Christine, joined her; they soon found it advisable to wear a distinctive dress. They were particularly concerned with rescuing girls and women from the streets and were soon faced with a problem - what to do with those who wished to find a better life?

In an attempt at a solution the Mission bought eight acres of land in Cheltenham and built there the first part of a "House of Mercy". This section was opened, free of debt in 1892 by Lady Hopetoun, the wife of the Governor of Victoria. The singing by the St. Paul's Cathedral choir boys was a feature of the ceremony. Sister Christina was in charge of the first twelve inmates. Some of the land was planted with fruit trees; there was a paddock for the cows that supplied the Home with milk. In 1895 a second building and chapel were added and the number of inmates increased to twenty-one.

In the years that followed hundreds of girls and women passed through the home, chiefly occupied in housework, laundry and all kinds of sewing. A photo taken in 1925 shows three aboriginal girls among others in the laundry. In 1908 a third addition was made; a new dormitory and ironing room were built and the chapel enlarged and improved.

In those early days the water supply caused much concern; an underground river supplied a well from which water was pumped by a windmill to the House. But the supply often failed and was a source of anxiety to the financial committee.

Meanwhile Sister Esther had become the Mother Foundress of a new order of nuns - the Community of the Holy Name, whose members continued to be in charge of the Home. Sister Esther died in 1931 and was buried in the Old Cheltenham Cemetery in the novice habit she had worn at Wantage in England. A fund was opened to commemorate her work and Community House was built close to the House of Mercy. It became the administrative centre of the order, a place for the training of novices and a home for retired sisters.

In 1946 the House of Mercy ceased to exist as such; it is now called Retreat House and is used for religious conventions, youth conferences and similar gatherings and is a place of retreat for any denomination. Sister Flora became its first Sister Superior.

There is a little colony of graves in the Old Cheltenham Cemetery where lie the sisters who have served through the years. The earliest date is 1902. Several of the names - Alice, Winifred,

(over)