



# Museum Matters

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June 2019

IPSWICH HOSPITAL MUSEUM Inc.

Committee :

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

## Chairman's Chatterings

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Certainly, this edition of our newsletter brings this famous quote from Charles Dickens to mind, as I reminisce on the hospital based training that I undertook. This quote outlines the ups and downs of life that is shared when working and living together. On the job nursing training certainly had many advantages but it can not measure up to the significant gains in nursing education that the tertiary sector can offer.

Who, in the early days of nursing training at Ipswich Hospital could imagine the depth and breadth of clinical specialisation, especially nursing specialisation that is evident in our hospital today. Whilst more recently graduated registered nurses won't share the memory of living in the nurses quarters, they continue to build great memories from being part of the large Ipswich Hospital nursing family. This tradition of nurturing new nursing graduates I am pleased to say is alive and well.

## Early Days of Nursing

When Ipswich Hospital opened in 1860 professional nursing was in its infancy.

Staff included three honorary medical officers, Matron, wardman with his wife working as a cook, assistant wardman, laundress, a nurse for female patients and a dispenser. Male patients were cared for by the wardman. The dispenser would assess patients arriving at the hospital, call a doctor if required and oversee patient care in the absence of the doctor.

Dr Phillip Thornton, the first Medical Superintendent, was appointed in 1870.

The duties of the first matron, Miss Ellen Raymond, were largely housekeeping and nurses had no training.

In 1863 Matron Raymond was paid £50 and the nurse £25. By 1866 the matron's salary had increased to £60 and there were three female nurses each paid £30 plus quarters and rations. A night nurse joined the staff in 1876. In the 1860s the wages at Ipswich Hospital were considerably higher than at Brisbane Hospital and Ipswich staff turn-over much lower. Prior to 1891 a matron was paid £80 but a housekeeper could be paid £50. So in 1892 the position of matron was controversially abolished, largely as a cost-saving measure in the 1890's Depression. The position of matron was reinstated at the hospital in 1904.

Nurses at Ipswich Hospital still had no formal training and wore their own clothes but this was changing with the increasing professionalism of nursing.

In 1892 caps were introduced. These were usually cotton or linen, heavily starched. Practically they kept hair away from the face so it did not obstruct the nurse's view or spread germs. They were also used to identify the nurse with a hospital or to signify rank.



Staff in 1992 dressed in uniforms through the ages.



Staff in 1987 dressed in corporate nursing staff uniforms

## Uniforms

Uniforms were first provided in 1889. They were blue with a white apron – white symbolising hygiene and cleanliness and blue for purity. They were based on English versions, similar to domestic servants' clothing of long-sleeved full-length dress with apron, mob cap and cuffs. There was no distinction in rank.

Extracts from "A Hard and Noble Life: A History of Nursing at the Ipswich Hospital 1860-2011" by Margaret Cook were used for this edition.

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## Nurses in Training

The first nursing training in Queensland began in 1886 at Brisbane Hospital. Dr Thornton started lectures for senior nurses in Ipswich in 1889 in the subjects of elementary anatomy and physiology, practical nursing and the application of surgical appliances. In January 1890 he reported to the Acting Hospital Committee that four senior nurses had passed these examinations.

The Australasian Trained Nurses' Association (ATNA) was formed in 1899. Membership was granted only to those who held a certificate from hospitals approved by the Association – Ipswich was one of a few recognised. Graduate nurses could put ATNA after their names. Ipswich was at first a four year training hospital but later upgraded to a three year training hospital. Candidates had to complete a prescribed course in general, surgical and medical nursing, hygiene and invalid cooking and sit

written examinations. Invalid cooking was taught at the Ipswich Technical College and practical and oral examinations conducted by Ipswich medical practitioners in general nursing. Initially written examinations were held in Brisbane but after complaints by Dr Thornton that this was disruptive to nurses and the running of the hospital, Ipswich became an approved examination centre in 1907.

In 1912 the Queensland Nurses' Registration Board was established with state examinations and a common period of three years' training introduced. Ipswich nurses continued to sit the ATNA exams but Ipswich was registered as a training hospital under the State scheme.

Ipswich Hospital's last intake of hospital-trained general nurses graduated in July 1992, 100 years after the first Ipswich hospital nurses began their training.



NURSES' GRADUATION 1992  
Left to right ...  
Back Row: Danielle Low, Megan Wise, Leesa Clarke, Johanna Laughlin  
Middle Row: Sara Hristov, Patricia Young, Joy Destounis, Diane Edwards  
Sitting: Robyn Mumford, Victoria Parker, Anthony Bradley, Sharon Teske, Cathleen Monaghan



NURSES' GRADUATION 1992  
Left to right ..  
Back Row: Jodie Hanley, Lorelle Stanley, Kristina Jonker, Myles Sweedman, Rose Turnbull, Maria Van De Weyer, Jo-Ann Horn  
Middle Row: Lynelle Greenwood, Julie Allan, Kylie McDonald, Karen Sharp  
Sitting: Peta Brown, Stephanie Brumm, Anita Porter, Tania Petersen, Georgina Headridge

*The final nurses graduation class at Ipswich Hospital in 1992*

## Mister Sister

Alan Weatherhead was the first male nurse to train at Ipswich Hospital. He started his training on 6 January 1975 and graduated in 1978. Alan has spent his whole nursing career at Ipswich Hospital including about 8 years in Intensive Care, 2-3 years as acting Sister in Charge of Male Medical and then in 1992 moved to the Medical Imaging Department. Currently Alan still does some casual shifts in this department.



Two other male students started training about six months after Alan (at that time there were two intakes a year) - Ian Robinson-Griffiths and Bill Watson.

When Alan started there were no male uniforms—these were introduced when Ian and Bill began which comprised a white shirt and white pants. A wide dark blue tie indicated they were students and stripes on the shirt epaulettes showed the number of years. The tie was a potential hazard, slipping into bed pans and food trolley containers until a safety pin was used to secure it. After three years of training the tie looked the worse for wear.

On graduation Alan received a light blue tie to indicate his “sisterhood”.

Alan recalls that he never felt discriminated against and enjoyed great support from most nurses at all levels. One issue that Alan faced was that two of his cousins, Gladys and Emily Weatherhead, both trained here and they were “hard acts to follow”. Emily was a recipient of the Catherine Evans medal in 1967 (*see story on page 3*).

Other males who had trained elsewhere joined Alan in the wards. John Vogel and Colin Shipton worked in the Operating Theatre and George Greenwood was a psychiatric nurse.

John Vogel was one of the first two male ‘nursing sisters’ registered in Queensland, in 1973. He came to Ipswich Hospital in 1974 from the Princess Alexandra Hospital and worked in Theatre until his retirement in 2011. John passed away in 2015.

## Community Engagement

On Saturday May 11, 110 people took the opportunity to visit the museum on its Open Day in conjunction with the Great Houses of Ipswich

National Trust Open Day. One of the visitors, was Mr Greg Cook, the nephew of the 13th Matron, May Cook, who brought some information on his aunt. Museum volunteers welcomed 14

delegates from Gold Coast museums and historical organisations on Friday May 24 to see how a museum run by volunteers functioned. Afternoon tea was also provided.

## Memories

by Helga McCutcheon

I was only the second person to undertake the General Nurse training course at the Ipswich General Hospital soon after completing the Mental Nurse training course at the Baillie Henderson Hospital in Toowoomba. I have a certificate that states that I am a “Registered Mental Nurse” (you can take that as you will). I started at the Ipswich General Hospital on 24 June 1964. In 1968. I believe I was one of

the first Trainees to ask for and obtain permission to marry during my general nursing training. This was granted by Matron Wilcox and Miss Macfarlane, as long as I kept on working under my maiden name, until the completion of training.

My predecessor or first mentally trained nurse was Lennie Van Wyk [Nee van Oudheusden], who became the Matron of Challinor Centre and worked with my husband George until his retirement in 1985. Although never

meeting during our training days at Ipswich General, Lennie and I became firm friends, nursing Colleagues and fund raisers for Aid Retarded Persons



and Focal, both organisations assisting residents of Challinor Centre to live and work in the community.

*Helga was appointed as a Nurse Educator in 1973 and retired in 2005.*

## Sister Catherine (Kitty) Evans

Catherine (Kitty) Evans trained at Ipswich Hospital from October 1930 until July 1934 and joined the staff in August 1934. In 1936 she left to study obstetrics and returned in April 1937.

Sr Evans was much respected as the Sister-in-Charge of Male Surgical and for a time was Deputy Matron. In 1939 Matron Wilcox described her as “*honest, conscientious and trustworthy and in every way a capable nurse. Her work has always been carried out with care, skill and thoroughness. She is relieving Theatre Sister during the holiday periods and during emergencies, and is a thoroughly capable Theatre Sister*”. Dr Trumpy described her as “*one of the most magnificent, thorough, and conscientious surgical nurses with whom I have come in contact... Her work was outstanding*”.

Sr Evans dealt with a lot of mining injuries and was well-respected in the mining community.

She died from leukaemia in February 1955. She had been a prominent member of the Ipswich Hospital Trained Nurses’ Association and on her death the group decided to honour her memory, endorsed by the hospital board. From the Sister Kitty Evans Memorial Fund, an annual Catherine Evans Memorial

Prize was awarded to a graduate nurse completing her four years general training—given for general conduct, character, popularity, ward reports, practical nursing ability and examination results. Selectors were the Medical Superintendent, Matron, Deputy Matron, Tutor Sister and the Hospital Board Chairman and the prize was a badge with the hospital crest and the words Catherine Evans Memorial.

The first prize was awarded in 1956 to Joy McElwaine. The last recipient was Maria Van De Weyer in 1992. The prize has been presented 38 times.

In 1994, the Nurses’ Association commissioned a Catherine Evans portrait to be painted by Lake



## Donkey in the bed

*Hospital Memories from Valmae Jackson (Campbell-Jones) 2001*

Did you know that at least up until the late 1930s and early 40s, when patients returned from the operating theatre, they found they were to share their bed with a **donkey**?

True!! A “donkey” was a pillow or bolster wrapped in a sheet—somewhat in the shape of a sling. The two ends of the sheet were tied to the top of the bed and the donkey was placed under the patients’ knees. The purpose of the donkey was to prevent the patient from slipping down in the bed. Behind the patient were placed three or four pillows (to prop the patient upright). Two or more pillows placed each side to act as arm rests. Thus the patient was effectively immobilised and kept that way for a few days. Very different from early ambulation of the present day.

When preparing for the return of a patient from the theatre, a large can (probably an enema can) was filled with warm saline solution and a long piece of rubber tubing was attached to the lower end of the can. When the patient returned to their bed the other end of the tubing was inserted in the patient’s rectum. I guess there must have been a clip somewhere on the tubing to regulate the drip. After 60 years one forgets the details.

**Latest Exhibit:**

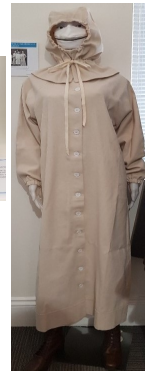
*Pestilence, plagues, poultices,  
poxes, pustules and pyrexias —*

**The Infections, Epidemics and Fevers of Ipswich**

**Open: Wednesdays  
9 am– 12 noon or  
by appointment for groups**

Location:  
Ground floor, Jubilee Building,  
Ipswich Hospital Campus,  
Adjacent to Court Street  
Ipswich

**FREE ENTRY**

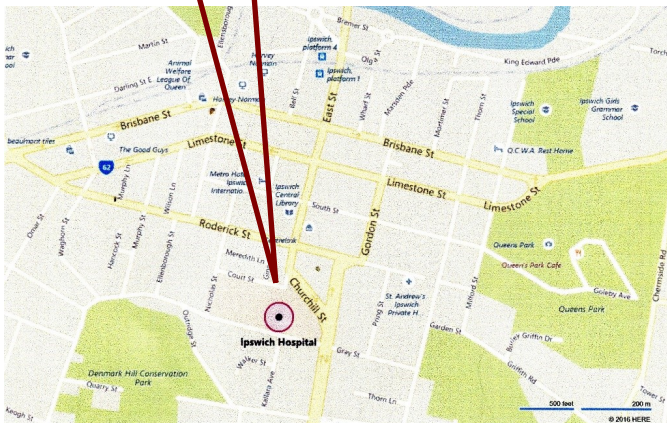


**Interested? - join us as a volunteer**



**Ipswich Hospital Museum Inc**

**LOCATION:  
Ipswich Hospital  
East St Entrance**



**CONTACT US:**

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Friends of Ipswich Hospital Museum



**Ambulance Service**

Following an article in the March edition about the Ambulance Service in relation to Ipswich Hospital, some new information has been provided by Mr Greg Eustace, QAS Heritage & History Research, Queensland Ambulance Museum. Mr Eustace is a former long serving Ipswich ambulance officer and currently State Secretary of the Queensland Ambulance Service Retired Officers Association Inc. In 2017, he produced the Queensland Ambulance Museum publication *“The History of Ambulance Services in Ipswich 1901 to 1991”* which took many years of research based on the historical records of the service.

He has contributed the following:

In June 1898, an “Ashford Litter” was purchased from the City Ambulance Transport Brigade and placed at the Ipswich Railway Station. Ambulance services commenced in Ipswich on 4 November 1901 with the first two permanent officers being Deputy Superintendent William Tomkins and Ambulance Officer William Armstrong who were supported by seven honorary ambulance officers. Tomkins and Armstrong were transferred from Brisbane with various items of equipment.

The fleet, as at 31 December 1901, consisted of two Ashford Litters (one kindly lent by the Ipswich Hospital Board and formally transferred to the ambulance service later) and one stretcher. The first premises was leased for the first 2 years.

Ipswich became a self-governing centre in 1906 with William Tomkins being appointed as the first Superintendent.

The building on the corner of Downs and Flint Street, North Ipswich was opened on 28 June 1919.

In 1934, David Miller was appointed Superintendent following the death of William Tomkins.

Records and images reveal that Ipswich Hospital Emergency Department staff attended major accidents for a long time prior to 1988.