

Hope Cottage

1887 – 1896

Other Names: • Hope Cottage Rescue Home

Details

Hope Cottage opened in 1887. It was a rescue home and lying-in home for single mothers giving birth to their first babies. It was established by Grace Soltau, the first president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In 1892, management was handed over to the Church of England. Hope Cottage closed in 1896. The work of Hope Cottage was transferred to Hobart, where a 'Hope Cottage ward' was established within the Home of Mercy at Cascades.

Hope Cottage opened on 4 March 1887 in rented premises in Ann Street, Launceston. Not long after it opened, Mrs Soltau got permission from the landlord to build added space, which enabled Hope Cottage to receive 6 women and 3 or 4 infants. Women worked in the laundry at Hope Cottage, and the proceeds covered expenses for housekeeping, clothing and medicine. The committee was dependent on 'the help of friends' to cover the rent, taxes and matron's salary.

In 1890, a newspaper article discussed the 'great and good work' being done at Hope Cottage, accomplished mainly by the efforts of two women, Grace Soltau and Mrs Stackhouse. The article outlined the stories of various 'girls' before coming to Hope Cottage – usually involving young women in domestic service being 'led away' and then abandoned by men.

In the report for 1890, Soltau stated that in the early days, Hope Cottage was the only institution of its kind in Tasmania. Since the establishment of the Home of Mercy (described as a 'Penitentiary' in the newspaper article) and the Anchorage (described as a 'Home for young mothers and their infants') in Hobart, Hope Cottage was able to concentrate its efforts on young women who were pregnant with their first baby. As Mrs Soltau put it: Hope Cottage was more about 'saving the weak from falling and guiding their feeble footsteps into safe and pleasant paths of well doing; than in attempting to rescue those who have fallen absolutely into vicious courses' (*The Colonist*, 1890).

In 1891, Mrs Soltau approached the Benevolent Society to propose the establishment of an institution for 'young women who had been unfortunate more than once'. She explained the policy at Hope Cottage, which was to receive 'only those who had been confined once ... and then only on the understanding that they remained nine months after the birth of the children'. Soltau also recommended that the Benevolent Society refuse assistance to women who would not enter the proposed home (*Launceston Examiner*, 1891).

In 1892, Soltau handed over the work of Hope Cottage to the Church of England. At a meeting in 1893, Rev Kelly reported that Hope Cottage had had 18 girls pass through during the year (6 were already in the home when the Church took over its management). Kelly reported that there was an average of 7 women at the Home at any time, together with 4 or 5 babies, the Matron and her assistant. The new management had increased the length of time women stayed at Hope Cottage, from 6 months to 9 months after their babies were born. Kelly reported that Hope Cottage had women from all over Tasmania, from 'every variety of religious denomination' (*Launceston Examiner*, 1893).

In 1894, Kelly reported that contributions for the work at Hope Cottage had ‘fallen off’ and it was commencing its fourth year in debt (*Launceston Examiner*, 1894). He spoke of how the need to do its rescue work ‘quietly and unostentatiously’ contributed to Hope Cottage’s difficulty in raising funds.

The report from 1895 explained the different work being done at Hope Cottage in Launceston, and the Home of Mercy in Hobart. Hope Cottage rescued single girls ‘after their first moral lapse’, while the Home of Mercy (also referred to as the House of Mercy during this period) was for ‘a different class of girls’, many of whom were admitted from the Lock Hospitals in Hobart and Launceston (*The Tasmanian*, 1895).

In 1895, another rescue home had opened in Launceston, the Salvation Army Rescue Home (which would become known as Rock Lynn House from 1900). At a meeting in August 1896, the Salvation Army rescue home was cited as one of the major reasons behind the Church’s decision to close Hope Cottage.

A newspaper article stated: ‘... the chief reason has been the establishment of another rescue home in Launceston, commenced with great energy, but worked on different principles’. It was claimed that some young women were refusing to come in to Hope Cottage when they learned the rules and the requirement to remain for months after the birth, ‘alleging that at other institutions they can leave when they like’. The article referred to Hope Cottage’s belief that rescue work ‘ought to be done in silence and quietness’ and claimed that the home ‘had never attempted sensational methods of appeal’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1896).

The Salvation Army’s Major Henri Gover responded to this article about the closure of Hope Cottage in a letter to the paper the following week. Gover wrote that the claims made about Launceston’s other rescue home were ‘most serious misstatements and insinuations that are wholly without foundation or fact’. Gover wrote that the Church of England’s claim that ‘at other institutions women can ‘leave when they like’ was an attempt to ‘blacken the Salvation Army’s work in order to excuse the confessed failure of purely Anglican Church methods’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 1896).

In September 1896, the Church of England announced that arrangements had been made to continue the rescue work of Hope Cottage but in a new location. The home was to be relocated to Hobart where the Church already ran the Home of Mercy at Cascades. The plan was to conduct a rescue home in Hobart, separate from the House of Mercy ‘but governed by the same board of management’. The Church News reported that the goods and chattels of Hope Cottage were being removed to Hobart and that ‘satisfactory arrangements have been made for the care of the late inmates of Hope Cottage’. The article claimed that responsibility for maintaining Hope Cottage had been ‘left in the hands of too few persons’ and thus the institution had had to close (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 1896)

In November 1896, the Church of England approved the decision by the committee of the Diocesan House of Mercy in Hobart to continue the work hitherto carried on in Hope Cottage, Launceston, under the title of Hope Cottage Ward.

The Hope Cottage ward eventually amalgamated with the Home of Mercy.

More info

Chronology

- **Hope Cottage (1887 – 1896)**
 - Home of Mercy (1890 - c. 1953)

Related Entries

Run by

- [Anglican Diocese of Tasmania \(1842 - 1981\)](#)

Date: 1892 - 1896

Related Organisations

- [Rock Lynn House \(c. 1895 - 1960\)](#)

The opening of the Salvation Army Rescue Home (Rock Lynn House) in 1895 was cited as a reason behind the decision to close Hope Cottage in 1896.

Resources

- National Archives of Australia, [Forced Adoptions History Project](#), 2013
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