrates that although initially, everyone was given a chance, girls who had been in the Home several times but had not settled there were not necessarily readmitted. Alternatively, the Secretary may have been bluffing, as there is no file record of his contact with the Reverend Mother.

Other girls expressed gratitude for their experience in Magdalen Home. Delia wrote to her mother in the north in order to reassure her, "I am in good hands the Nuns do all that is in there power for us to make us happy and contented."⁵⁶ Expressions of gratitude were particularly likely at the point of departure. Maud wrote to Secretary Packer: "I have been with the nuns three years, I am very greatfull for all they have done for me...the nuns is given me clothes."⁵⁷ She was about to join her married sister in New South Wales and needed money. Girls were not paid for their work at Magdalen Home, but clothes and some money were often given when they left. Emma was given "one Pound as I was leaving the Convent."⁵⁸ As the Department banked most of a girl's wages earned during any placements as an apprentice, these funds were often requested by girls when leaving the institution. They were available at twenty or eighteen, according to the discretion of the Department. Emma was lonely when she left for service in the country because she missed the nuns. She wrote to the Department: "I will never be able to stay down here. I miss the nuns very much they were very kind to me but I will let them see that I am grate-ful by being very good. I promised Reverend Mother I would write to you ... I would like very much to get at the place where Eliza was at just across from the Convent ... I would like to be there because I would be able to go across to see the Sisters."⁵⁹ She was encouraged to persevere and to write again if dissatisfied and in that case the Secretary would "see if Mrs K. requires a girl."

Girls who were unsettled at Magdalen Home either persevered, wrote to the Departmental Secretary, or lost patience and absconded. Elsie was a neglected child who grew up in the Girls Industrial School. Various service placements did not work out and at twenty she was placed in the Magdalen Home, following a miscarriage. Several months later she absconded with several others, was apprehended by police and returned. Having successfully

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ S.W.D., 1/39, No. 1995.

⁵⁷ S.W.D., 1/13, No. 837.

⁵⁸ Girl to Secretary H. Packer., 30th May 1912, S.W.D., 1/9, No. 601.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

brought attention to her frustration at being confined, Inspector Packer noted that "She protested against being kept there, but finally she agreed to remain there without attempting to abscond until a place of service can be found for her." She was in service three months later.⁶⁰ Elsie's reaction was a typical one whereas Julia's was not. Julia came from a background of abject poverty, "in a miserable, dirty two-roomed hut" and had come into care aged nine, while her father was in prison for theft. The Girls Industrial School Launceston declined to keep her after she was returned from service for displaying "immoral tendencies". As she was Church of England, transfer to the Home of Mercy was arranged on a trial basis. Julia was then seventeen. The Acting-Matron explained to Secretary Charles Seager: "If after trial, she should still prove immoral would you remove her, as we have a number of young girls placed here for protection by their parents and our Home is not large enough to keep the girls separate ... But probably the girl only needs steady work and proper companionship as we find a lot of the evil is caused through loneliness."⁶¹ The Launceston Industrial School was relieved, but Julia longed to return home. From her place of service at New Norfolk she wrote to the Department Secretary soon afterwards, "could you let me go home when I am eighteen ... I have never seen my people for nine years and I would be such a help to my mother, and would love to go home." A police report of poverty and drunkenness at home mitigated against her return, and by eighteen she had been at Magdalen Home and had absconded. Although no investigation was conducted by the Department, and her story was not investigated, the statement she made may be partly true. A similar statement was reputedly made by another girl,⁶² Both girls were removed from Magdalen Home on the basis of the following statement

I absconded from the Home because the day before we left Mother Sacred Heart hit me with a scrubbing brush and other girl with a footstool - she and the other nuns are always hitting us - there were three others trying to get away the same day as we did - During harvesting I had to get up at 4.30 am and go into the fields throwing up sheaves carry them into the barn and other laborious work. We also had to clean out the stables and sometimes do a day ironing on top of it. If we wrote letters to outside complaining of our treatment, they were destroyed, I have never received a letter since I've been

⁶⁰ S.W.D., 1/1, No. 660.

⁶¹ A Acting-Matron Florence Jones to Secretary, Neglected Children's Department, S.W.D., 1/13, No. 803.

⁶² File note by Charles Seager, S.W.D., 1/13, No. 803.

there. The Rev Mother and other nuns were always trying to get us to change our religion and they have succeeded in inducing Freda and Bessie and others to do so. I do not want to return to the Home but will stay at the Salvation Army Home until enquiries are made as to the accuracy of my statements.⁶³

Words like "laborious" and "accuracy" reflect the influence or assistance of Charles Seager, whose signature appears on the bottom of the statement. Nevertheless the statement is more than evidence that being an inmate of the Magdalen Home involved hard work, and that the nuns were keen to share the joy of their religion. A Sister with the same title as the accused had been sent back to Abbotsford "for a few months ... suffering with nervous breakdown" early in 1913. This could explain the uncharacteristic "hitting" incident.⁶⁴

Some girls welcomed the consolation and feeling of belonging which they shared upon joining the Roman Catholic faith. Elizabeth was a ward who entered Magdalen Home compulsorily at eighteen, after absenting herself from service and being out overnight. Inspector Patterson interviewed her there.

She is in the sewing department ... She stated that apart from her health she was getting on well, but as the officials of the Home like the girls to stay two years, she refrained from writing and decided to wait till the two years are up. On 9th January last she was admitted to the Roman Catholic faith and duly baptised. This step she took of her own free will, in fact she says she asked the Rev. Mother to allow her to change her faith." Elizabeth was twenty at the time, and left for service several months later.⁶⁵

The nuns saw religion as the key to a girl's salvation both in heaven and on earth. It was the principal area of knowledge that was taught to the inmates, and was an integral part of the daily routine for girls as well as the nuns. Annual Retreats were a time of contemplation and intensive religious instruction. At the retreat for penitents in 1900, conducted by a priest "Several of them promised him never to leave the house and more of them promised to remain for another year.⁶⁶ The Sisters' hope for girls, was that their arrival at Magdalen Home would be a new beginning in their lives. A girl's past was

⁶³ S.W.D., 1/13, No. 803.

⁶⁴ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 20th February 1913.

⁶⁵ S.W.D., 1/12, No. 786.

⁶⁶ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1900.

seldom referred to and upon arrival she was given a saint's name.⁶⁷ The aim was to progress through degrees of religious commitment, meanwhile behaving with the humility and obedience of "a true penitent." Particularly after retreats, groups of girls were likely to be baptised or confirmed. Following this, others would receive the "Cord of the Aspirants", which was a step toward becoming a "Child of Mary" who could wear the "Badge of Our Lady". Finally, inmates could become "Consecrated children" who were called "oblates", and then "auxiliaries", later in the century. This indicated that they had decided to remain in the institution as "Sisters Magdalen", to assist the nuns and to fulfil their own vows.⁶⁸ They were then able to wear "the brown and blue scapulars."⁶⁹ An inmate could never actually become a Sister of the Good Shepherd. The Annals reflect the nuns religious aspirations for the inmates, and indicate that conversion was encouraged.

Nine of our dear children had the happiness of making their First Holy Communion. Five of them are Converts having (been) received into the Church a short time previously.⁷⁰ The children sang with great fervour between each Station a verse of the touching hymn ... One of the children had the happiness of making her first Communion ... The children entered on retreat ... made an excellent one and seemed greatly strengthened in their religion by the above Father's admonitions.⁷¹ ... We had the consolation of seeing two children receive the Sacrament of Baptism ... One of those, until a few weeks ago was a Staunch Protestant and intended to remain such. Grace touched her heart on hearing a Sermon on the real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and she said that the light of Faith flooded her soul. For some time she had been wearing a Picture of our Lady of Perpetual Succour and we feel sure that it is owing to the intercession of the Mother of God that this child received the light of Faith ... The sheep of the fold of the Good Shepherd entered on retreat shortly after that of the religious and were greatly strengthened in their holy religion by Father Keogh's many beautiful examples of the true penitent ... One of our dear penitents died fortified by the Sacraments of our holy Mother the Church. This poor Soul was not quite twelve months in the fold of

⁶⁷ Information from Sister Immaculata, Convent of the Good Shepherd, Austin's Ferry Tasmania. Also S.W.D., 1/18, No. 1065, Letter to Cousin 1st October 1924.

⁶⁸ *Hobart Convent Annals*, passim.

⁶⁹ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 8th December 1903.

⁷⁰ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 22nd July 1912.

⁷¹ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1893-1894.

the Good Shepherd and her death was a great victory over the evil one as she was very weak in virtue but died quite resigned to God's holy will spending days before her death in repenting acts of true sorrow for sin.⁷²

When the question of religion upset relatives of Protestant wards of state at Magdalen Home, they generally requested transfer to a Protestant institution.⁷³ Occasionally they responded with outrage. An older married sister in a family of orphans wrote direct to "Mother of the Sacred Heart" as follows:

I have been notified by my sister Fanny that it is the intention of the Sacred Heart to induce 'Mavis' our sister to become a 'Nun'. I absolutely forbid such a thing, also her brother is highly indignant about it, he considers that we should have been consulted in the matter ... be kind enough to have her ready for me to take away.⁷⁴

Mavis responded with a letter to the Department in a style which suggests assistance with its composition.

I was placed here with the Nuns about six years ago by Mrs. D. Launceston. I think I was in the children department, and she adopted me, she sent me here, because I was wayward and thoughtless. I like been here, my sisters and brother are coming for me this afternoon. I don't want to go with them. I am staying with my own free will, and can leave here at any time I wish, but I don't want to at present. I will be twenty two years in August.⁷⁵

It is not clear whether Mavis stayed on at that time, but apparently she did not become a nun, as the final entry on the file notes her marriage at Cradoc in 1931. Parents usually tackled the matter of discharge by expressing restrained anger toward the Department and, mindful of Departmental power, by enlisting the assistance of ministers, lawyers and Members of Parliament.⁷⁶ Requests for transfer were generally heeded, but requests for discharge were responded to on a case by case basis and granted less frequently. Until twenty years of age, Magdalen Home was regarded by the Department as the safest and most secure Home for 'troublesome' girls, in the older teenage bracket.

⁷² *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1895-1897.

⁷³ S.W.D., 1/17, No. 1009 & 1010.

⁷⁴ S.W.D., 1/10, No. 632.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ S.W.D., 1/17, No. 1009.

The Department made no objections if they chose to remain longer provided the girl communicated in writing that she was doing so of her own volition.

In summary, although the attitude of the Neglected Children's Department seems judgmental and even draconian in retrospect, the Department took responsibility for its wards very seriously. Relationships with wards were formal, and emotional needs were unrecognised, with care interpreted as need to control and train. Nevertheless, the intention was to enable wards to move toward an independent life and to break away from forces associated with poverty stricken backgrounds. Like the Department, the Sisters probably underestimated the strength of a girl's bonds with her family of origin. Hard work and strict discipline were essential components of life within the institution, yet the underlying motivation was benign. Although the religious hierarchy within the institution might be considered inappropriate today, it constituted a unique programme based on reward rather than punishment. The solace of religion, and the provision of opportunities for self expression, thereby building self esteem, in many ways anticipated modern child and adolescent psychology. At Magdalen Home, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd attempted to provide a substitute family for girls whom they recognised as needing love and care.

Chapter 6: Prosperity

"This little colony of industry and prayer."¹

The establishment of a secure, cooperative relationship between Magdalen Home and the Neglected Children's Department early in the twentieth century was clearly in the interests of both parties. For the Home, it bolstered the number of inmates, and for the Department, it provided a satisfactory long-term placement for its most difficult cases. Although wards formed a significant group within the Home, they did not constitute a majority. Nevertheless, since the Department took responsibility for its wards seriously, the Sisters could justifiably feel proud that State children were entrusted to their care.

Confidence, stability and prosperity were the hallmarks of Mount St. Canice in the early twentieth century. The pattern which had been established during the nineteenth century continued. For the inmates, the recommended admission age was fifteen, but an extremely flexible admission policy meant that prostitutes bent upon reformation were admitted at any age. Mentally deficient girls were accepted, and one inmate nick-named "Grannie", arrived in her old age. She died aged eighty, "having come to the Good Shepherd to end her days with the Sisters".² Uncontrollable teenagers, however, remained the principal category of inmates, with pregnant girls generally transferred elsewhere, until after their confinement. The Sisters preferred girls to stay for two years,³ thereby hoping to cement more lasting changes to the pattern of their lives. Many elected to stay longer, or were not permitted to leave if the Reverend Mother and their Departmental guardian did not consider them ready to do so.

Laundry and farm work were hard, but so was working in domestic service outside the convent. Illness and death were not unknown, but were equally likely, if not more so, elsewhere. During the first twenty years of operation, the deaths of eleven inmates are recorded in the Annals. Six Sisters died in the same period, although the figure is distorted by the fact that some nuns returned to Abbotsford when they became seriously ill. Consumption was the most common cause of death among both groups, and a small chalet was

¹ "Solemn Opening of the Memorial Church .Mount St. Canice. Lower Sandy Bay", Extract from *Monitor, Hobart Convent Annals*, 27th October 1910. Occasional sermon by Very Rev. Dr. O'Mahoney.

² *Hobart Convent Annals*, 28th March 1907.

³ S.W.D., 1/12, No. 786.

built in the grounds for one penitent who would otherwise have needed to be moved to "the Government Sanatorium, where religion is set a naught."⁴

On the positive side, food was plentiful and nourishing within Magdalen Home, and dramatic and musical entertainments were frequent and varied. In 1904 an eight and ten year old "played for us on the violin".⁵ The visit of the Naval Band from H.M.S. Challenger was a highlight in 1909,⁶ and in 1912, an entertainment "illustrative of an incident in the life of Bonny Prince Charles" was performed in the concert hall.⁷ The 1913 picnic was particularly memorable. "One and all went up to the mountain for the day. Games and amusements - together with a good supply of eatables made this day a memorable one."⁸ Modern style entertainment was particularly popular and Mr. and Mrs. Murdoch regularly brought moving pictures to the Home,⁹ which doubtless relieved the monotony of institutional life. Individuality in dress was permitted for the inmates. The *Mercury* noted that "the ordinary inmates wear white aprons, but are not otherwise restricted in their attire, any suitable dress being allowed."¹⁰ In addition, an atmosphere of friendship and co-operation was both encouraged and modelled by the nuns.

The consecrated children were similarly dedicated, and modelled friendly, obedient and modest behaviour. They worked and lived very close to the inmates, sharing the dormitories. Their own past lives, as orphans, neglected children or prostitutes, resembled that of the inmates, and their commitment to work, prayer and the reformation of themselves and others was total. The *Mercury* summarised the situation:

so long as they conduct themselves properly and choose to remain, none are ever asked to depart. In fact so delighted are many of them with the place, and with the good fellowship they find within its walls, that after a probation extending over seven or eight years, they formally attach themselves to the institution wear a distinctive garb - a black becoming dress set off by a picturesque Swiss bonnet - and are a great help to the Sisters in many ways. They sleep in the same dormitories, and share the same work with the other inmates,

⁴ "Death of a Penitent" *Hobart Convent Annals*, 21st August 1913.

⁵ "A Musical Treat", *Hobart Convent Annals*, April-May 1904.

⁶ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 29th February 1909.

⁷ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 5th June 1912.

⁸ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1st January 1913.

⁹ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 7th April 1913.

¹⁰ *Mercury*, 1907, Transcribed in *Hobart Convent Annals*, 1907.

but they set a good example to the rest, and may be regarded as the yeast which leaveneth the whole mass."¹¹

As with other religious orders, the conventual life of the Sisters maintained the pattern followed by their Order internationally, with daily recitation of the Office and regular Mass. Choir Sisters led principally enclosed lives, whilst the Touriere Sisters in their distinctive bonnets conducted necessary business in the city, and acted as travelling companions to their fellow Sisters. Their visibility in the local community assisted in the vital task of attracting "friends to the Convent" who would donate money or services.¹² Lay Sisters wore white, and came to the Order without a dowry. As they did not recite the Office, they necessarily spent more time on domestic work than the Choir Sisters, who are recognisable in photographs by their white habits and black veils.

The spiritual and personal care were the responsibility of the Superioress, and Chaplain in Hobart and of the Mother Provincial, who visited regularly, and on special occasions. The personnel holding these vital positions changed infrequently, which encouraged stability of management policies and enduring relationships with inmates and colleagues. In 1899 Monsignor Hoyne came to the position of Chaplain for his retirement, leaving that of Vicar General at Ballarat Victoria. He was still in residence to celebrate his diamond Jubilee in 1912,¹³ and later his eighty-ninth birthday, soon after which he died.¹⁴ Mother Mary of St. Alphonsus (Dowling), the first Superioress of Mt. St. Canice, celebrated her Silver Jubilee at Hobart in 1904.¹⁵ In the following year she was transferred to Victoria to establish a new foundation at Bendigo.¹⁶ In 1905, at a "general chapter" of the Good Shepherd Sisters at Angers, Mother Alphonsus (Dowling) was appointed to be "Mother Provincial for Australia and New Zealand." Although at that time Mother Alphonsus was in charge of the orphanage and Magdalen Asylum at Bendigo, Victoria, an extract from the *New Zealand Tablet*, quoted in the Hobart Convent Annals, referred to her Hobart position as Superioress for 13 years, during which time "Under her wise organisation and administration that house of the order made great progress."¹⁷

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Death of Sister Mary of the Rosary", Hobart Convent Annals, 21st February 1903.

¹³ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 5th June 1912.

¹⁴ *Daily Post*, 14th January 1914.

¹⁵ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 9th June 1904.

¹⁶ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 19th February 1905.

¹⁷ *New Zealand Tablet*, 14th September 1905.

As a result, "Sister Assistant"¹⁸ at Hobart, Mother Mary of St. Magdalen of Jesus (Sutton) was installed as Superioress.¹⁹ At the Installation ceremony Bishop Delaney congratulated the Sisters on their achievements. "It speaks well for the Community that the former Reverend Mother has been made Provincial over all Australia and surrounding Islands, and that her right hand support who shared her views, and lightened her burden in every way for the past thirteen years should now be Superior ... We have noticed from day to day how the Convent has grown and prospered since it was opened - because you all give yourselves to the spirit of the Good Shepherd saving the souls entrusted to you, and doing your best to heal their wounds."²⁰ Regrettably, Mother Mary of St Magdalen (Sutton) died six years after being appointed Prioress.²¹ As her obituary noted:

She watched over the whole house and each employment in particular with extreme solicitude ... She succeeded not without many efforts and sacrifices in erecting a new Ironing Room, packing room, Spacious Dormitories, and completely transformed the Farm which are all built under the latest improved system. But her crowning life work was the erection of our beautiful "Church".

The *Monitor* article at the time made the point that "With the approval of the Mother Provincial several improvements were introduced, all tending to make the labour of the inmates lighter and their lot happier."²² Her successor would be Sister Mary of our Lady of Perpetual Succour (Curr), "Sister Assistant of the Good Shepherd Convent, Mt. Magdala, Christchurch."²³

The Magdalen Home had undertaken a remarkable capital development programme since the turn of the century, principally financed by the continued success of the Laundry as a commercial undertaking. First, the five roomed brick Presbytery, which remains largely unaltered, had been constructed by William Smith in 1901, to a Walker and Salier design.²⁴ By 1903, additional funds became available from Father Dunne's estate and largely covered the purchase of "two large paddocks adjoining the convent grounds - the property

¹⁸ This term denotes the second in charge.

¹⁹ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 12th October 1905.

²⁰ "Installation of Our very [honoured] Mother Mary of St. Magdalen of Jesus", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 12th October 1905.

²¹ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 25th May 1911.

²² *Monitor*, May 1911.

²³ "Appointment of Superioress", Extract from *Monitor*, cited in *Hobart Convent Annals*, 29th December 1911.

²⁴ "Presbytery 26-6-01", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

of Mr. Cripps ... purchased through Mr. Salier at a cost of £1500."²⁵ In the same year, Mr. Stabb built commodious quarters for the men who worked on the farm. The Alan Walker designed building, (called *Stella Maris* and later used as a hostel for girls), contained the oven and bakery, larder and bacon store, either side of a central passage which led to the flour store and men's dining room.²⁶ The building cost £700 and was blessed by Father Treand on 13th October 1903.²⁷

In 1905, Alfred Gregory revamped the farm buildings, incorporating an enormous new barn, part of which is still standing.²⁸ "The farm buildings erected in 1895 being found too small for present use. Our very [honoured] Mother (Dowling) before leaving for Abbotsford saw the necessity of building new piggeries, cow shed and storerooms, all on the improved system. The plans were drawn out by Mr. Alan Walker Architect. Mr. Gregory was the Contractor. The whole cost £757-17-0."²⁹ The enlarged farm buildings were to service increasing land holdings, required to sustain the increasing numbers in the institution. The *Monitor* reported that there were 108 inmates in the institution in 1906.³⁰ Consequently, loans from Abbotsford and from local solicitors helped to finance the additional land purchases, which included the fertile thirty acre Edwards property,³¹ and the extensive Mt. Nelson run:

Mr Gellibrand's property consisting of the land up to the flag-staff on "Mt. Nelson" was offered to us at a moderate rate (£2500). With permission of our very [honoured] Mother Provincial we have secured the land, which is valuable to us for the wood thereon, and also for grazing purposes. We fervently thank our dear Lord for this blessing Deo Gratias.³²

In 1906, James Dunn was contracted to undertake extensive additions to the south wing.³³ "The temporary iron buildings which have been used for an ironing and packing room since the foundation of this Convent, are to be replaced by a two storeyed brick building, and to be fitted with all modern

²⁵ "Purchase of Land", *Hobart Convent Annals*, December 1903.

²⁶ "Additions 6-4-03 Mr. Stabb", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

²⁷ "New Additions to Main Building", *Hobart Convent Annals*, December 1903.

²⁸ "New Farm Buildings 25-11-04 Alfred Gregory", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

²⁹ "New Farm Buildings", *Hobart Convent Annals*, January/February 1905.

³⁰ "The Magdalen Home", Extract from the *Monitor*, cited in *Hobart Convent Annals*, 24th August 1906.

³¹ Financial Records, Good Shepherd Convent, Austin's Ferry.

³² "Purchase of Land Mt. Nelson", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 21st May 1913.

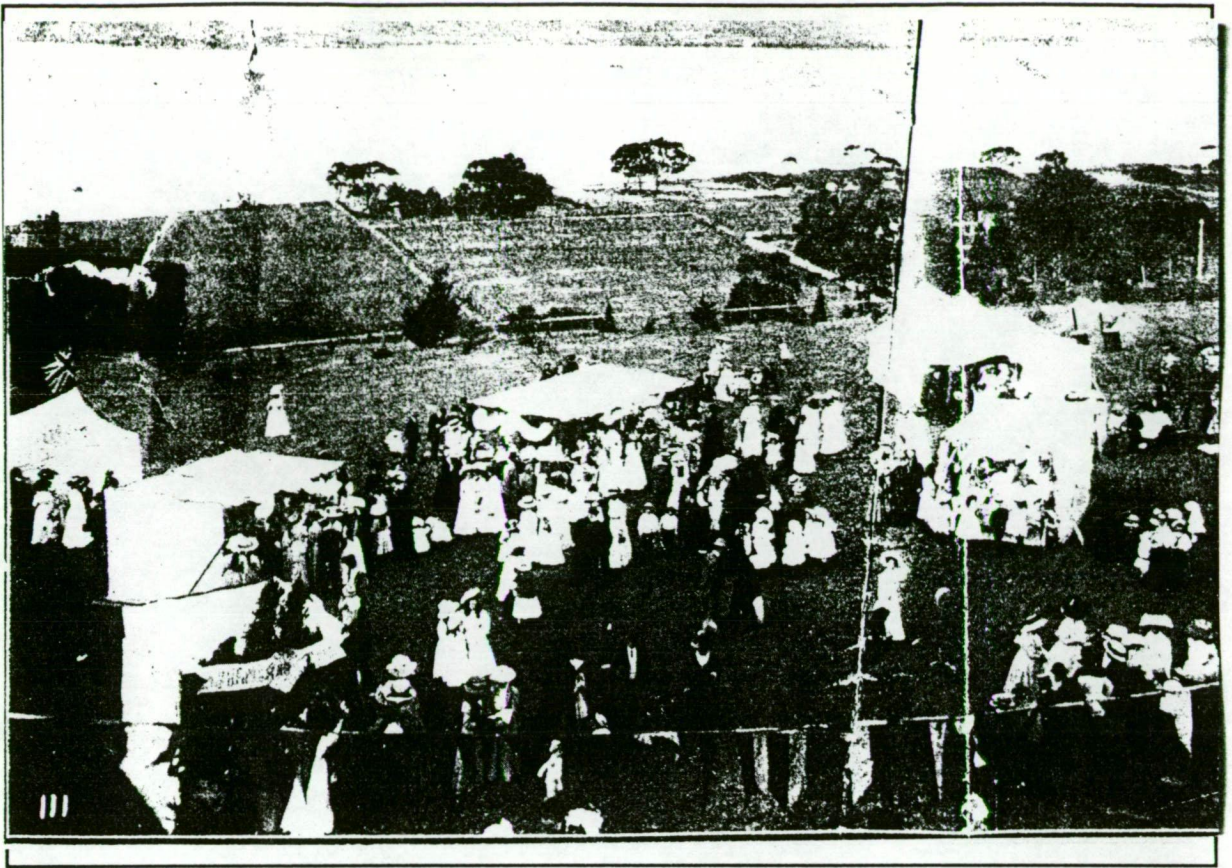
³³ "Erection of a New Ironing and Packing rooms etc.", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 5th May 1906.



"Stella Maris" (1903) - quarters for men who worked on the farm.



The Barn (1903) - the only remaining farm building.



The Garden Fete of 1910.



Miss Clara Maher and Committee.



A bouquet for Lady Barron.

improvements. The Architect is Mr. Allen Walker, and Contractor Mr. Dunn. The whole building will cost £3198 when completed, including the removal of the old ironing room - which will be used as an infirmary for the children. The first men came to lay the foundation on May 24th 1906."³⁴ Shaped ironing boards in 13/8 inch kauri pine are included in the plans, but it has not been possible to verify whether the design was original!³⁵

The secure financial base of Mount St. Canice in the early twentieth century stirred aspirations for the central focus of any convent, namely its own church. Publicly, the idea was first mooted in the *Mercury* in 1907. With 110 "Children" and sixteen Sisters in residence, "Notwithstanding the recent extensive additions, the Home is still too small for its numerous inmates so they are thinking of constructing a chapel, and putting the beautifully fitted room, which was used for the purpose, to some other use. But to do that more money is required and Mother Magdalen (Sutton) does not yet see from what quarter it is to come. It is just possible that the publication of this little sketch may help her to find the means."³⁶

Raising money to finance the building of the Church, became the means of cementing the co-operative relationship which existed between the community and the convent. A succession of Governors' wives had patronised the institution since Viscountess Gormanston in the 1890's, especially Lady Edeline Strickland and her successor Lady Barron. Lady Strickland visited on several occasions, once with her two daughters in 1906 and again in 1907, showing great interest "in the Limerick lace done by the children."³⁷ Lady Barron became a confirmed supporter of Magdalen Home. Her first visit in October 1909, at which she received the usual "address of welcome" from the penitents in their classroom, coincided with a meeting of Ladies organising a "Garden Fete" aiming to "raise funds to pay off some of the debt on our new Church."³⁸ Lady Barron's patronage and support for two successive annual Garden Fetes proved to be financially and socially advantageous. Members of the establishment came in droves, including Sir Elliott Lewis and Lady Lewis, as well as that inveterate supporter of all good causes, Mrs Henry Dobson. "Special tram cars brought crowds of people from town" and almost £200 was

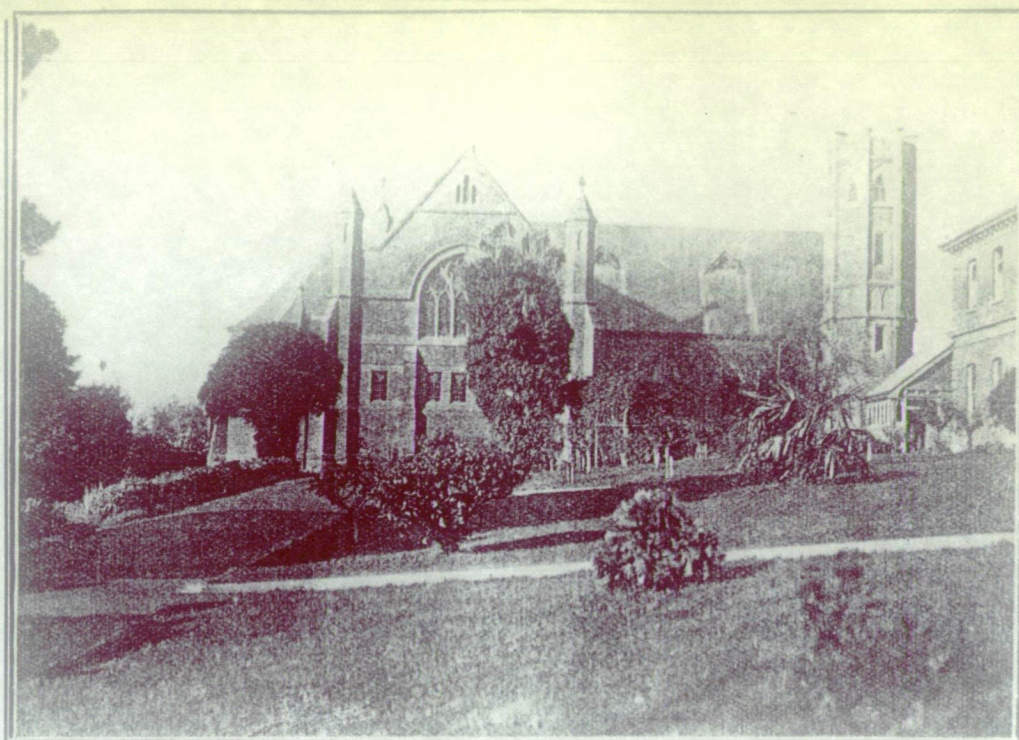
³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Additions South Wing", Henry Hunter Collection, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Document Collection.

³⁶ "The Magdalen Home", Extract from the *Mercury* 1907, cited in *Hobart Convent Annals*, 8th July 1907.

³⁷ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 24th August 1906 and 12th June 1907.

³⁸ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 26th October 1909.



The Church in 1913.



The covered cloister through which inmates passed to enter the church.

raised on each occasion.³⁹ Lady Barron formed a significant attachment to Magdalen Home. Writing to inquire about the welfare of individual children after her departure from the State, she commented to the Sisters that "she found the people of Perth very different from Tasmania."⁴⁰ In Western Australia, patronage of the Governor's wife was presumably expendable.

For the Sisters, the Church was of paramount significance, the ultimate building project. It would be the focus of their own religious life and the pathway to salvation for the penitents. Certainly its commencement appears to have represented a financial leap of faith far greater than any previous projects at Mt. St. Canice.⁴¹ Unlike other buildings on the site, it was to be for public as well as institutional use. The nave, with individual blackwood stalls, was set aside for the use of the Sisters, and the south transept, with its closed cloister, was solely for the use of the penitents. The northern transept, was accessible to the public by a separate entrance. The three congregations would be physically separate, but with one central focus. In a way, the church was a symbol of the Home, which had three very different facets to its character, but all united by the Catholic faith. Sound business acumen and dedicated commitment by the nuns, hard work by Sisters and "children", combined with the cultivation of a supportive community from outside the Home, had enabled the "little colony of industry and prayer" to thrive.⁴²

³⁹ *Tasmanian Mail*, 29th January 1910 and *Mercury*, 23rd January 1910.

⁴⁰ *Hobart Convent Annals*, 22nd May 1913.

⁴¹ "Ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone", *Hobart Convent Annals*, 28th February 1909.

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