

The Anglican Historical Society of New Zealand
Te Rōpu Hītori o te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa
The Chapel is the Centre of Life at St Mary's Homes, Otahuhu

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This article is the result of research undertaken at Auckland Diocesan Archives into the history of the St. Mary's Homes' Chapel for a presentation to Anglican Historical Society (AHS) members. AHS members were invited to visit the chapel at the Anglican Trust for Women and Children (ATWC) premises in Otahuhu to introduce them to a project being undertaken to write a history of ATWC.

The dedication of St. Marys Women Homes, Otahuhu took place in 1904, a year after the property was purchased. Ashley Hunter designed the buildings including the villa shown above, where the chapel was first located. An article about the dedication in the Auckland Church Gazette records the following about the chapel: 'For the present, one room is fitted as a temporary chapel. The altar cross, vases, credence table and book desk gifts of Major Gay of Parnell. The lectern a gift from the Vestry of St Marys, Parnell. A handsome brass tablet to the memory of Lady Martin and Mrs Cowie was

donated by a former fellow worker with them. The inscription reading 'In loving memory of Mary Ann Martin, wife of the first Chief Justice of NZ who died at Torquay 2 January 1884 and of Eliza Jane Cowie, wife of the Primate of NZ who died at Auckland 18th August 1902 'So he giveth his beloved sleep.'¹

We hear of the chapel again via the Gazette in August 1905. It is the birthday of the Superintendent, Miss Hudson. An opportunity of a reunion of former residents. A special service of thanksgiving was held in the chapel by Rev. Harry Mason. The former dining-room now being utilised as the chapel, the room recently in use being too small. The Bishop had visited the Homes on Monday 31st July to dedicate the relocated chapel. The article concludes with the comment that a permanent chapel is urgently needed.²

Reverend Harry Mason was the first Chaplain. He had been appointed by Bishop Neligan to the

parish of Otahuhu-cum-Panmure in February 1904 and on 4th August that year he was licenced as Chaplain of St Mary's Homes Otahuhu, a position he held until 1925.

Come May 31, 1911, Bishop Crossley dedicated a new chapel along with the Campbell Nursery, the latter a gift of Sir John and Lady Logan Campbell. Arthur George Daw was the architect. Among his other projects of interest are the additions to the Children's Home in Richmond Road in 1910 and the Lodge for the Girls Friendly Society in 1914. The chapel was built by Mr. Calver of Parnell from subscriptions specially collected for the purpose from numerous friends, largely by Mrs. McCosh Clark.³ It was designed by Daw in the 'Selwyn' style, with a painted roof and windows and deep eaves. It was lined inside with oiled rimu, with an open cross-beamed roof.⁴ This photograph appeared in the Auckland Weekly News, 8 June 1911, p.12.⁵



The 1910-1911 Board of Management Report states 'the most potent influence in saving and helping the girls is the atmosphere of loving Christianity by which the homes are characterised; the erection of a plain simple, but dignified chapel has contributed very markedly in making the religion of Jesus Christ the moving influence of the whole work. Many memories had gathered round the little room previously

used as a Chapel. So many confirmations, so many baptisms, so many communions, so many helps towards the building up of a high ideal, the staff were so sorry to see it go but the room was urgently needed for other purposes, and the separate Chapel has the great advantage of greater quietness.'

The chapel was furnished with further gifts from friends including silver altar vessels and cruets given by the Mothers Union in memory of Mrs. Cowie; and brass cross and candlesticks 'in memory of the ministrations in these Homes of Bishop Neligan.'⁶ In 1922, a further gift to the Chapel from old girls of the Homes was a font given in memory of Miss Janet Hancock.⁷ Janet was appointed Matron of the St Marys Homes in 1910. In 1918, Assistant Matron Sister Bennett had been asked to go to Kilbryde, the temporary hospital set up during the influenza epidemic in Parnell, to act as Matron. Miss Hancock went to advise on the organisation of the hospital. It had not been her intention to stay, but while there the number of patients arriving was more than the nurses could deal with, she felt she must stay and help. She worked for 4 days but contracted influenza and died.⁸

In 1925, Canon Mason transferred to the parish of Howick and so ended his chaplaincy at St Mary's Homes. An article in April 1925 in the New Zealand Herald comments: 'The St Mary's Homes has been his special care, and this has entailed a considerable amount of thought and work. Every Thursday a service is held in the chapel and every girl after the service is given the opportunity of an individual interview, in which she is advised and helped and later assisted to take place again in everyday life'.⁹ The girls were required to stay six months at St Mary's. An article in the Church Gazette in 1937 indicates that the hope was that the life and teaching of the Home may do them permanent good. The chapel is the centre of life at St Mary's it stated.¹⁰ 'The girls go into chapel for morning and evening prayers daily. The

chaplain celebrates Holy Communion every Thursday morning as well as on the great festivals of the Church and on Fridays the Chaplain takes Evensong and instruction. One of the Sisters of the Order of Good Shepherd assists in the work associated with the chapel and preparation of candidates for confirmation.¹¹ The chapel was always open for prayer and meditation.¹²

This final photograph shows the 1927 extension to the Chapel with one of the Sisters of the Order of Good Shepherd standing outside. The Sisters of The Order of the Good Shepherd managed the Homes from 1924-1951. The 1927 enlargement consisted of the addition of a porch and vestry again the costs paid from subscriptions made to the Chapel Fund.¹³



Endnotes

¹ Diocese of Auckland Church Gazette May 1904 p.93

² Diocese of Auckland Church Gazette September 1905 p 165

³ St Mary's Homes Otahuhu Report 1910-1911

⁴ Diocese of Auckland Church Gazette July 1911 p133

⁵ 'Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19110608-12-4

⁶ Diocese of Auckland Church Gazette July 1911 p.133

⁷ Pukekohe & Waiuku Times, 9 June 1922

⁸ Auckland Star 3 December 1918 p. 7

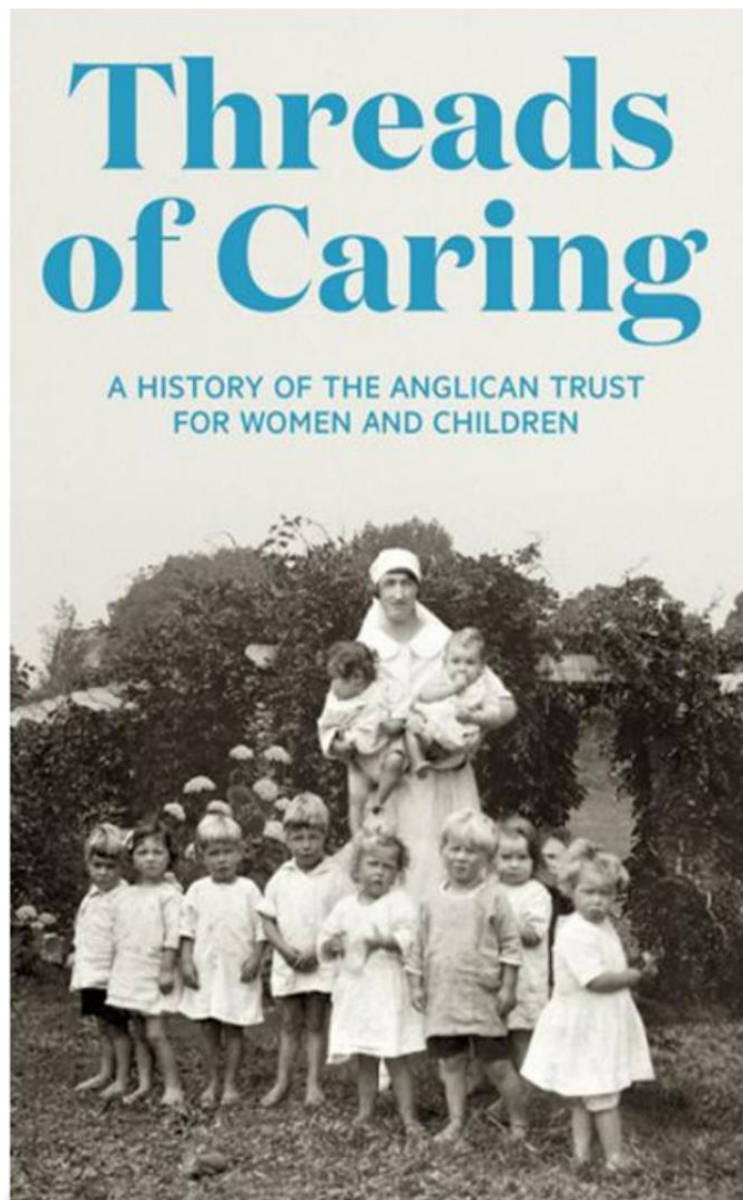
⁹ New Zealand Herald, 1902 27 April 1925

¹⁰ Diocese of Auckland Church Gazette February 1937 p. 3

¹¹ S Mary's Homes Otahuhu Report 31st March 1933

¹² S Mary's Homes Otahuhu Report 31st March 1941

¹³ S Mary's Homes Otahuhu Report 31st March 1927



'Threads of Caring, A History of the Anglican Trust for Women and Children'

by Ruth Greenaway and Megan Hutching,
published by the Anglican Trust for Women and Children.