

University of Canterbury

The Canterbury Female Refuge

A Case Study 1865 - 1916

'This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 8989 words in length.'

Category One

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the Canterbury Female Refuge from its founding in 1865 through until 1916. New Zealand welfare historians have looked at this period of Charitable Aid based relief in some detail, along with studies of some of our early charitable institutions. However, the Canterbury Female Refuge has remained a footnote in these other histories, and has not be explored in any considerable depth. I examine the history of the Female Refuge, looking at the founding and running of the institution by the Charitable Aid Board and the Anglican Church. This dissertation also seeks to paint a historically accurate picture of how single mothers were treated. I looked at the everyday experiences of these women while at the Female Refuge, as well as their lives following their stay. The women who entered the Refuge were largely from the working classes, and most went into domestic service following their stay. The records used in this study suggest that these women did not experience the level isolation or social shame that may be expected. The Female Reformatory, which served as a refuge for troubled women, is also discussed here as a comparative study between two similar institutions. This dissertation aims to add to the existing scholarship on welfare, women and early society in New Zealand.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter One	8
1. A Timeline of Refuge History	8
2. The Role of the Refuge	9
3. The Role of Religion	11
Summary	14
Chapter Two. Inside.....	15
1. The Committees.....	15
2. The ‘Inmates’.. ..	17
3. Daily Life.....	18
Summary.....	21
Chapter Three. Beyond the Refuge.....	22
1. Life after the Refuge.....	22
2. The Reformatory.....	23
Summary.....	25
Conclusion	26
Bibliography	28

Introduction

In November 1888, Alice Beatrice McNulty was admitted to the Canterbury Female Refuge on Essex Street, Linwood, Christchurch¹. Alice was only fifteen at the time, having moved to New Zealand when she was nine. She had been in domestic service since she was 13. She was pregnant with an illegitimate child, and although the father is not named, her record notes that she was “lead astray through a bad companion²”. Alice spent her time at the refuge in relative silence, but is recorded as being a well-behaved housemate. The duration of her stay is not recorded but her child was adopted and she moved out about the same time. Alice McNulty was one of the hundreds of girls and women who passed through the Canterbury female refuge between 1865 and 1916. The story of this institution is a part of the lives of all the women who lived there. It is a part of the story of women’s history, of welfare history, and of the history of Christchurch. Public perceptions surrounding the treatment of unwed mothers during the 19th century are filled with ideas about public disgrace and shame. However, the everyday reality for such women was far less melodramatic. This dissertation will explore in detail, the records kept on the Canterbury Female Refuge, assessing the place this institution held in early Christchurch society. In exploring the history of the Refuge, it is clear that it was founded with a specific purpose, to meet the needs of the growing community. Chapter one looks at how the Anglican Church and British models of welfare heavily influenced how these young communities structured their charitable work. The institution was run by several committees, working side by side, and assessing the roles each committee played is vital in understanding the politics and ideologies behind the Refuge. Chapter two looks at the Refuge’s residents, exploring their backgrounds and their daily experiences, along with looking at how daily life at the Refuge changed during this period. Finally, chapter three looks at life beyond the refuge, considering the fate of the mothers and babies and how they were re-integrated back into society.

The Female Refuge records provided a wealth of knowledge about an early Christchurch institution, and more generally, about 19th century New Zealand society. The records have, as far as is known, only be studied twice previously. New Zealand welfare historian Margaret Tennant utilised these

¹Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board; fragments of history; hospitals; tuberculosis and benevolent institutions and miscellaneous*. (unpublished manuscript), 194.

²CATV CH395/1/d Case Book June 1886 - 26 April 1894; Alice McNulty.

sources when writing her monograph *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand, 1840 - 2005*³. The Female Refuge appears only briefly in this expansive volume⁴. However, the institution itself is not explored in detail. Another woman, Winifred Norris, worked with these records in the 1940s while writing her manuscript *The North Canterbury Hospital Board; Fragments of History*⁵, which remains unpublished. As such, these precious primary records have not received the proper study they deserve.

Sources and Methodology

My research on the Canterbury Women's Refuge was carried out in its majority through the use of The Essex Home record collection, housed at Archives New Zealand, Christchurch Branch. In their entirety, these records span a period from 1865 until 1957, covering the institution's journey from a female refuge to a maternity hospital. All records in this collection created after 1916 are restricted access due to the 100 years privacy law. My research was carried out using only the records created between 1865 and 1916, which are freely accessible to any member of the public. These records are all classed as government created documents, however, they also include report books, yearly hospital diaries, diaries on patients, committee books and several letters.

The limitations of these sources quickly became evident as I began to work through the collection. Firstly, all of these records were created by staff, volunteers and government employees, rather than the inmates of the Female Refuge. As a result, we must consider the potential bias and judgement that these figures may have felt, particularly towards the inmates. The people who had a hand in creating these records were personally and closely involved with the running of the institution and in the lives of the young women staying there, and so were not subjective observers. The fact that none of the records in this collection were created by the very people seeking refuge is a limitation in itself, and furthermore, there are no personal statements from the staff either. This leaves us with no first hand perspectives or personal impressions on the Refuge. The resulting history is therefore

³Margaret Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare: Voluntary Organisations, Government and Welfare in New Zealand 1840 - 2005* (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 2007).

⁴Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare*, 50.

⁵Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board; fragments of history; hospitals; tuberculosis and benevolent institutions and miscellaneous*.

not a particularly personal one. It is an institutional history, focusing on the daily running of the Refuge. I will touch upon some of the individual experiences, but the records necessitate these perspectives come from the outside, looking in.

The most significant limitation I encountered while working with this collection was the often vague and incomplete nature which characterised many of the records. These records may not have been written with the intent that someone from outside the Refuge would read them, and as such many of the records lack detail and explanation. Surnames were often omitted in daily records and at times, when a woman leaves the refuge, no explanation is given as to why. There is no information in the records about the staff writing them, or the volunteers who passed through the Refuge on a daily basis. In some instances, the hand writing is illegible and so some information may be missing from this study. Information about the founding of the Female Refuge is also notably absent from the records, so regrettably, this work is an incomplete history of the institute. There are complete records for only the years between 1874 and 1916. I have utilised secondary material in order to attempt to fill the gaps left by these records, to ensure a fuller picture of this period.

A significant proportion of this collection is made up of the 'Records of Daily events', or 'The Hospital Diaries' from the Refuge. These diaries cover every year in my study and contain notes on the daily events, comings and goings, births and deaths at the refuge. Due to the sheer volume of material in these diaries, I carried out a sample, reading the diary from every second year. This allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the everyday reality of life at the refuge as well as to gauge any changes in management over the 30 year period in question. These records were among the more vague works I encountered, as they consisted mostly of quick notes jotted down at the end of each day. Their value lies in the consistency with which they were written, revealing routine, structure, rules and yearly occurrences. Very similar to 'The Hospital Diaries' are the 'Registry of Weekly Returns' records. These weekly logbooks contain much of the same information as the diaries, but with added detail in some instances. They often note who adopted children born in the Refuge, who employed women from the Refuge, and at times they discuss the behaviour of the inmates, and general mood within the institute.

Perhaps the most interesting source in this collection is the 'Case Book', containing more personal information about some of the women seeking refuge. Only one book makes up this collection and

it covers a period from June 1886 - April 1894. This is an enormously useful source, as it reveals the background of the inmates, where they came from, their family situation, and at times the circumstances which lead them to seek refuge. The behaviour of the women while in the Refuge is also often commented on, as well as where they found employment, or accommodation following their stay. This reveals the kind of women who entered into the Refuge, the lives they led before entering the Refuge, and some ideas about their fates after leaving the institution. This source allowed me to include specific Refuge cases and to add some personalities to the collection of 'inmates', as the women were referred to in the records, who passed through the institution.

Related to the Female Refuge, there are some records on The Female Reformatory, a home for troubled women, and I have chosen to include these in my research. The Reformatory shared the property of the Refuge as they were run by the same charity groups, and these records include a weekly Diary and Case Book. These sources provided a brief comparative study of two institutions with similar yet differing purposes, and helped me to define the parameters of The Refuge's work. The records also reveal that the Reformatory provided a different kind of refuge in and of itself.

The final major source I have used in this study is a book of 'Committee Meeting Minutes'. This record details the minutes from the committee in charge of The Female Refuge from April 1889 until August 1900. This committee of men ran the Refuge from afar, dealing with supplies, repairs and financial matters. This record reveals what went into the practical management of such an institution and some of the policies employed by the committee, such as rules defining who could be admitted to the Refuge. Utilising these major documents, along with more minor records and secondary scholarship, makes it possible to gain a more complete and complex understanding of the Female Refuge during the period concerned.

Chapter One

A Timeline of Refuge History

The Canterbury Female Refuge was first proposed in 1864 by the group of Anglican Church members, and headed by the Diocesan Synod. There are very few records from this early period of Refuge history and so it is unclear where the building stood in 1865, when it was founded. It was in 1875 that the original Anglican committee secured the first known location for the Refuge, when they purchased a plot of land known as ‘Shicklans’. This was an area of two acres, on which stood a slightly run down building which was to be replaced with a government approved structure suitable ‘for the lying in of single women’⁶. According to the Winifred Norris Manuscript, the building was on Gordon Street, accessible from Cashel Street, and that Gordon Street was renamed Essex Street around 1885. It was in 1885 that the building was taken over by the Charitable Aid Board and they continued to run the Female Refuge from this location⁷. The Refuge was also run at this time by two sub-committees, a men’s committee and a women’s committee, who dealt with the daily issues which came with running such an institution. On the 1st of September 1891 the Charitable Aid Board conferred control of the home to Saint Saviour's Guild, an Anglican charity group, who set about reorganising the running of the refuge⁸. Under the Guild, the Refuge was run by a new Ladies Committee. The Refuge was deemed to be for single Canterbury women only, and only those going through their first pregnancy⁹. This contractual agreement for the running of the Refuge expired in 1910, when the institution returned to the control of the Charitable Aid Board and North Canterbury Hospital Board, who planned a second building on the site to house second time cases. In 1915, feeling that there was little to no work for them to continue with, the Ladies Committee resigned their position of the running of the home¹⁰. In 1918 the Refuge became known as Essex Home, and throughout the 20th century, the focus became increasingly on prenatal and

⁶CAAR 20410 CH287/ CP 665/b, Session 42 Papers and Returns -Correspondence re; purchase of a site for Female Refuge - 9 April 1875.

⁷Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board*, 194.

⁸CATV CH384/407, 7/1, 15. Female Refuge Report Book 1891.

⁹Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board*, 199.

¹⁰CATV CH395/4/i. Female Refuge (record of daily events) 12th January 1915.

anti-natal care for women from all walks of life, not just single mothers¹¹. Essex Home eventually became known as Essex Maternity Hospital.

The Role of the Refuge

The Christchurch Female Refuge was one of the first of its kind in New Zealand, and evidently there was a need for such an institution. New Zealand's population grew steadily throughout the 19th century and the population could no longer rely on neighbourly charity when in need of support¹². In her book *Paupers and Providers; Charitable Aid in New Zealand*¹³ historian Margaret Tennant explores how Charitable Aid was rolled out by the provincial government in response to the growing need for relief. Charitable aid offered a number of services to the struggling public, including free hospital care for the poor and outdoor (monetary) relief to the needy¹⁴. Specialised institutions also formed in response to the needs of New Zealand's growing population, and many of these received grants and assistance from local Charitable Aid Boards¹⁵. There are several reasons that an institution formed with the specific purpose of caring for young, single women, and these will be explored here. Firstly, the idea of a refuge for women was not a new one, and charity work in early Canterbury was certainly influenced by British models of charity work. In her thesis on *Social Aid in Otago and Canterbury*¹⁶, Kathleen Stringer argues that the foundation nation of each province had a huge impact on the way in which Charitable Aid was formed. Canterbury was an English settled province, and so British models of charity and female refuges naturally served to influence the young city¹⁷. What is more, having a Ladies' committee involved in the running of the Refuge was a very Victorian notion. Middle-class women became involved in charity work during

¹¹Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board*, 201.

¹²Margaret Tennant, *Paupers and Providers; Charitable Aid in New Zealand* (Wellington, Allen & Ulwin New Zealand Limited, 1989), 14.

¹³Margaret Tennant, *Paupers and Providers; Charitable Aid in New Zealand* (Wellington, Allen & Ulwin New Zealand Limited, 1989).

¹⁴Tennant, *Paupers and Providers*, 14.

¹⁵Tennant, *Paupers and Providers*, 27.

¹⁶Kathleen Stringer, "Social aid in Otago and Canterbury up to 1885; With special reference to Oamaru and Ashburton." (Masters Thesis. University of Canterbury, 2015).

¹⁷Stringer, "Social Aid in Otago and Canterbury." 2.

the Victorian period as a way to escape the home, and as a way of supporting the community¹⁸. The population of single women in New Zealand was also on the rise, especially in the Canterbury region. The government was actively encouraging immigration, even subsidising passage from England for such women¹⁹. Young, single women were brought to New Zealand to fill the constant demand for domestic servants in the growing colony, and to ensure the birth of the next generation²⁰. From the 1850's through to the 1870's, 12,000 single women landed in New Zealand²¹. Clearly, the intent was for such women to marry, and then to be supported by their husbands. For nineteenth century women, motherhood was the expected career and most respectable women would marry, it was less the respectable women who required refuge and guidance²². When employed, single women became pregnant they had to leave their jobs. Having often travelled to New Zealand alone, they were then left homeless. The Female Refuge offered such women a place to stay before, during and after the birth of their child. It is clear from the records that the Refuge was not just for single working women, though they did make up the majority of cases admitted. Young women who still lived with their parents were also received at the refuge. An example of this can be found in the report book from 1884, of Rose Lake, who having been committed to the home by her parents 12 months earlier, wrote to her mother demanding she be let out²³. Evidently, parents had some control over the daughters in this instance, but other women staying at the Refuge were allowed to leave of their own accord²⁴. In the earlier years of the Refuge's existence they also allowed married, pregnant woman to seek accommodation, although this was a rare occurrence which stopped completely when the home was declared for single, first-time mothers only in 1891. However, in March 1890 a "Mrs Attwood and son 2 and a half years old" were admitted to the Refuge, where Mrs Attwood gave birth to a girl a

¹⁸ Julia Parker, *Women and Welfare: Ten Victorian Women in Public Social Services* (London, The Macmillan Press LTD, 1988), 2.

¹⁹CAAR 19936 CH287/CP 58, ICPS 2102/1864. J. Marshman (Emigration) to Provincial Secretary 17 September 1864.

²⁰Charlotte MacDonald, *A Woman of Good Character; Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth Century New Zealand* (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1990), 1.

²¹MacDonald, *A Woman of Good Character*, 4.

²² Heidi Whiteside, " 'We Shall Be Respectable'; Women and Representation of Respectability in Lyttelton 1851 - 1893." Masters Thesis. University of Canterbury, 2007.

²³CATV CH384/406, 7/1, 7. Female Refuge Report Book 1884.

²⁴CATV CH395/2/a. Registry of Weekly Returns, 12 December 1898 - 28 September 1903.

month later²⁵. Here it is clear that the institution provided refuge for a family. Importantly, the Refuge did not remove children from their mothers. While many children were placed up for adoption, there is nothing in the records to suggest that such a decision was ever forced on the mothers by the Refuge. Many mothers left the home after their stay, taking their babies with them²⁶. The Canterbury Refuge did more than just supply accommodation, they also provided training and medical care, and expected work in return. The women at the Refuge spent their days learning domestic skills and doing laundry to earn their keep²⁷. Due to the labour they were expected to provide, the Refuge can be compared to the female factories that existed in Australia. These factories were run as correctional facilities, where convicted women completed domestic labour as penance²⁸. Another idea that influenced the creation of a female refuge was the notion that women required extra help. Traditionally, women have been viewed in society as less-capable and self-sufficient than their male counterparts. For this reason, women as a group have always been one of the largest recipients of welfare²⁹. This idea is reflected in how the Refuge inmates are spoken about in the records. They are constantly referred to as ‘girls’, for example, no matter their age, and they received constant supervision whenever they left the Refuge, like children who could not be trusted³⁰. Bronwyn Dalley describes this as “the infantilisation of inmates”, which she describes as a feature of all women’s institutions at the time³¹. The sexist element of this must be acknowledged, with women being seen as dependants, while men were accepted as fully independent human beings³². In short would could not, and were not allowed to, make it on their own. These attitudes also explains why there was no male refuge. Instead, men were sent to prisons and detention centres, showing the prevalence of double standards in this society.

²⁵CATV CH395/1/a. Register of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

²⁶CATV CH395/1/a. Registry of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

²⁷CATV CH384/495, 7/1, 3. Female Refuge Report Book 1880.

²⁸Eleanor C. Casella, “‘A Large and Efficient Establishment’: Preliminary Report on Fieldwork at the Ross Female Factory.” *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Stable* 15 (1997): 79.

²⁹Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare*, 16.

³⁰CATV CH384/409, 7/1, 24. Female Refuge Report Book 1901.

³¹Bronwyn Dalley, “From Demi-monders to Slaveys; Aspects of the management of the Te Oranga Reformatory for Delinquent Young women 1900 - 1918” in *New Zealand Women in History* 2, ed. Barbara Brookes et al. (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1992), 164.

³²Anne Summers, *Damned Whore and Gods Police* (Victoria, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1994), 163.

The Role of Religion

Religion played an enormous role in all aspects of how the Female Refuge was run, and had a large influence over how Refuge inmates were viewed and treated. The founding of the Refuge may have been about sheltering and concealing fallen women, but it was also about the evangelical nature of the Anglican Church work. Following the model set by the Church in England, it was expected that the Church perform charity work throughout the community in order to support their parishioners, as well as to save souls and convert people to the Anglican faith³³. The fact that the Refuge was a project of the Anglican faith is also of interest, as many other faiths present in New Zealand were also involved in charity and evangelical work. As explored in the previous section, Canterbury was an English settled province. English settlers brought with them their Anglican faith and traditions, making Anglicanism the most common religion in the Canterbury region, and champion of many of the charities in the area³⁴. It was the Reverend Henry Torlesse who originally called for a women's home in order to help improve the respectability of the growing city³⁵. It was believed that urban life had a negative effect on people's morality, as opposed to the countryside, which bred purity and decency³⁶. This idea goes some way in explaining why the Refuge was built on a two-acre section, in order to emulate the feeling of country life. Ideas about sin, good and bad women, and who was worthy of help, all stemmed from the religious influence over the Refuge. The Church's influence can be seen in who was accepted into the home in the first place. The best example of this can be seen when the home, having come under the control of Saint Saviour's Guild, where the new committee ruled that the home would be for first time, single mothers only³⁷. This was not done because of the overwhelming number of applicants for the home, but rather because women who had already been pregnant outside of wedlock were considered to be beyond salvation. Margaret Tennant discusses the idea of good and bad women in her work on women's homes, looking at how first-time mothers were seen as victims in need of saving from the dangerous sexuality of men³⁸. In

³³Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare*, 44.

³⁴Stringer, "Social Aid in Otago and Canterbury." 96.

³⁵Margaret Tennant, "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles: Women's Homes in Nineteenth Century," in *New Zealand Women in History 2*, ed. Barbara Brookes et al. (Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1992), 49.

³⁶Winifred Norris, *The North Canterbury Hospital Board*, 179.

³⁷CATV CH395/9/c. Minuets of Memorial Home and Female refuge Committee Meeting 12 April 1889 - 7 August 1900.

³⁸Margaret Tennant "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles," 63.

second-timecases, it was clear that a women's vices were inbuilt, and that she was unwilling to repent her life of sin. Such women were thus banned from Christian homes³⁹. To quote Tennant, "welfare has always involved judgments⁴⁰", and women applying for refuge were judged on whether or not they could be saved. In the home's *Registry of weekly Returns*, there are multiple mentions of women who were turned away from the home, said to be "not a fit case for the Refuge". An example of this can be seen on the 14th of January 1895, when a "Marion McCue was sent to Mrs Pinion to be housed. Not a fit case for the Refuge"⁴¹. We can also see that women and girls who did not exhibit the correct behaviour were asked to leave the home, or were more forcefully dismissed. On November 9th, 1887, the Matron of the Refuge writes "three girls had a violent quarrel in the laundry" and that one of them was dismissed that night "Mary Hopkins who raised the quarrel"⁴². Stay in the Refuge was not a right. It was a privilege that could be taken away if one exhibited un-Christian behaviours. Religion was a forceful presence in the weekly, if not daily, lives of the Refuge's inmates, as the Church tried to encourage virtue and piety. This can be seen in accounts of the weekly routine, with services held every Sunday, and bible classes a regular feature⁴³. It must be noted though, that the Anglican religion was not forced upon the inmates. In the Committee meeting minutes from June 1889, the committee approved a Presbyterian minister to visit the Refuge weekly, in order to hold services for those under his denomination⁴⁴. It was not only the Refuge residents who were expected to engage in religious practice. The staff and matron who ran the home were expected to lead by example. This can be seen in a letter in which Eliza Wright applied for the position of Matron at the Refuge. Clearly, Eliza felt that her observations of religion were one of her best recommendations, as she writes "My observations of such work in England will enable me to put the like into working order. Namely the giving of a daily amount of religious instruction⁴⁵". Although Eliza was not offered the position, this example illustrates the

³⁹ Margaret Tennant "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles," 69.

⁴⁰Tennant, *The Fabric of Welfare*, 9.

⁴¹CATV CH395/1/c. Registry of Weekly Returns 14 January 1895 - 5 December 1898.

⁴²CATV CH395/1/a. Register of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

⁴³CATV CH384/407, 7/1, 15. Female Refuge Report Book 1891.

⁴⁴CATV CH395/9/c. Minuets of Memorial Home and Female refuge Committee Meetings 12 April 1889 - 7 August 1900.

⁴⁵CAAR 19936 CH287/CP 152 ICPS 2883/1874. Eliza Wright to Provincial Secretary 3 December 1874.

kind of women who were wanted to run the Refuge. Religion was an important part of 19th century life and charity work, so it follows that this is reflected in Refuge life.

Summary

The Canterbury Female Refuge opened its doors in 1865 under the care of the Charitable Aid Board and the Anglican Church. The Refuge provided a home for expectant mothers from across the Canterbury region, caring primarily for women expecting their first child outside of wedlock. Although married women, and women carrying their second child, were also accepted into the refuge, this changed in 1891 when it was declared that the home would be for first time cases only. The Refuge also provided training for the women in residence, and expected their labour in return. The Anglican Church had a strong influence over how the home was run, and the home was founded with the goal of leading young women away from a life of sin. Most importantly, the Refuge supplied a safe haven for hundreds of women and children in need.

* * *

Chapter Two: Inside

The Committees

The Church and the Charitable Aid Board played considerable roles in the founding of the Canterbury Female Refuge, and influenced the running of the institution. However, there were two committees who were charged with the everyday running of the refuge; a men's committee and the Ladies' Committee. This section explores the role that each committee played in the regular running of the Refuge. The first mention of the men's committee is in the record entitled *Minutes of Memorial Home and Female Refuge Committee Meetings (from first meeting) 12 April 1889 - 7 August 1900*⁴⁶. This record details the responsibilities of the committee, decisions they made, and how they organised themselves. It is unclear who filled this role before the men's committee seen here, as there is no mention of a committee preceding this one. The men's committee was in control of several institutions, including the Memorial Home, the Orphanage, and the Female Refuge. Their main responsibility with regards to the Refuge was dealing with financial matters. In their meeting minutes they regularly discussed and approved spending for the home, and set out budgets. In a detailed account from 14th May 1889, the committee approved the salaries of both the Matron and the caretaker, as well as spending on milk, bread, and the purchase of a lawnmower. In March 1892 the record shows that the committee decided on the budgets for the various institutions under their control. The Orphanage was granted 1000 pounds, the Memorial Home 900 pounds, and the Female Refuge, being the smallest, was granted 300 pounds. The men's committee also dealt with the upkeep of the buildings at the Refuge, inspecting the home semi-regularly, ensuring that repairs were carried out whenever necessary. From this, it is evident that this committee filled the traditional male role of the household, in keeping with the period. The men's committee was also involved in decisions about who was and was not admitted to the home. In August 1889, they received a report on a girl named Fanny Hyde and granted her request to enter the home. They also declined to receive a Mrs Hiscoke, because she was a married woman. Each women's acceptance seems to have been considered on a case by case basis, as the committee would request reports of individual women. In one case from February 1890, they allowed Jane Berry to stay at the home for two months, as a destitute person, but state clearly "The case is not to form a precedent". This

⁴⁶CATV CH395/9/c. Minutes of Memorial Home and Female refuge Committee Meetings 12 April 1889 - 7 August 1900.

record also reveals another rule which governed who could remain at the refuge, when a girl named Jane Grey refused to give up the name of her child's father. It is recorded that she was allowed to stay at the refuge for two weeks, after which time she would be asked to leave if she had not admitted the father's identity. The men's committee also had control over the staff of the home, filling positions, granting leave, and receiving monthly reports from the Matron. On April 1st, 1890, the men's committee were responsible for advertising for a new Matron, when the previous one decided to leave. With more serious or substantial issues, the men's committee would report to the Charitable Aid Board, often referring complicated cases to them. In July of 1889, they asked the Board if a telephone could be put in at the Refuge, at the (*princely sum?*) cost of 14 pounds per annum. Presumably, these responsibilities were handed on to a new committee run by Saint Saviour's Guild from 1891 onwards. While the men's committee may have dealt with some of the bigger administrative issues that came with running an institution, it was the Ladies' Committee who actively helped at the refuge on a day to day basis. The Ladies' Committee were below the men's committee in rank, as evidenced by their writing to the men's committee, requesting funds and concessions for the accommodation of certain women⁴⁷. The first mention of the Ladies' Committee can be found in the *Lyttelton Times* on the 15th of January 1856, in a section called 'News on Organisations run by the Church'⁴⁸. The article reports "the Female home is another charitable establishment and is very excellently managed by a committee of ladies who devote themselves to it with the most praiseworthy zeal". The Ladies' Committee was a fixture of refuge life from the very beginning, and their visits to the institution were a daily occurrence. In the Hospital diaries, which detail weekly events, the Ladies of the Committee can be seen visiting weekly and commenting on the state of affairs within the institution, as well as on the well-being of the girls⁴⁹. The Ladies' Committee also met at the home once a week, on a Tuesday or Wednesday, with a revolving cast of married women in attendance⁵⁰. As discussed in chapter one, having a Ladies' committee in charge of charitable work was a Victorian notion, the idea being that virtuous, married women could lead young troubled women by example, thereby saving them⁵¹. However, it

⁴⁷CATV CH395/9/c. Minuets of Memorial Home and Female refuge Committee Meetings 12 April 1889 - 7 August 1900.

⁴⁸Lyttelton Times, Volume XXIII, Issue 1344, 14 January 1865 "News on organisations run by the church."

⁴⁹CATV CH384/406, 7/1, 7. Female Refuge Report Book 1884.

⁵⁰CATV CH384/95, 7/1, 3. Female Refuge Report Book 1880.

⁵¹Margaret Tennant "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles," 58.

is clear that the Ladies' Committee offered more than this; they also offered support. When the inmates of the Refuge needed to go into town to look for work, run errands or attend church, they were often accompanied by one of the ladies of the committee⁵². In 1903, there is also an example of one of the Ladies offering financial support to a young mother. Mrs Simpson put up five pounds for the confinement expenses of a Miss Edith Cotter and agreed to pay five pounds per month to help care for the infant⁵³. The Ladies' Committee would also bring gifts for the girls, such as fresh fruit and clothes, and would often come to read to them and spend time with them at the Refuge⁵⁴. These women donated their time and served in mothering roles in support of Refuge inmates.

The Inmates

Within the Female Refuge records the women and girls in residence are often referred to as inmates. This phrase may conjure images of prison life, but the term was simply used to describe those in residence at any one time. Information about the inmates' lives and experiences of the Female Refuge is found primarily in two records; the *Case Book*⁵⁵ and a record entitled *Helpers Names and Addresses*⁵⁶. Despite the title of the second, which appears to have been mislabeled, both of these records contain information about the inmate's backgrounds, their behaviour while at the refuge, and at times hints at the situation which lead them to seek refuge. In the Case Book, a typical Refuge case can be seen in the notes on Sarah King⁵⁷. Sarah migrated from Scotland at the age of four and lived in Lyttelton with her mother and stepfather. At the age of sixteen she was admitted to the Female Refuge, where she gave birth to a son, who she named Bertie. The length of her stay is not recorded here, but she and her child returned to live with her mother eventually. Sarah is one of the younger women to have entered the Refuge. The youngest recorded was Hilda Collins, aged fifteen, in 1906, and the oldest woman was 36 years. A more unusual case in 1890 shows the arrival of one of the few married woman admitted to the Refuge. Mrs Attwood had stayed at the Refuge

⁵²CATV CH 395/4/a. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1903.

⁵³CATV CH 395/4/a. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1903.

⁵⁴CATV CH384/406, 7/1, 10. Female Refuge Report Book 1886.

⁵⁵CATV CH395/1/d. Case Book June 1886 - 26 April 1894.

⁵⁶CATV CH395/3/b. Helpers names and Addresses 1894-1908.

⁵⁷CATV CH395/1/d. Case Book June 1886 - 26 April 1894.

before her marriage in 1887 but returned, pregnant, after her husband deserted her and sold their family farm. Her conduct while in residence is described as being “troublesome, always disagreeing with other inmates”. She left, before giving birth, to live with Mrs Jane of Greendale. Mrs Attwood’s case is unusual in that she was married, and that it was her second stay at the Refuge, but also in that she left before giving birth. Although women seemed to come and go as they pleased, they were actively encouraged to stay by the Ladies’ Committee and the Matron. In some cases, more information is offered on the girl’s background. Eleanor Going was admitted in 1888 at the age of twenty-two. She was a Roman Catholic born in Christchurch, and she had been “brought up by an old aunt who is very poor”. A Sarah Smith who was admitted in 1891, was the daughter of a bricklayer from White-cliffs, and one of seven children. The record even notes that the father of Sarah’s child was Alfred Lemmings, a coal miner who was also from White-cliffs. All of the women in this Case Book come from working class families, and many of them were working themselves at the time they became pregnant. Perhaps middle to upper class families experienced less illegitimate pregnancies, or sent their daughters elsewhere. Regardless, such women were not sent to the Female Refuge. The record entitled *Helpers Names and Addresses* contains very similar information to the case book, noting the occupation, religion and duration of stay. Most of the women admitted had previously worked as domestic or general servants, but some were cooks, dress makers, and shop assistants. This record reveals that most women spent approximately a year in residence at the home, with some leaving early due to their disruptive behaviour, medical issues, or because they had family who wished to care for them.

Daily Life

The everyday routine of Refuge life was relatively monotonous for the inmates, as it followed a regular rhythm across the decades. There were many rules in place in women’s homes and institutions, as they attempted to create order and discipline⁵⁸. The weekly events are recorded in the Hospital diaries or Report Books, with one diary being kept for each year. The main focus of life at the Refuge surrounded pregnancy and child care. There were usually between 10 and 20 women in residence at the Refuge at any one time, all expecting or having recently given birth. The records are very consistent with regards to recording when a women went into labour and the outcome. When a woman went into labour it was referred to as her entering ‘confinement’, and she

⁵⁸ Margaret Tennant “Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles,” 59.

was isolated from the rest of the inmates during this time. Women went into confinement at the home, but should complications arise they could be sent to the hospital. An example of this can be seen on the 23rd of October 1905, when “Susan Eddy was taken to the hospital for her confinement as an operation had to be performed”⁵⁹. With so many new mothers and babies, doctor’s visits were also a weekly occurrence, with various doctors serving the Refuge throughout the years. Doctors came to tend to sick mothers and babies, and to vaccinate the children. A Dr Patrick attended the Refuge regularly throughout the 1880s. On the 15th of January 1880, he has signed the report book stating that he attending a sick baby, and vaccinated three others that day⁶⁰. Illness was fairly common inside the Refuge also, with colds, flu and fevers noted regularly, no doubt as a result of closely shared living quarters. The home was struck by a particularly bad epidemic of diphtheria in 1882, which affected many of the inmates, and even spread to the Female Reformatory, which was situated next door⁶¹. Sadly, infant mortality was another common feature of the Refuge, and a number of babies were stillborn. The matron often notes the passing of infants. In a summary of the years 1891 - 1895 the matron notes that out of sixty births, seven were stillborn and five died⁶². In one tragic incident on September 10th, 1894 the matron reports “Martha McConnell confined of a girl September 6th, 1894”. “Martha McConnell’s infant died from infant overlaying by the mother on the 10th. Dr Murdock made a post-mortem exam”. This was an incident in which the mother rolled onto the baby in her sleep, causing the infant to suffocate. Another child is recorded as having died of the same cause just over a month later when “Louisa Taylor’s infant was found dead in bed⁶³”. Instances like these were no doubt devastating for the young mothers, but they were not uncommon during this period, and this also shows that mothers and babies shared beds regularly, as the Refuge did not have cradles. The other major feature of daily Refuge life was the laundry. The inmates worked in the laundry on week days when able, as a way of helping to fund their stay. They undertook the house washing on a Monday. Commercial laundering for local businesses and hotels began on Tuesdays, and was normally completed by a Thursday or Friday. In the first week on 1884, the refuge received a very large load of washing from one of the hotels in the city, which saw them working very long days. They also experienced difficulties drying the washing the

⁵⁹CATV CH395/2/b. Registry of Weekly Returns 5 October 1903 - 5 October 1908.

⁶⁰CATV CH384/495, 7/1, 3. Female Refuge Report Book 1880.

⁶¹CATV CH384/404, 7/1, 5. Female Refuge Report Book 1882.

⁶²CATV CH384/407, 7/1, 18. Female Refuge Report Book 1895.

⁶³CATV CH395/1/b. Registry of Weekly Returns 7 April 1891 - 7 January 1895.

following week, as the fire kept going out, meaning they had to work into the evenings⁶⁴. That same week it was recorded that an inmate called Ada was allowed to stay and help in the kitchen, as she was unable to work in the laundry, and inmates were expected to help out around the home in whatever way they could. Conflict between inmates was also a semi-regular occurrence. Margaret Tennant attributes this conflict to the girl's resentment at having to work at the Refuge for such an extended period of time⁶⁵. This, along with so many young women living in close confines, was sure to result in the odd outburst. Most of the conflict seems to have occurred while doing the laundry. In 1887, on April 28th, "Emily Smith went away of her own accord after having behaved very rudely in the laundry and the house". Another incident followed a month later, with three girls having "a violent quarrel in the laundry"⁶⁶. Besides weekly visits from the Ladies' Committee members, Clergy members and nuns also frequented the Refuge. Church service was given every single Sunday at around 4 pm, as well as Tuesdays at 7 pm, although this varied from year to year⁶⁷. Baptisms happened on a weekly basis, either on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. These were performed by the Anglican minister at the Refuge, and girls from other faiths could take their babies to the church of their preference⁶⁸. Bible studies were included in the weekly routine during some years, and a nun, committee member or another volunteer would come to read to the girls every week⁶⁹. Aside from activities within the actual Refuge, inmates were regularly accompanied by the matron to court, where they sought monetary support from the fathers' of their children. In 1888, the Matron writes "took out a summons for the father of Jane Bell's child". She then accompanied Jane to court where the "case was settled, the father of the child giving her 20 pounds and paying all expenses⁷⁰". This shows that it was not just the women who were held accountable for their illegitimate children, and that the Refuge strongly supported these girls in seeking legal help and monetary support. This did not always go smoothly however, as in 1910 when "Matron took Lillian to court to sign a warrant to have the father of her child arrested". It is not stated why the father was to be arrested but it seems to be connected to some sort of child support. The following month, the

⁶⁴CATV CH384/406, 7/1, 7. Female Refuge Report Book 1884.

⁶⁵Margaret Tennant "Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles," 60.

⁶⁶CH395/1/a. Register of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

⁶⁷CATV CH395/4/a. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1903.

⁶⁸CATV CH395/4/e. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1911.

⁶⁹CATV CH384/404, 7/1, 5. Female Refuge Report Book 1882.

⁷⁰CATV CH384/406, 7/1, 12. Female Refuge Report Book 1888.

father of the child took Lillian to court “The case was settled out of court. The father of the child to pay seven pence per week and five pounds for home expenses⁷¹”. Very little changed in this weekly routine from 1876, when the weekly diaries begin, until 1916. The only noticeable change is the number of visitors the Refuge received, and the number of outings the inmates took. Towards the end of the 19th century, and especially in the early 20th century, the mothers, sisters, cousins, friends, and occasionally fathers, of the inmates would visit on the weekend and sometimes take the girls and the babies for outings⁷². The Matron would also accompany girls of their outings, but some girls were allowed to go out on their own. On June 22nd, 1901, a group of six girls went for a group outing and some shopping⁷³. The Refuge inmates were not shunned by their families and they were not hidden away from society. Their lives revolved primarily around their children and laundry duties, interspersed with time spent with family and friends.

Summary

Life inside the Canterbury Female Refuge was largely governed by the men’s committee and the Ladies’ Committee. The men’s committee dealt with the Refuge’s finances, as well as the upkeep of the buildings and facilities. However, it was the Ladies’ Committee members who played significant roles in the lives’ of Refuge inmates. The Ladies visited the Refuge weekly, offering support, both moral and financial, to the inmates. There was certainly an element of judgment in this system, as the ‘bad women’ of the refuge were expected to learn from the example of the ‘good women’, who made up the Ladies’ Committee. The inmates themselves were often from working class backgrounds, and their time at the refuge mostly revolved around their children and laundry work. Life inside the Refuge was perhaps monotonous and routine but the women were far from isolated and hidden. A constant stream of visitors, committee members, priests and family flowed through the Refuge, and the inmates gained further and further freedoms as the 20th century arrived.

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⁷¹CATV CH395/4/d. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1910.

⁷²CATV CH395/4/d. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1910.

⁷³CATV CH384/409, 7/1, 24. Female Refuge Report Book 1901.

Chapter Three: Beyond the Refuge

Life After the Refuge

After a woman's time at the Refuge had expired, she had to secure new accommodation for herself and her child. There were several options for these women and their children, all of which will be assessed here. Most commonly, women would return to work after the birth of their child. As discussed in chapter two, this was usually work as a domestic or general servant. The Refuge's Matron and the Ladies' Committee also assisted the girls in finding these positions, with someone often accompanying the girls into town to secure this. Girls usually went to work in the local area. In 1888, two girls are recorded as having gone to fill two positions at the home of Mrs Bates at New Brighton. Some of the women went back to live with their parents after their time in the Refuge. A few of the women were very young, and had lived with their parents before entering the institution. Others had families willing and able to support them. One girl was taken away when her family found out she was staying at the Refuge, as they preferred to care for her at their home. Jessie Grey entered the refuge in 1898, and gave the false surname of White, "went home on the 17th (May) to her parents at Sydenham - they not wishing her to remain, only found out on Saturday she was here⁷⁴". More common than may be expected, was the prospect of marriage for these young women. If the father of her child was still involved, the couple was often married as soon as could be arranged, following the woman's exit from the Refuge. On the 31st of December 1891, Sarah Mulloy left the institution "was married the same day to Charles Hogg the father of her child and is now living in Byron Street Sydenham⁷⁵". One of the main misconceptions surrounding homes for single mothers is that such institutions forcibly removed children from them. There is no evidence in these records at all that the Canterbury Female Refuge forced, or pushed for the removal of any children, although this may have occurred. The Refuge functioned as an adoption agency when an inmate decided to give up her child, and this was the most common choice. Women who went back to work would have been unable to take their children with them, and presumably, some did not wish to. Children were usually adopted out to families within the city. All adoptions were recorded in a similar fashion in the Refuge diaries, for example, "9th November 1889. Kate Barclay left her

⁷⁴CATV CH395/1/c. Registry of Weekly Returns 14 January 1895 - 5 December 1898.

⁷⁵CATV CH395/1/a. Register of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

child gone to Mrs Williams Ford Brougham Sydenham⁷⁶". A note from 1893 shows a young woman who went to work and her child went elsewhere, "Winnie left for a situation at Mrs Hastingbridge's, her child to go to Mrs Ablett, St Albans⁷⁷. Despite adoption being the norm, many babies were taken home by their mothers. On the 25th of August 1891, for example, "Sarah King left with her mother on Saturday night. Her mother has taken both Sarah and the child home to Lyttelton⁷⁸". In 1895 twelve women put up their babies for adoption, and six took their children with them, while nine babies passed away, and two were committed to other institutions⁷⁹. However, in 1897, 10 women kept their babies and only eight were put up for adoption, while two infants passed away⁸⁰. When looking at similar institutions, a comparison can be drawn here between the Refuge and single mothers' homes in Ireland, in the early 20th century. Many people may be familiar with stories from these homes, which served a similar purpose as the Refuge, but are well known for forcing mothers to give up their children⁸¹. Unfortunately, some women and children remained institutionalised following their stay at the Refuge. Mothers could be admitted to the asylum, or other charitable aid home, with their babies being sent to the orphanage or the government receiving home. In 1906 "Mrs Banks took Phoebe and her baby to court, the baby was committed to the receiving home and Phoebe to St Mary's for two years⁸²". It is unclear why homes could not be found for some babies, perhaps in Phoebe's case she hoped to regain custody of her baby after her two years at St Mary's had elapsed. Overall reintegration into wider society was not difficult for the ex-inmates of the Female Refuge. They found jobs and positions with relative ease, and most children found homes.

The Reformatory: Another kind of Refuge

Run alongside the Female Refuge, on the same grounds, there was another institution with a similar purpose. The Female Reformatory, also referred to as Class B in the Refuge records, served as a

⁷⁶CATV CH395/1/a. Register of Weekly Return 7 April 1887 - 31 March 1891.

⁷⁷CATV CH395/1/b. Register of Weekly Returns 7 April 1891 - 7 January 1895.

⁷⁸CATV CH395/1/b. Register of Weekly Returns 7 April 1891 - 7 January 1895.

⁷⁹CATV CH384/407, 7/1, 18. Female Refuge Report Book 1895.

⁸⁰CATV CH384/408, 7/1, 20. Female Refuge Report Book 1897.

⁸¹Paul M. Garrett, "Unmarried Mothers in the Republic of Ireland." *Journal of Social Work* 16 (2016), 711.

⁸²CAWU 3383 CH823/55/110. Female Refuge (Hospital) Diary 1906.

sanctuary for different kinds of women. It is included here as a comparison study and as an institution where women may have ended up after their stay at the Refuge. Both institutions were also run by the same committees. The records of the Reformatory are very minimal, and for this reasons they are included in the Female Refuge record collection. They consist of a Registry which holds information about inmates, and also a diary covering the events of 1883. The women who stayed at the Reformatory were not necessarily mothers; they were often vagrants, criminals and alcoholics. The registry⁸³ reveals that one inmate, Isabella Leckie, was in the reformatory three times between June 1880 and August 1881, as well as in and out of courts and gaol. Most of the women came in and out of the reformatory readily. Many were married women and they tended to be significantly older than the inmates of the Female Refuge. Mary Duffies was 44 when she was admitted to the Reformatory for the second time. She “promised to behave well... on April 11th Mary behaved so violently and abusively that the ladies were compelled to dismiss her immediately”. It is clear that these women were troubled, and had often lived difficult lives, and that violent tendencies and outbursts were common. Elizabeth Andrews was admitted to the Reformatory 1881 on “April 4th brought from the gaol with an infant a month old. Has been here 14 days for throwing a stone while in unexcited temper and breaking a window”. Elizabeth’s behaviour while at the Reformatory was less than satisfactory, as her record describes her as having a terrible temper. A doctor even came to examine her but did not think she was fit to enter the asylum, and she was instead sent to the gaol. One of the Ladies’ Committee members, Mrs Scott, took Elizabeth in following her sentence. Elizabeth however, was found to be an unfit mother and “She was sent to Addington (prison) and the baby to the orphanage”. Alcohol abuse was also common among the women. A Mrs M Hickwood is reported as having gone out to visit her son and she “did not return for three days then tipsy and without bonnet. Stayed until the 15th and the left again and came back on the 26th drunk”. The Reformatory functioned as a much more general place of refuge than the actual Female Refuge. There are no rules for entry mentioned, and women did not have to apply to the board or committee for entry. The Reformatory even took in sick women who had nowhere else to go, “Clara Dodsworth (was) admitted temporarily until a situation can be obtained for her, she was discharged from the hospital today and appears to be in better health⁸⁴”. The Reformatory diary from 1883 shows that the daily routine was centred around

⁸³CATV CH384/412, 7/2,1. Female Reformatory - Registry 1880 - 1883.

⁸⁴CATV CH384/412, 7/2, 2. Female Reformatory 1883.

laundry. Similarly to the Refuge, the Reformatory ladies were expected to earn their keep⁸⁵. House washing was done on Mondays, Tuesday was public washing, Wednesday was for mending and folding, and they finished the washing and ironing on Thursdays or Fridays, while house cleaning was done on Saturdays. The Reformatory received very few visitors compared to the Refuge, and work seems to have been a much bigger focus. Priests from various denominations stopped by occasionally, but there is no mention of the weekly visits received at the Refuge. They also experienced a lot of issues with their laundry facilities during 1883. In January, their boiler was failing and this made washing difficult for the women. In April, their water supply was cut off and they “had to take it in turns to go round to the Refuge grounds for water, we had to utilise one of our baths for a boiler and to contrive to boil the shirts and the table napkins”. This offers an idea of how close the Reformatory was to the Refuge but also suggests that the former had inferior facilities that were unreliable. Life at the Reformatory was not all that dissimilar from life at the Refuge. Although the women of the Reformatory did receive support and care during their stay, it does not seem to be equal to what their less tarnished neighbours received.

Summary

Life beyond the Canterbury Female Refuge continued for ex-inmates. Many went to work, some married, some went home to their parents or other family members, and others remained institutionalised. It appears that they were not ostracised or shunned for their pasts, and it seems to have been relatively easy for most of the women to find employment. The children born in the Female Refuge found homes with other families in the area, or remained with their mothers and families. There is no evidence to suggest that children were taken from their mothers in this setting. Instead, it was at the discretion of the mother and grandparents, whether or not the child was put up for adoption. The Refuge served as an adoption agency when needed. As to the Female Reformatory, this institution better fits the current definition of a refuge. It served as a home for the sick, the troubled, the destitute, and the homeless. In stark contrast, the inmates were not as carefully curated as at the Refuge. The result is women of all ages, married, unmarried, mothers and spinsters. This brief comparison shows how the Female Refuge differed from other, similar institutions, in the opportunities and care it offered.

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⁸⁵CATV CH384/412, 7/2, 2. Female Reformatory 1883.

Conclusion

The Canterbury Female Refuge was one of the first of its kind in New Zealand. An institution primarily for the care of unmarried mothers, the Refuge provided shelter, medical care and vocational training to dozens of women between 1865 and 1916. Under the control of the Anglican Church and the Charitable Aid Board, the Refuge was intended as a place in which young women could redeem themselves and mend their ways. It was hoped that through hard work and prayer the inmates would go on to lead virtuous lives. Heavily influenced by models of charity and welfare work from Britain, Refuge life was also shaped by religious values and the substantial role that the church played in its running. The home started out as a refuge for all mothers, but after it came under the management of Saint Saviour's Guild in 1891, the home began to focus only on young, first time mothers from around the Canterbury region. Two committees were involved in the day to day running of the Refuge. The men's committee dealt with financial matters and Refuge repairs, while the Ladies' Committee offered support, and served as positive role models. Together these committees acted as paternal and maternal figures within the institution.

Often public perceptions of single mothers' homes are incredibly negative, centring around images of heartbroken mothers separated from their children, family and friends. While life at the Canterbury Refuge may not have been ideal, conditions there were certainly not as abhorrent as might be expected. The women worked incredibly hard, but they were not prisoners, being allowed to leave the home accompanied, and unaccompanied in latter years. There is also no evidence in this record collection that children were taken from their mothers, or that any of the inmates were mistreated during their stay. As stated in the introduction, this study lacks personal statements and accounts from the inmates and staff who actually lived at the refuge. Such statements would greatly assist in this study, and may reveal that some inmates did, in fact, feel mistreated during their stay at the refuge, felt that their children were taken from them unfairly. As far as records show, most women left the Refuge for new jobs as domestic servants, and most children were adopted by families from within the Canterbury area. The Female Reformatory stood right next door to the Refuge and though it served a similar purpose, it housed a very different group of women.

There is plenty of detail in these records and still more work that could be done. Certain areas, could be studied further, with additional sources added to expand them. This dissertation has aimed to provide a solid preliminary survey of these records, and the history of the Canterbury Female Refuge. There is no doubt that, historically, there has been an element of shame associated with

single mothers. At times during their lives these women were hidden away, and likewise, they have sometimes been hidden, and thus made invisible from history. By exploring the history of this Refuge, this dissertation has made these women visible again. The story of such women is an important element in the story of welfare, motherhood and early society in New Zealand.

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