



Museum Matters

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IPSWICH HOSPITAL MUSEUM Inc.

Committee :

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Chairman's Chatterings

The shift away from hospital based training for nurses and midwives has been in effect for almost 30 years and yet there remains a nostalgia for hospital based training. I don't think that anyone could dispute the fact that over the past few decades advances in clinical treatments have been life saving. It is these advances in clinical treatments that has largely driven the need for higher education of all clinical staff including nursing. The role of the nurse has changed dramatically and often nurses look at historical areas of nursing that have now been taken up and developed further by our allied health colleagues. However the role of the registered nurse in an acute setting has completely changed to include many roles that were once reserved for medical staff only. Nurses are skilled clinical technicians and care providers that can undertake very advance clinical investigations and treatments such as canulation, taking blood gases, caring for peripherally inserted central catheter and complex medication infusions.

Whilst it is fantastic to see the clinical advancement that university level education has brought it has not replaced the strong bonds of friendship that were developed in the hospital based apprenticeship model of education. I suppose this has been the most significant trade off one that is great for patients but perhaps not so good a creating the cohesiveness that nurses enjoyed in the past.

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Early Years of Nurse Education

In a century of nurse education at Ipswich Hospital many changes occurred – working conditions, wages, entry level of education, changed age of registration, career pathways and opportunities. General nursing training is now a university based course with blocks of practical learning in the hospital setting.

In 1992 the general nursing course at the hospital ceased with the final graduation of hospital based trained nurses. These nurses began their training in 1989, coincidentally 100 years after Dr Phillip Thornton, the Medical Superintendent, gave his first lectures to nurses.

Nurse training in early days followed that of other Queensland hospitals in that, initially, it was not formal but learned on the job.

In 1889, however, Dr Thornton initiated lectures to a small group of senior nurses, following on from the lead set by Dr Sandford Jackson at Brisbane Hospital. The subjects taught at Ipswich were elementary anatomy and physiology, practical nursing and the application of surgical appliances. In January 1890 four senior nurses passed examinations in these subjects.

By 1891 the head nurse, Mrs A.D. Holcroft, was assisting in nurse training with systematic instruction in practical nursing in the wards. The publication of previous examination results attracted applications from young women – many of whom had received a superior education – in Toowoomba, Maryborough and Rockhampton to undergo training at Ipswich.

In 1899 Ipswich became one of the few Queensland hospitals recognised as providing the required training demanded for nurses to become members of the newly formed Australasian Trained Nurses' Association. The conditions of approval included the status of the nurse in charge at the hospital, the length of the course and the granting of certificates only after

passing an examination. In 1904 the Association began to set its own examinations and restricted membership to those who had passed written examinations and completed courses in general, surgical and medical nursing, hygiene and invalid cooking over three, four or five years, depending on the number of daily occupied beds at the training hospital.

Ipswich Hospital was initially a four-year training hospital but soon upgraded to a three-year school. Invalid cooking was taught at the Ipswich Technical College and candidates had practical and oral examinations conducted by Ipswich medical practitioners, besides the written examinations.

Initially Ipswich was not an examination centre, however Dr Thornton expressed concern that travelling to Brisbane for the written examinations not only disturbed the nurses but interfered with the smooth running of the hospital. On one occasion 10 of the 12 nurses on staff were notified that they had to travel to Brisbane for examinations. Ipswich was eventually approved to hold examinations.

Some years later state registration of nurses was introduced, along with a Nurses' Board which set examinations, courses of instruction and condition for the recognition of training hospitals. Ipswich Hospital duly became approved as a training hospital under the State scheme.

According to Ross Patrick in his book, The Ipswich Hospital 1860-1991, evidence supported the fact that a high standard of nursing was maintained here. Both Drs Thornton and Wilson would not countenance slipshod nursing care and they were very proud of their nurses. In their annual reports or during comment at the annual meetings both superintendents frequently praised them. In his 1907 annual report, Dr Thornton said that three former nurses had been appointed matrons of other hospitals – Sister Scott at Bundaberg Hospital, Nurse Langford at Mount Morgan Hospital and Nurse Auld at the Mount Perry Hospital. He doubted that this could be matched by any other hospital.

Nursing Tutors

Miss Bart Schultz was appointed as the first nurse tutor in 1949. She had previously been an army nurse and was working at Ipswich Hospital when appointed. After a short time in the position she was granted 12 months leave to take advantage of her Florence Nightingale scholarship award and undertake postgraduate education at London University. It is believed she was the first Queensland nurse to be awarded the scholarship. She returned to Ipswich but resigned in 1952 to work at the education school at the Royal Brisbane where she had initially trained. Sr Joyce Jackson, a Gympie trained nurse who had worked in many areas of Ipswich Hospital, was appointed to the position. Sr Jackson resigned in 1964 to become senior nurse educator at Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Miss Margaret Boulter, the first Ipswich Hospital trained tutor, was appointed to replace Sr Jackson, who had been the nursing tutor when she started training in 1950.

(see Margaret's story on page 4)



Above: Student nurses practising skills in the School of Nursing in Jubilee Building.

Right: Nursing Tutor, Sr Helga McCutcheon, teaching student nurses in the lecture room of the School of Nursing in Jubilee Building.

School of Nursing

In 1956 the Health Department's first Adviser-in-Nursing, Doris Bardsley, visited Ipswich Hospital and reported that the teaching unit, then in the old female surgical ward, was in poor condition. Although the school of nursing was run efficiently and examination results were good it was recognised that there was a need for more suitable quarters for the school. But it was not until 1964 that the hospital board asked for loan funds to convert the ground floor of the Jubilee building for education purposes. It had been used as student nurses' quarters before Trumpy House was built. Funds were not available until 1967. The board decided that the new school was to be named the 'A.E. Wilcox School of Nursing' in honour of the long service of the retiring Matron, Miss Wilcox. The school was opened in 1968 by the Health Minister, Douglas Tooth, in the presence of Miss Wilcox who had travelled from Sydney at the board's expense. The Catherine Evans Memorial Reference Library was included in the school in honour of Sr Evans who had spent many years at the hospital as the doyen of the male surgical ward.

A demonstration ward was added on the top floor of the Jubilee building in 1971. The school also included a lecture theatre complete with a movie and slide projector and screen.

The high standard of teaching continued with education staff increasing from two in 1968 to four in 1972.

During hospital redevelopment the school of nursing was moved to Trumpy House then back to Jubilee after a new ward block was built. In the early 1990s the school moved to Level 9 in the Tower Block. This floor



Winds of Change

In the 1960s and 1970s many changes took place in nursing education. Several Ipswich staff attended courses in nursing administration, nurse education and ward management at the Queensland branch of the College of Nursing (Australia) founded in 1960 at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Previously nurses had to travel to Melbourne for these courses. Amendments were made to the general nursing curriculum and the educational standard for entry to nursing. Permission was granted for nurses to attend lectures in hospital time and a regional nursing scheme was introduced. This enabled student nurses from smaller hospitals to attend large hospitals for block lectures and training. During their absence nurses from the major hospital would take their place. This meant that nurses from Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe, Kingaroy, Wondai and Warwick hospitals came to the Ipswich school of nursing for regional training. In 1980 the nurses' course was upgraded and hours of study for basic training increased from 840 to 1200. This threw an extra burden on the hospital's Nurse Education staff which saw it increase to eight nurse educators. Enrolled nursing education began at Ipswich in 1971 so educators were not only involved in this but also in further changes to the curriculum. They transferred from the Wilcox School to the Trumpy Nurses' Home. Despite all these changes and additional activities, examination results at all levels – general, maternity and enrolled – continued at a high standard.

Letter from a Nurse

A hospital Museum volunteer has been researching the records for 1890, and has composed fictional letters from a nurse to a friend relating her experiences of hospital life at that time.

The information presented is based on historically recorded facts.

The nurse has addressed her letters from the Ipswich Hospital, Denmark Hill, Ipswich. Follow her journey in her first year of nursing in this and subsequent editions.

1st May 1890

My Dear Friend,

As you can see, I have left home, and now have a position as a nurse at the hospital. I commenced work just 3 weeks ago, almost 6 months after finishing form IV at the Central Girls School. With the big flood in March and poor prices, positions are scarce. My family are very pleased that I have found a good place.

I am very tired. Every day I arise about 5 to be ready by 6 am for whatever duties I am given, and I am kept busy until 8 pm every night, after which I have to get myself sorted for the next day before falling into bed. I share a room with other nurses, but I have my own bed and some space of my own

There are 8 nurses altogether. I am one of the day shift. There is a night shift from 8 pm to 6 am. We have about 40 to 50 patients to look after at the moment. Dr. Thornton, who is the Medical Superintendent, and responsible for all the medical matters, wants modern nurses, modelled on Florence Nightingale it seems. He has given evening lessons to some of the senior nurses, in elementary anatomy and physiology, practical nursing, and the application of surgical appliances. Those who passed the examination were awarded certificates by the Board. So it is my intention not to be a glorified housemaid but to learn as much as I can.

As a beginner, my duties are mostly cleaning and tidying the wards and the beds, and fetching and carrying for everybody, and generally helping patients with meals and other things. I wear a uniform, a blue dress with a white apron, so I look like a nurse. The first time I was called nurse, by a gentleman twice my age, was quite disconcerting. I try to carry it off, but many of the patients have been here longer than I have, and tell me what I should be doing.

The nurses have full board and lodging. We eat the same food as the patients, but in the staff dining room. The food is very plain. The hospital relies on charitable donations for its funding so every penny counts, and any waste is frowned upon.

I am writing under gaslight, and it is time for bed. I will write again.

Your friend,

Nurse Ella Banks

First Graduates

In 1890, at the usual fortnightly meeting of the Ipswich Hospital Acting Committee, the Medical Superintendent, Dr Philip Thornton, submitted his report for the period ending January 7:

“On the 6th instant, an examination was held in connection with the classes commenced in September last for the instruction of the nurses. The subjects taught were elementary anatomy and physiology, practical nursing, and the application of surgical appliances. Four of the senior nurses—Edith Loader, Elizabeth Hussey, Eleanor Biglin, and Anna Jackson have passed a very satisfactory examination, and I have very much pleasure in recommending them for certificates. The intelligent interest taken by the nurses in the subjects taught, and the efforts made by the

successful candidates to attain a high standard, have encouraged me to continue my system of instruction, and I would recommend that, in future, promotion should be given, when opportunity occurs, to those who have received certificates. I would also recommend that Nurse Edith Loader, who, for the past twelve months, has been known as senior nurse-and has rendered very valuable service in the fever and surgical wards-be styled head nurse and that, in future, her supervision should extend over the wards generally.”

Several members spoke in favour of the system adopted by the doctor, who was to be commended for the interest he was taking in the training of the nurses. The four nurses were admitted to the committee room and presented with certificates.



A 1891 staff photo.

At the back are Nurse Northall, Mrs Jackson, Nurse MacFarlane and Nurse Walker

In the middle seated are Dr Thornton, Mrs Alcroft (believed to be an incorrect spelling of Holcroft) and Mr Thompson

In front are Nurse McManus and Nurse Harlow



Two nurses who trained at Ipswich Hospital and later were appointed as Matrons of other hospitals, as mentioned in Dr Thornton's annual report in 1907, are shown in this 1914 photograph. This group of Australian Army Nursing Service personnel are en route to field hospitals overseas in World War I.

Sr Scott (Matron, Bundaberg Hospital) is standing on the far left in the middle row.

Sr Langford (Matron, Mt Morgan Hospital) is sitting on the right in the front row.

Nurse Educator Margaret Boulter Recalls

Sr Margaret Boulter was the first Ipswich trained Senior Tutor and led nurse education here for over 30 years working through many changes to the nurse training system and site locations in that time.

She trained at Ipswich from 1950 until 1954. Margaret and fellow student nurse, Barbara Fielding, slept in the same room where the hospital museum now is – the Catherine Evans Library in the Jubilee Building.

Margaret recalls that the other student nurses she met on her first day, and



others over the years, became lifelong friends to this day.

“We had good, sad and bad days but I think I remember the good days best. We had no counselling in sad times but just debriefed with our friends over a cuppa.”

Training nurses worked shifts and attended lectures once a week for a block of 120 hours of lectures over 4 years. They worked in the wards from their first day. Most learning was done on the job but there were also lectures by Joyce Jackson and Bartz Schultz, the initial two sister tutors. Doctors did the medical training. Lectures had to be attended either while on duty or when not working.

In the first year of training subjects were general nursing, anatomy and physiology. Second year included medicine with Dr Trumpy, nutrition and hygiene. In the third years surgical and advanced nursing

subjects were studied. Examinations each year were both oral and practical.

Board and lodging, uniforms and laundry were taken out of their wages before they were paid.

Work in the ward was supervised by more senior nurses and Charge Sisters wrote reports on the trainees' work.

On night duty there was one senior and one junior nurse on each ward and one Registered Nurse for the whole hospital. The RN on night duty did the rounds of the nursing quarters to ensure that all nurses were in bed. A very astute RN would check that the beds were not bolstered to appear as though the nurse was asleep in it.

Night duties were eight-hour shifts.

Nurses had to move rooms when on night duty – probably for a four-week block. Nurses on night duty had to stay in bed until 3pm each day. Afternoon tea was brought out for them on the verandah.

In 1954, after graduating, Margaret went to the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Melbourne and gained her certificate in midwifery. On returning to Queensland, she spent 12 months in the maternity section of Gympie Hospital. She came back to Ipswich in 1957 and relieved Sr Jackson in 1961.



Initially Queensland nurses went to Victoria College of Nursing, Melbourne for upskilling in diplomas of education and

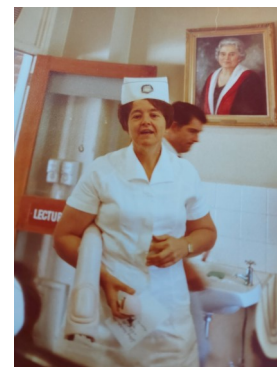
administration. The Princess Alexandra Hospital later became a branch and both Margaret and Helga McCutcheon, also an Ipswich Hospital trained nurse and later a nurse educator, gained their extra qualifications here. Margaret passed her Diploma in 1962 and her Certificate of Maternal and Child Welfare in 1964.

She was appointed to the role of Sister Tutor in 1964. In 1991 her title was changed to Assistant Director of Nursing, Education and Staff Development.

When the School of Nursing was relocated to Jubilee Building, Margaret was consulted by the architect as to what was needed for education. This was just prior to Matron Wilcox's retirement.

Sr Boulter recalls many other changes in education including the increase in staff numbers; changes in curriculum; the training of male nurses; married women allowed to become nurses, on-site nurses' quarters phased out; an increase in lecture hours and the move from hospital based training to university education.

Margaret retired in 1995.



Miss Boulter in her element as Sister Tutor in the lecture room in the Jubilee Building.



Extraordinary Service

Not only did Margaret Boulter devote nearly her whole career to nursing education at Ipswich Hospital but she worked tirelessly for many years as a nursing sister with the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

In 1958 she became a Nursing Officer with the Ipswich Division, in 1965 a Corps Nursing Officer and in 1970 rose to the rank of District Nursing Officer Grade II in the Queensland District.

Her dedication to the Order of St John culminated in the award of Commander Sister in 1985. She received her medallion and robes at a ceremony at Government House. The only higher award in the order for women is Dame of Grace.

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Museum Closed

The Ipswich Hospital Museum, housed in the Jubilee Building, is still closed to the public but volunteers are now able to work there after more than 18 months absence. Cleaning, sorting and organising of artifacts and research material will continue until the end of the year. It is planned that the museum will reopen to the public with a new exhibition in the new year. Much of the museum's collection has been stored safely at The Park—Centre for Mental Health but will be moved back to secure and appropriate storage at Ipswich Hospital soon.