

Historical Background

The order was founded by Frances Margaret Taylor (1832-1900), a Roman Catholic convert from Anglicanism who had served as a nurse in the Crimean War, and whose account of her experiences was published as *Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses* (1856). Frances Taylor had established a considerable reputation as a journalist and author, being the founder editor of the Catholic periodical *The Month* (1864-5). One of her most notable works was *Irish Homes and Irish Hearts* (1867) an account of Irish religious orders and charitable institutions. As Mother Magdalen of the Sacred Heart she was to be the first superior of the order, officially founded in London in 1872, which by the turn of the century administered over 20 houses and institutions, including the Providence Free Hospital, St. Helens. Great assistance was given to the order in its early years by the support of distinguished clerical and lay Catholics, including Cardinal H. E. Manning (1808-1892), and the novelist and philanthropist Lady Georgiana Fullerton (1812-1885). The order was focused upon work in England and Ireland, but also had houses in Italy and France; more recently it has extended its charitable work to the USA, Africa and South America. Houses were acquired in Roehampton in 1876 and 1927, and the Generalate continues to be based there.

The standard accounts of the life of the founder and the early years of the congregation are given in the following:

- Sister Mary Campion Troughton SMG, 'Memoir of Mother Magdalen Taylor' (1908, privately published by the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, 1972)
- F.C. Devas, *Mother Magdalen Taylor* (London, 1927)
- Mother Mary Geraldine O'Sullivan SMG, *Born to Love* (London, 1970)
- Ruth Gilpin Wells, *A Woman of Her Time and Ours* (Charlotte, NC, 1988)
- Sister Eithne Leonard SMG, *Frances Taylor, Mother Magdalen 1832-1900, Servant of God*: (Catholic Truth Society booklet, 2009)
- Sister Eithne Leonard SMG, *Frances Taylor, Mother Magdalen SMG, A Portrait, 1832-1900* (Gracewing, 2015)