



# Museum Matters

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IPSWICH HOSPITAL MUSEUM Inc.



### Committee:

Chairman: M. Parcell  
Secretary: J. Kingston  
Treasurer: C. Marre

### Chairman's Chatterings

During the year the Museum welcomed a conservator to complete a preservation needs assessment. A conservator holds qualifications in heritage, museums and cultural materials conservation. Preservation can be defined as the protection of cultural property through activities that minimise chemical and physical deterioration and damage and prevent the loss of information.

The assessment reviews the policies, practices and conditions that effect the preservation of an organisation's collection. It identifies specific preservation needs and actions to meet those needs. The Museum's conservator reviewed our collection with specific focus on our environment, our storage, security and access and our housekeeping. The conservator made a raft of recommendations that we will be working on over the coming years.

Having a careful review of how we care for the museum collection has helped us to identify areas for improvement and appreciating what is working well. Perhaps during this Christmas season it might be interesting to use the preservation approach within our own environments and consider our family and friends and take time to consider what's going well. It might also be appropriate to carefully consider what areas may need 'preserving' and what plans we need to put in place to ensure 2023 is a success.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Museum volunteers who work tirelessly to preserve the rich history of Ipswich Hospital and its positive impact on the community. I would also like to thank the Ipswich Hospital Foundation and West Moreton Health for their ongoing commitment to the museum.

Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 2023

*Melinda Parcell*

### Dr Gilmore Wilson

Dr Benjamin Gilmore Wilson (known as Gilmore Wilson), the second Medical Superintendent at Ipswich Hospital, was part of a medical dynasty started by his grandfather, the Reverend Benjamin Gilmore Wilson. Dr Gilmore Wilson graduated from Sydney University's school of medicine and succeeded Dr Phillip Thornton as the medical superintendent in 1915. He was born in Queensland in 1889, the eldest son of Benjamin Gilmore Wilson and Esther Cribb. His grandfather, the Reverend, had qualifications as both a medical practitioner and a clergyman, and came to Queensland from England in 1858, after an open invitation was put out for someone to take charge of the first Baptist Church in Queensland. Most of his activities in Queensland involved the church, but he would help out during medical emergencies. After five years in the role of Medical Superintendent Dr Gilmore Wilson retired from Ipswich General Hospital in 1920 and set up a general practice at his home on the corner of Brisbane and Thorn streets, now the Limestone Medical Centre, in partnership with his cousin, Mervyn Patterson. His family would become one of Ipswich's most distinguished medical families. In 1919, the influenza epidemic sweeping the world made its way to Ipswich. From mid May to mid June over 3000 cases were recorded; there were probably countless others. About 20 deaths occurred in the hospital and doctors and nurses were also afflicted, including the superintendent, Dr Wilson.

Gilmore and his wife, Dorothy Dunstan, had three sons and a daughter. His three sons all attended Ipswich Grammar School. Dr Wilson also served as Chairman of Trustees of Ipswich Grammar School from 1929-1942.

Their eldest son, Harry Gilmore, was

Dux of IGS in 1934 and became a cardiologist (The Harry G Wilson Building at IGS is named in his honour). The second son, Chester Gilmore, became a well-known Ipswich obstetrician who went on to deliver many future IGS pupils. The third son, Brian Gilmore, also studied medicine and became a highly regarded ophthalmologist and recipient of one of the six inaugural Churchill Trust Fellowships in 1966 and in 2007 was awarded an OAM for his services to ophthalmology and to the community. Their daughter, Esther Frances Gilmore, attended Ipswich Girls Grammar School and later studied medicine, one of only two female students in her year at the then three year old University of Queensland. She married another doctor, Charles Roe, and they set up practice in Brisbane. Her three daughters also became doctors.



Photograph above shows a young Dr Gilmore Wilson with his eldest son, Harry. Photo courtesy of the late Dr Esther Roe (Gilmore's daughter), published in "The Ipswich Hospital 1860-1991" by Ross Patrick.

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## Dr Gilmore Wilson *continued*

Two families of medical practitioners in Ipswich claim descent from Reverend Wilson. The first are Mervyn Stuart Patterson and his son Hamilton Stuart – both distinguished members of the medical profession. The other family retained Gilmore Wilson as part of their name, including Dr Benjamin Gilmore Wilson. Dr Gilmore Wilson died in 1943 from a myocardial infarct. His son, Harry, at that time a young doctor serving in the war, was sent home to take over his father's practice.

Harry graduated in medicine from the University of Queensland in 1940; the top student in the first class of students to graduate from the university. After a year as resident medical officer at the Brisbane General Hospital (now the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital), he served for three years as a medical officer in the Australian Army, including with the 1st Light Field Ambulance, before being recalled to home. After seven years working in Ipswich, he went to England to continue his studies, achieving Member of the Royal College of Physicians (MRCP) in London in 1951 and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (FRACP) in 1957.

He completed his Master of Arts (MA) in Queensland in 1957. In the 1960s he was appointed senior physician to Princess Alexandra Hospital, and helped found the Queensland Cardiac Clinic. He was also a director of Cromwell College at the University of Queensland and served on the board of the Ipswich Grammar School for several years. He passed away in 1998 at Ipswich.

Brian's Churchill Fellowship allowed him to study treatment of glaucoma in the USA, the UK, Germany, Switzerland. His commitment continued in a generous endowment made in memory of his first wife, Dorothy. He retired from private practice in 1997 but continued to benefit his community and beyond by being an active member of the Queensland Churchill Fellows Association. In January 2020 Brian was presented with the Churchill Trust Board Recognition Award in appreciation of his significant contribution to the Trust for forty-eight years. He passed away two months later aged in his 90s.

Obstetrician and gynaecologist, Chester Wilson, became a part-time paid specialist at Ipswich Hospital in 1961, as part of a new 12-man medical team.

He continued in this role until 1965 when he resigned and publicly stated it was because of inadequate maternity facilities—extensions to the ward finally opened in 1974. Chester died in 2001.

Esther's decision to decision to pursue tertiary education was strongly influenced by her mother, who held a Bachelor of Arts from Sydney University. Following family tradition she did well at Ipswich Girls' Grammar School, where she had to study physics and chemistry at the Ipswich Boys Grammar School so she could enrol in medicine.

Following World War II when her husband, Charles Roe, had served as a medical officer in the RAAF, they set up general practice at their home in Yeronga until 1994. At 50 she trained to become a counsellor. Esther died in 2012 aged 93.

*In the Queensland Times on Saturday 18 December 1948 two birth notices showed sons born to brothers Drs Chester and Harry Wilson and their wives on December 14. Chester's son was born prematurely and named Chester Gilmore. Harry's son was named Roderick Gilmore. They were, of course, grandsons of the late Dr (Benjamin) Gilmore Wilson, former medical superintendent of Ipswich Hospital.*

## Museum to Re-open

The Ipswich Hospital Museum plans to reopen on March 4, 2023. The theme of the new exhibition is "The Ipswich Hospital Museum's Items of Significance".

Recently the museum was awarded a grant for a consultant to perform a Significance Assessment on the collection. The consultant identified numerous items in the collection which have local and national significance.

Another successful grant was obtained for a preservation needs assessment to be performed on these items for recommendations on methods to preserve and or restore these items.

The exhibition will display some of these items, provide the story relating to the items, why they are significant and the recommendations on what is required to preserve and or restore them.

The opening will coincide with the inaugural 'Friends of the Ipswich Hospital' annual reunion. It will continue the tradition started by the recently wound-up Ipswich Hospital Nurses Association of an annual get-together of past nurses of the hospital. The 'Friends of the Ipswich Hospital' reunion is open to all past Ipswich Hospital employees.

We look forward to welcoming back visitors to the museum with a regular open day at the museum.



*Left, Four Honorary Medical Officers of Ipswich Hospital in the 1920s. Dr Gilmore Wilson, former Medical Superintendent, is on the left with (from left to right) Drs Mervyn Patterson, Alec Cameron and Basil Hart.*

This photograph appeared in "The Ipswich Hospital 1860-1991" by Ross Patrick courtesy of the late Dr Esther Roe (Dr Gilmore Wilson's daughter).

It was hospital policy at the time that all doctors in Ipswich who wished to serve as consulting surgeons to the hospital joined the staff as voluntary medical officers.

## Merry Christmas

The Ipswich Hospital Museum volunteers wish all our readers a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year. We look forward to welcoming you back when the museum re-opens to the public next year.

We thank members and Friends for their ongoing support and input to our work this past year.



## Christmas Memories—Special Memories

As 2022 draws to a close and we head into the festive season we look back on some heart warming memories.

In the early and original Sunshine Ward there was for many months a toddler suffering from encephalopathy, a dear little boy who we would lovingly care for, and during these care periods we would talk to him, sing to him, tickle him, whisper in his ear, massage his tiny body and limbs in an effort to prevent contractures as he lay with little self movement or speech—and for so many LONG weeks there was little obvious reaction. We were approaching Christmas and Joyce Ruhl, a long term and highly valued member of the nursing team, was singing well known Christmas carols to her little ‘charge’ - when she stopped and asked the question “What do you think Santa will say when he calls to see all the sick children?” To which this slow and very deliberate response came forth—“HO HO HO”. To this day some 50+ years on the utter joy of that moment lingers and the tear streaked face of his mother was a joy to behold.

*Steph Shannon, Sunshine Ward charge sister for over 30 years,*



*A young patient remains fast asleep as Santa visits on Christmas Day 1996. Photograph from Queensland Times.*

You cannot have Christmas without Santa! For so many years Steph’s nephew, Andrew, was Santa, and Rebecca and I were Santa’s helpers. After Steph retired my brother, Colin, became Santa. He loved the job. The smiles on the faces of the children on Christmas morning when they see Santa—this is what Christmas is about. On a couple of occasions Santa has made an early visit for special families.

*Jo Gurd, former paediatric nurse*



*Children’s Ward is always beautifully decorated and for many years the marbled top cabinet was the centrepiece of the festive season. The cabinet is now part of the Ipswich Hospital Museum’s collection and displayed in the foyer of Jubilee Building.*

*The cabinet was restored by the Ipswich Men’s Shed and is used for museum display purposes. It is normally decorated by museum volunteers every Christmas. However, because of Covid-19 restrictions preventing the public visiting the museum since early 2020, the cabinet has not been decorated since this photo was taken in 2019. Hopefully, next year the cabinet will come to life again in Christmas colours.*



*The unadorned marbled cabinet in the foyer of Jubilee Building.*



*Above, Photograph published in the Queensland Times, Thursday 26 December 1963 shows Ipswich Hospital nurses arranging a Christmas scene in Women’s Surgical Ward. Left to right, Sisters H. Middleton, H. Neuendorf, C.Nisbet and N.Jordan.*



*Christmas has always been a very special time in the children’s ward with many members of the public, community groups and businesses donating gifts and other ‘goodies’ to help the children have a wonderful day despite being a hospital patient. The day is made even more joyful with decorations, below, and, of course, a very special visitor. Left, Santa is seen here with Bradley Edgar on Christmas Day 1997. Photograph published in the Queensland Times.*





## Letters from a Nurse

Concluding our insight into a new nurse's experiences at Ipswich Hospital in her first year. After extensive research of 1890 records, one of our museum volunteers has composed fictional letters from a nurse to a friend relating her view of hospital life at that time. The information is based on historically recorded facts.

12th December 1890

My Dear Friend

There are changes afoot here, and not only the buildings.

The building activity has been quite hectic. The new women's ward is nearly finished and painting is about to start. It is a very impressive building with four huge wards and high ceilings. This makes them very light and airy. Each ward will have 10 beds, with a window and a fanlight between each bed. For the winter there is a marble fireplace in each ward. The staircase in the central hall will give a very gracious ascent with the stairs having a gentle rise.

The cast iron columns and iron lace on the verandah and balcony with the curved iron roof above make the building very attractive. The back verandah and back balcony are the work areas on each floor. Three small rooms and a linen closet at one end, a lavatory and a bathroom at the other, and a scullery and a locker in the centre. A flight of back stairs with generous landings will make carrying stretchers and other goods much easier.

The morgue had to be taken down and rebuilt as it was in the way, and the old ablutions block was replaced for the same reason. We are all quite excited at the prospect of working in the new ward.

As well, a night soil furnace has just been completed. It is made of brick with 2 separate

coal fires, one under the grate and one under the chimney to purify the gases. The gardener gets good fires going, dumps the sanitary waste onto the grate and seals the furnace door, stoking the fires as needed until a few hours later nothing remains but ash. Dr Thornton and the Committee are very enthusiastic as the germs and infection are fully destroyed unlike the old system of burying the waste at the edge of town. Some town councillors are less enthusiastic and have asked questions about noxious odours and nuisance to the neighbouring residents. There has also been some public criticism of the hospital after Doctor Thornton refused admittance to a young girl who had scarlet fever. Her father, a widower, having no one at his home to care for her, brought her to the hospital and asked for help. Dr Thornton's reason was that the hospital did not have the facilities to prevent the infection from spreading throughout the hospital, which would be disastrous for all the patients. As a charitable institution funded by the public to care for sick who are poor or destitute many have remarked it was the hospital's duty to care for her. The Hospital Board has supported Dr Thornton's decision. They have written to the Government asking for a tent to be erected at the far end of the grounds to accommodate such cases in the future. There have also been some staff changes. A new nurse has been appointed, Emily Hillier. There is plenty to do and another nurse is welcome. Mr J. Thornton, the dispenser has left under a cloud after sixteen months in the position. The

Saturday paper reported that the Committee had formed a sub-committee "to inquire into some matters in connection with the dispensary". The Monday paper had an advertisement inviting applications for the position. Mr Thornton had left over the weekend?

A Mr Brennan, who trained in Dublin, came up from Sydney to fill the position a week after the advertisements closed.

Of more concern to me is that we are to have a new Head Nurse. Edith Loader is leaving in the new year. I enclose a copy of the advertisement. I hope they find a good one.

I cannot believe it is only one year since finishing school.

My best wishes for Christmas.

Your friend, Ella Banks

"Wanted, for the above Hospital, a HEAD NURSE, who must have had at least three years' hospital experience age not to exceed 35; salary, £50 to commence with uniform provided twice yearly. The Head Nurse will have sole charge of the nursing staff, subject only to the medical superintendent. The selected candidate will require to commence duty on 1st January next. Applicant to state whether single or widow. Applications, which must be accompanied with copies of recent testimonials, will be received, addressed to the undersigned, till noon of WEDNESDAY, 17th December. The successful candidate will be allowed travelling expenses."




The new women's ward building, as described by our nurse in her letter above, was 76ft long by 34ft wide, two stories high with a 9ft verandah and balcony all around. The walls were 14 inches thick brick. Inside were four wards 32ft square with 14ft high plastered walls and pine ceilings. A row of cast iron fluted columns ran down the centre of the bottom floor beneath a long beam which supported the floor above and allowed the wards to be the full width of the building. There are special ventilation "bricks" with adjustable doors set into the brickwork so the ventilation can be fully controlled. The central hall was 8ft 6 ins. wide with a cedar staircase.

His Excellency, the Governor of Queensland, Sir Henry Norman, laid the foundation stone on 23 June 1890 and the ward was opened in April 1891. This building was demolished in 1976 to make way for a new ward block,

### CONTACT US:

[www.ipswichhospitalmuseum.com.au](http://www.ipswichhospitalmuseum.com.au)

Email: [info@ipswichhospitalmuseum.com.au](mailto:info@ipswichhospitalmuseum.com.au)

Find us on:  Friends of Ipswich Hospital Museum

Phone: 04292995178



These plans of the Female Medical Building were believed to have been drawn up in the 1930s when extensions and modifications were being planned. They clearly show, however, the layout of the four rooms with 10 beds each as described by our Nurse in her letter above.